CLASSIS

A Journal of the Association of Classical Christian Schools
VOLUME XXXII, Issue 1 | Fall 2024

CLASSIS is a journal promoting a new "old way" and is designed to edify, support, and encourage educators around the world who seek to recover classical Christian education in the twilight of the West.

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INFORMATION
CLASSIS is a publication of the Association of Classical and Christian Schools (ACCS). Views expressed in CLASSIS do not necessarily represent the views of the association or our members. Our goal is to inform and expand the community of supporters of classical Christian education. CLASSIS is published two times a year and is mailed to member schools and individuals with a subscription. If you do not wish to receive this publication, please contact our office at info@accsedu.org. Visit **classicalchristian.org/classis** for information about subscriptions, article submission, and a selection of previously published articles.

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Friends, Colleagues, and Fellow Classical Christian Educators,

In *The Abolition of Man*, C. S. Lewis famously argues, "The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts." The specific context for this is his appeal to inculcate "just sentiments." Education's aim is to align our rational will with the Good and bring our appetitive will into conformity with Reality. This would imply that our sentiments and affections, which are gifts of God, must also be disciplined and trained to conform to the *Summum Bonum*. In other words, education is not simply having the right worldview. The "feels" matter too. Like it or not, vibes matter. But what are the other deserts that need watering? What other realms of knowledge or domains of belief must also be irrigated?

Lightly do we talk of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty while sometimes preserving latent materialist assumptions about the nature of Reality. Despite whatever lip service we might pay to believe in the "invisible" and supernatural realities, we might yet nourish a safe skepticism—that the history of the church is primarily one of ideas and not also of strange events that might challenge our materialist predilections. We praise the reading of Great Books and the study of wise men, but then maintain that medieval historians are to be trusted only insofar as they keep records of battles or treaties or anything else that comports with a world of combustion engines, electronic computing, and digital smartphones.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, however, would have us see the world differently. "The world is charged with the grandeur of God," he says, and it will "flame out, like shining from shook foil." Many students with a classical Christian education may not actually believe this. What is of more concern is that many classical Christian educators may not understand what such a claim means. When the psalmist says, "The heavens declare the glory of God," we often think only of the original act of divine creation. We don't always consider how the world is still suffused with mystery and beauty and divine life. Even when "the last lights off the black West went," Hopkins would remind us not to despair, for "nature is never spent." There is always more present than what we can account for. Thus, Eustace Scrubb must unlearn his materialism and forsake the hubris of his modern progressive education. He must come to see that merely knowing what a thing is "made of" does not comprise a thing's essence, its "is-ness."

This insight is not confined merely to faery stories. This is also true of any hidden thing that has meaning. God is present in the world, and his presence is not merely contained in abstract ideas or right worldviews. Emily Dickinson put it this way:

> There's a certain Slant of light,
> Winter Afternoons –
> That oppresses, like the Heft
> Of Cathedral Tunes –
>
> Heavenly Hurt, it gives us –
> We can find no scar,
> But internal difference –
> Where the Meanings, are –

What is "Heavenly Hurt"? And why should classical Christian educators understand such things? How does an ancient or medieval vision of the cosmos shape how one teaches or what ought to be done in the classroom? How important is the role of re-enchantment for the classical teacher? What is the role of Beauty in the formation of the person and of the society?

These are the questions we attempt to answer in this newly designed issue of *Classis*. Our theme is the necessity of beauty and wonder in classical Christian learning. We begin with an inspiring piece by Louis Markos, who examines the paideutic role of nature in education, as well as the way in which memory and nature work together for our good. We'll return to the importance of memory in our Commonplace section, where a graduate at Trinitas Christian School distinguishes between the vain nostalgia of the world and the godly nostalgia that every Christian should possess.

We are also pleased to feature Junius Johnson, who explores the way in which the act of teaching is a kind of romance, where the teacher woos on behalf of the text. In a previously published piece, Rob Kirkendall examines the *Sonnets* of Shakespeare, providing interpretive clarity around its unifying theme. Surprisingly, what we find in these poems are not disconnected images of personal fancy but a contiguous dramatic monologue that defends the beauty and moral good of family life over and against those who might "willfully avoid child-rearing for ignoble reasons, out of mere vanity, prodigality, or social convenience."

In addition, I muse on whether we can recover the educational virtue that the modern world lost but which allowed the learning of the classical and medieval worlds to flourish. David Seibel reviews Stratford Caldecott's classic *Beauty in the Word*. Finally, Nick Duncan from The Ambrose School points us to Plato's dialogue *Greater Hippias* as a primer on Beauty and how important it is for classical educators to understand the difference between the study of Beauty and the study of Aesthetics. As a reference, we are pleased to print the Benjamin Jowett translation of *Greater Hippias* for this issue's Old Voices section.

A few more parting notes on this edition. You'll notice that our staff has grown. We're blessed to bring on Austin Hoffman as an editor and Paula Gibbs, who has refreshed our design and made an already handsome journal even more comely. Fitting changes for an issue on Beauty and Wonder.

Non nobis,

Devin O'Donnell, Editor-in-Chief

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ARTICLES

In Defense of (Wordsworthian) Romantic Education

Louis A. Markos, *Houston Christian University*

For a century-and-a-half, progressive educators have sought to replace the traditional teacher-centered, classics-reading, virtue-instilling classroom with a child-centered, experience-focused, skill-oriented romantic classroom. Although I stand firmly in the traditional camp, there is something that modern classical Christian parents and teachers can learn from the romanticism, not of Rousseau, but of Wordsworth: something that allows for an experiential interaction with nature that is both positive and soul-building. In this essay, I hope to convince such parents and teachers that a proper education in nature can complement a traditional one at home or in the schoolroom.

In "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," the twenty-eight-year-old Wordsworth returns to a place he had visited many times in his life. In the central movement of the poem, the poet, using Tintern Abbey as his backdrop, meditates on how his interactions with nature shaped his young consciousness. Thinking back nostalgically on those endless summer days, he remembers the time

> . . . when like a roe
> I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
> Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
> Wherever nature led: more like a man
> Flying from something that he dreads, than one
> Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
> (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days
> And their glad animal movements all gone by)
> To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
> What then I was. The sounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colours and their forms, were then to me
> An appetite; a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, nor any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye. (Lines 67-84)

Although the phrase in parentheses depicts the poet when he was very young, perhaps three or four, the bulk of the passage celebrates the high point of his boyhood freedom when he bounded through the natural landscape as if he were a deer.

He communed directly and spontaneously with the natural world in those golden days.

He did not think about it; he felt, absorbed, and devoured it. Nature haunted the boy as if it were a living being with form, motion, and will. It provoked feelings of fear and dread in him, but it was not the kind of fear that crushed the will or incited anger and rebellion. He fled from it, but as a little girl flees, laughing when the father she loves chases her; he is overwhelmed, frozen by its power, but as a grown man who stands at the base of a waterfall is rendered speechless and motionless by its grandeur.

The Child is Father of the Man

In Book I of his poetic autobiography, *The Prelude*, Wordsworth gives several examples of the shock and awe that nature inspired in him when he was a boy. Here is how the adult poet remembers an incident when he stole woodcocks from someone else's snare:

> Sometimes it befell
> In these night wanderings, that a strong desire
> O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
> Which was the captive of another's toil
> Became my prey; and when the deed was done
> I heard among the solitary hills
> Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
> Of undistinguishable motion, steps
> Almost as silent as the turf they trod.
>
> (Lines 317-325; 1850 edition)

Here, nature takes on an almost moral role, exposing and rebuking the boy for his theft. But the admonition manifests itself not in words or commandments but in a presence that is deep and chthonic and primitive: it breathes and murmurs, but not as humans or even animals breathe and murmur.

The world is more than he knows or can imagine. Something within him is growing and expanding: a sense of reverence for life, for truth, and, though he is too young yet to have a word to describe it, for holiness.

The experience awakens the boy's moral conscience, causing him to feel guilt, fear, and terror all at once. He suddenly becomes aware that there are forces beyond the physical and the natural, an awareness that fills him with a sense of numinous dread. The world is more than he knows or can imagine. Something within him is growing and expanding: a sense of reverence for life, for truth, and, though he is too young yet to have a word to describe it, for holiness.

The poet follows this psyche-shaping remembrance with a second one that also involves an act of theft, this time eggs from a raven's nest:

> Nor less when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,
> Moved we as plunderers where the mother-bird

Had in high places built her lodge;
though mean
Our object and inglorious, yet the end
Was not ignoble. Oh! when I have hung
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill sustained, and almost (so it
seemed)
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that
time
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud
dry wind
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed
not a sky
Of earth—and with what motion moved
the clouds!

(Lines 326-339)

This time, the force, the spirit for which he has neither name nor category, does more than pursue him. This time, it blows through him, catching him up in a wave of energy and suspending him between sky and earth. This time, it also tries to communicate with him through something almost a language, a "strange utterance" that attunes him for a moment to the spinning of the heavens, the motion of the cosmos.

Having tried in words to express a mystical experience that transcended words and sunk down into the very being of the boy, the adult poet steps back to analyze the experience and assess the impact it had on him.

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music; there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling
together
In one society. How strange that all
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
Within my mind, should e'er have borne
a part,
And that a needful part, in making up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!
Thanks to the means which Nature
deigned to employ;
Whether her fearless visitings, or those
That came with soft alarm, like hurtless
light
Opening the peaceful clouds; or she may
use
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, as best might suit her
aim.

(Lines 340-356)

Experiences such as these do more than open the boy's eyes to an unseen realm of power; it *worked* on him, molding his discordant hopes and regrets, passions and vexations, pleasures and miseries into a deeper unity and harmony. Out of the terror came calm, but the transition occurred over a lengthy process.

We are complex beings, physically as well as emotionally. As our bodies were knit together slowly and painstakingly in the secret place of our mother's womb (Psalm 139:13-14), our psyches develop bit by bit as they rub against and flee from, commune with, and tremble before the world around us. St Paul promises "that all things work together for

good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28; KJV), but those "things" that "work together" include happiness as well as sorrow, victory as well as persecution.

"Fair seed-time had my soul," writes Wordsworth a few lines earlier, "and I grew up / Fostered alike by beauty and by fear" (301-302). For each time that the young Wordsworth felt joyous delight in the presence of mother nature, there were two or three times when nature ministered to him in a sterner, more palpable fashion. Now soft, now harsh, now invigorating, now alarming, nature administered punishments and rewards, daunting tasks and exhilarating triumphs. He did not know what was happening to him then; he could only look back now from the perspective of his integrated adulthood and see how the process occurred.

Experiences such as these do more than open the boy's eyes to an unseen realm of power; it worked on him, molding his discordant hopes and regrets, passions and vexations, pleasures and miseries into a deeper unity and harmony.

There is a kind of training and equipping that can only be done when we are young and supple, open to forces external to our psyche—but those forces must be allowed to be forceful. If we coddle and overprotect our children, we will prevent them from the necessary shaping that occurs in the face of the infinite and the sublime. We must not shield them from guilt and shame; neither must we shield them from those things in nature that are uncanny and menacing. And the same goes for those aspects of fairy tales that inspire terror and dread. They need to be protected, of course, from real dangers, but not from their capacity to experience fear of the numinous and the unknown.

For Wordsworth, adulthood is in part a product of the experiences—physical, spiritual, emotional, perceptual—that we have as children. In terms of his own life, he believed strongly that his early interactions with nature laid the foundation for that "calm existence" that was his when he was worthy of himself. Indeed, his memories of those interactions often ministered to him when, as an adult, he felt cut off from the natural world and from his own sense of himself as a perceptual being with a sensitive soul. And that takes us back to "Tintern Abbey."

Let Nature Be Your Teacher

When Wordsworth wrote "Tintern Abbey," he had just returned to the pastoral Lake District where he had grown up after spending a long and deadening sojourn in what to him was the noisy, dehumanizing city of London. During that dark period, when the poet came close to losing his connection to all that made him human, his memories of the landscapes of Tintern Abbey (in the Wye Valley) rose up within him. They restored the calm existence which the city had torn away from him:

…oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration. . .
…how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!
(Lines 25-30, 50-57)

The memories return through the bustle, noise, and madness of the modern city, bringing with them what Wordsworth calls "tranquil restoration." Those memories, far from mere fancies dancing in the mind, have real weight and presence; the poet feels them viscerally along his veins and arteries. They bring with them a natural and healing weight that lessens and removes the artificial and stifling weight of the anxiety and weariness that hang so heavily on the adult.

By such means, the child comes to the rescue of the man in a time of crisis. The connection between the two is deep, with the water of restoration flowing directly into the poet's "purer mind." I say connection, but dialogue may be the better word. As enfleshed souls, we are constantly changing while yet remaining the same. Our core identity develops in childhood and persists through prosperity and adversity, uniting us as a single being.

In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth describes that dialogue and that unity in words that delve into the heart of what it means to be human:

So feeling comes in aid
Of feeling, and diversity of strength
Attends us, if but once we have been strong.
Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands; but this I feel,
That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,
Else never canst receive.
(Book XII, Lines 269-277)

There is a kind of training and equipping that can only be done when we are young and supple, open to forces external to our psyche—but those forces must be allowed to be forceful. If we coddle and overprotect our children, we will prevent them from the necessary shaping that occurs in the face of the infinite and the sublime.

Man is a mystery, not only in his incarnational nature or status as a creature made good but fallen but in the rich and strange manner by which his psyche is formed and upheld. There is a greatness within us, but that greatness has humble origins in the innocence and simplicity of childhood; in fact, it is out of the unfathomable depths of that innocence and simplicity that that which is most lasting and mighty within us has its roots.

We are so made, so intricately woven, that if there was ever a time in our distant past when our perceptions were pure and our feelings strong, the memory of that alone can revive our hearts and restore to us the purity and strength that seemed to be lost forever. The wonder and awe, freshness, and spontaneity of the child in nature are a precious gift, a seed that can sprout again when all seems dead and without light.

Our Birth is but a Sleep and a Forgetting

Wordsworth celebrates and expresses gratitude for this endowment of childhood in "Tintern Abbey" and *The Prelude*; he does so again and more fervently in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." Like the former two, the "Intimations Ode" is a crisis poem that chronicles a moment when the poet suffers some kind of division or estrangement in his emotional, spiritual, or perceptual life. That crisis sends him in desperate search of a resolution, which he then finds by reconnecting his present self to his former self.

In the "Intimations Ode," the crisis that rocks the poet is his realization that he no longer perceives in nature the kind of ethereal glow and divine aura that he once saw all around him. To explain this phenomenon, he borrows from a Platonic myth that suggests that our souls existed in heaven before entering our earthly bodies. Perhaps that is why the child still sees the light of heaven emanating from nature, but the adult, having traveled further away from his memories of heaven, no longer does.

By the poem's climax, the poet discovers traces, or intimations, of that celestial radiance yet remain, lighting the way for the adult. The child, still close to heaven, knows intuitively that there is a reality greater than his physical eyes can discern. He intuits that and "tremble[s] like a guilty Thing surprised" (line 147), just as the young Wordsworth did when he stole woodcocks and raven's eggs. Those numinous feelings, those intimations of a greater spirit and power, the adult finds, are "the fountain light of all our day" and "the master light of all our seeing" (151-152).

We are so made, so intricately woven, that if there was ever a time in our distant past when our perceptions were pure and our feelings strong, the memory of that alone can revive our hearts and restore to us the purity and strength that seemed to be lost forever.

It is they that
Uphold us, cherish, and have power
to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the
being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad
endeavour,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal
sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the
shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling
evermore.
(Lines 153-167)

As adults, we must live far away from the mystic East where we once knew direct, unmediated, spontaneous communion with heaven. But we did know it once, knew its joy, felt its peace, and bathed in its magical glow. And because we did, once, we can know it again, perhaps in a quieter mode, but no less real and tangible. Through memory, the poet regains eyes to see and ears to hear, and they cannot be taken from him.

In writing this passage, Wordsworth surely had in mind the great promise of St Paul: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). A thousand Londons polluting the air with coal dust and the din of traffic cannot strip away from us our connection to those eternal truths that cannot die.

Wordsworth had more to say on these matters. He knew that to reach full maturity, we must cherish our childhood memories while moving on to a more sober, philosophical communion with nature that does not shy away from what he calls, in "Tintern Abbey," "the still, sad music of humanity" (91), and, in "Intimations Ode," "the soothing thoughts that spring / Out of human suffering" (183-184).

Still, what I have written should be enough to convince classical educators and parents that a focus on nature need not be pantheistic, environmentalist, or New Age. God reveals himself through two books: the Bible (special revelation) and nature (general revelation).

Nature cannot teach a young person that Jesus is the Son of God or even the foundations of Greco-Roman classical thought, but it can and will, if we allow it, open the eyes and ears of our children to the numinous power of the Creator. Passages from Scripture memorized as a child can restore the adult who has lost his connection to the Lord and His good promises; just so, our childhood interactions with nature can come to our aid when we feel lost, isolated, and alone.

Our memories are, I believe, the most intimate part of us. The Holy Spirit works

through those memories, not just of God's Word but of God's world. An early encounter and wrestling with the beauty and fear that God wove deeply into nature can build up and strengthen the soul of a child in a way analogous to how reading and grappling with Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, Augustine, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton can instill a hunger for and an understanding of virtue. One of the chief goals of classical Christian education is character formation, and I believe that an education in nature like that described by Wordsworth can aid greatly in achieving that goal. Let us not squander the "fair seed-time" of our children's souls.

Louis Markos, Professor in English and Scholar in Residence at Houston Christian University, holds the Robert H. Ray Chair in Humanities; his 26 books include *From Plato to Christ*, *The Myth Made Fact, On the Shoulders of Hobbits: The Road to Virtue with Tolkien and Lewis*, and *Eye of the Beholder: How to See the World like a Romantic Poet*. His *Passing the Torch: An Apology for Classical Christian Education* and *From Aristotle to Christ* are due out in 2025.

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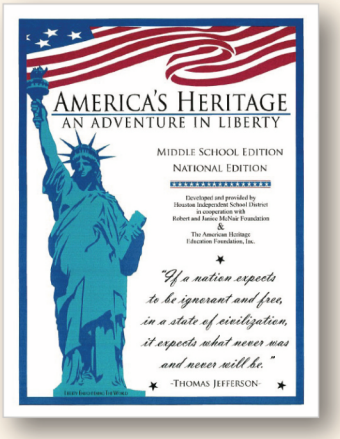

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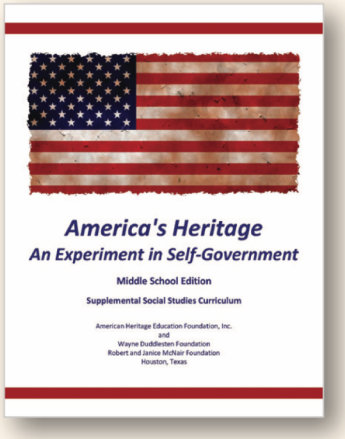

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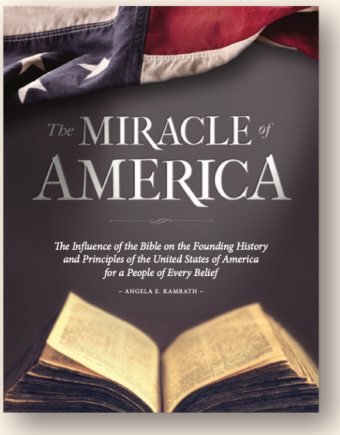

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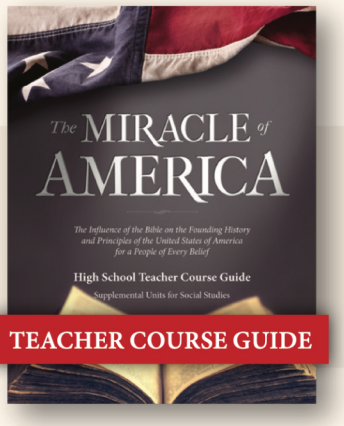

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Beautiful Arts: Imagination and the Formation of the Soul

Junius Johnson, *Junius Johnson Academics*

In English, we speak of the performing arts as "fine arts." This distinguishes them as much from the liberal arts as from the mechanical or servile arts (arts directed at caring for the body's needs, such as cooking or making clothes). But in French, they have a different designation: *beaux arts* or "beautiful arts." I have always found this to be both deeply powerful and more apt than our own less enthusiastic designation of "fine." This conception has spread in my own thinking to encompass not just the performing arts but much more: first, the humanities, and then all human making and knowing. Because once the idea of beauty gets hold of you, it does not let go easily, nor will it be easily quarantined: it tends to expand, colonizing nearby sites and bringing more and more under its dominion. And so, for me, "beautiful arts" has come to encompass my entire approach to education.

My foundational claim is that the heart of pedagogy is romance. Now, romance is not the same as love. Love begins with captivation, as the perception of beauty arrests the eye. It progresses through admiration and meditation (which is an intentional reflective delight in the beauty perceived) to desire and finds its consummation in union. On the other hand, romance is the *histoire d'amour*,[1] the course of being drawn. It begins not with captivation but pursuit. It aims to draw the other into a space similar to the space the one who romances occupies, thus creating a mutual, symmetrical recognition of and desire for beauty. The mutual and at least somewhat symmetrical occupation of such a space is one of the prerequisites for consummated love.

What does this look like in the case of education? It means that the educator must cast a vision before the student, a vision that will captivate and allure the student. The student is the one pursued, and the educator pursues on behalf of whatever stands as the goal of education. When this romance takes hold of the student, pursuing the goal becomes self-sustaining because it is internally driven: the student wishes to reach the desired end.

As a result, what is proposed as an end matters greatly, for only the right object will elicit love. But it also matters *what* we fall in love with, for our loves change us in the direction *of* our loves. On the one hand, information is not likely to elicit love from our students, and we do not do well in achieving our educational outcome by focusing on acquiring or mastering certain bits of information. On the other hand, even those few who can fall in love with such an end are not helped thereby, for by loving information,

1. "History of love," which in French is a way of referring to the entirety of the relationship from its beginning to the present.

they become more the type of person who values information over meaning, data over context, knowledge over people, and facts over truth. Such students are being trained to treat the world reductively, including other human persons. Such reductionism is precisely what classical education in its current forms is trying to avoid because we recognize that reductive understandings of the world are not likely to produce sensitive, creative, holistic solutions to pressing societal and environmental problems or to generate subtle, provocative, yet reverent works of art and genius.

My foundational claim is that the heart of pedagogy is romance . . . the educator must cast a vision before the student, a vision that will captivate and allure the student.

There are, then, two things to be investigated: the first is the dynamics of intellectual romance, in which wonder and imagination play such key roles. Wonder arises from perceived beauty, while imagination works to open the eyes and cast forth our gaze. Without imagination, no object of desire will ever be presented to the mind's eye; without wonder, it will not captivate us. The second thing to be investigated is the worthy pedagogical ends and how we must subordinate the specific learning outcomes (material mastery) to the greater demand of a vision of reality and one's place in it. This cannot be separated from moral vision precisely because to understand one's place in the world is to understand ways one ought and ought not to interact with other objects in that world.

Because teaching is never mere information transfer but aims to take a student as far as possible, we cannot specify the endpoint or prescribe a one-size-fits-all model. In fact, the material is not the goal at all but the formation of a certain type of person, namely, an actively self-motivated lifetime learner. Therefore, we need to cast a vision tailored to each student that will become a passion, such that the students pursue it increasingly of their own accord. Because it is impossible to tailor this vision to each student in the abstract (precisely because no concrete persons are abstract), education requires the teacher to constantly assess and adjust based on real-time conditions on the ground. The vision we cast must be sufficiently broad to keep drawing the student on throughout a lifetime; thus, the goals of education need to be epic in proportion.

I suggest that this process of drawing the student is a form of romance. This notion of romance is not accidental or peripheral to the task of education but is, in fact, its beating heart.

The Dynamics of Intellectual Romance

To understand intellectual romance's dynamics, it will be helpful to make some general remarks about romance.

Romance often begins with one party pursuing the other, but in its fullest form, it is a mutual pursuit. This is why romance is not best described in terms of conquest, such as when a Don Juan conquers the hesitations of a hapless woman who is to him little more

than an object.[2] Rather, true romance is a dance. To be sure, in this dance, there is invitation and hesitation, pulling apart and drawing together again, but it is only a dance so long as both partners stay engaged; therefore, the center of gravity is not in one partner or the other, but rather in the space between the partners that are defined by their ever-shifting relations to each other.

Now, to avoid a dangerous caricature, it must be understood that the teacher acts as a proxy: he is the intermediary between the student and the goal of education. As such, he must be faithful to the goal, recognize when to step aside, and allow the two for whom he has been working to come together on their own. Every good teaching philosophy aims to make the teacher unnecessary in time.

Transforming the Vision of the Student

The first step in romance is to get the attention of the one pursued. This involves a transformation of vision: either something that has not been seen before must be seen for the first time, or something must come to be seen in a new light.[3] Likewise, when we think about intellectual romance, we begin with the eye of the mind. The faculty that corresponds to the eye of the mind is the imagination, and so the imagination is central to the work of education. It is specifically the student's imagination that is of paramount importance here. For though imagination is equally important in the pedagogue—from the first conception of a class to the execution of the very last day—we are concerned here with how to draw students into the task of learning so that it becomes internally rather than externally driven. For that, we must focus on the conditions of the student.

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The first and most foundational use of the imagination in education is casting a vision for the student to pursue. Love works using what we have become accustomed to call a final cause: the goal draws one towards itself—it becomes the reason for which all actions are taken.[4] But a final cause can exert no influence if it is not known, at least to some extent: we do not fall in love with what we do not know, even if it is true that we can never really know something until we love it with a suitable love. Thus, something has to be presented for the student to catch sight of, or no desire to pursue will be awakened. The student enters this dance only reluctantly and must be drawn into it. Something, therefore, must be proposed to the student as an incentive that will ground the

2. Cf. Mozart, *Don Giovanni*¸ and Lord Byron, *Don Juan*.

3. And so love is described as a kind of conversion: "Love sank into her heart and, terror fleeing, / Began on the conversion of her being" (Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book II, stanza 128 [trans. Neville Coghill. London: Penguin, 1971], p.77).

4. Aristotle, *Physics* II.3 and *Metaphysics* V.2.

risk inherent in letting oneself be drawn out of the comfort of the familiar or known.

This is where we very often go wrong in the service of expediency: we seek to use something other than the goal itself to draw the student into the dance, but when we do so, we run the risk of the student falling in love with the means rather than the educational final cause. For example, we tell students they should study Latin because it will help them with their scores on standardized tests, and in so doing, we instrumentalize Latin. We intend this explanation to be a way station on the journey to the love of the language itself; but it is taken to be the end itself, and so becomes a competing, improper end. It is a rare thing indeed for a student whose understanding of the value of Latin is so brutally instrumental to develop a desire to continue their study beyond this period of usefulness. In fact, I would argue that no student conceives this desire so long as Latin is conceived of only in this instrumental way; the ones who do get inflamed with the desire to continue their study of Latin are the ones who have moved on from the instrumental conception: they have discovered that it is beautiful in its own right, and are now pursuing it out of love.

But this is no thanks to us, who gave no reasons to think it was of anything more than instrumental value. No, if we want the student to fall in love with Latin, we can use nothing else to draw the student into the dance than Latin itself. "Why should I study Latin?" they will ask. "Are you kidding me?" we respond. "Look at this stuff; it's so cool!" We will read them a line of Vergil, one of the great liturgical hymns, an ode of Horace, or part of the magnificent Requiem mass. We will read it to them *in Latin*: though they will not understand the words, they must hear the music of it, the unique vowel melody and consonantal syncopation of that language.

Then, we will show them what it means, not by mere translation but by pointing to the interaction between semantics and syntax. We will talk to them about the shades of meaning of these words, their history and how they have come to this place in this locution, and how those connotations interact with one another in ways that go beyond what can be seen from a literal translation. We will also speak of the form *and* function of the words, the way part of speech interacts with deployment: "this is no mere noun, but an adjective used nominally, or a verbal noun of a certain sort. See how that impacts the meaning."

The student cannot simply see my passion and take it as a goal: what is required is a new vision inspired by my passion yet distinct from it. This leap, which conceives something new by going beyond the existing conditions (the student's self-understanding and the teacher's passion), is an act of the imagination.

When we have finished, the student will likely regret having asked the question; the student will definitely have seen that this is the type of matter that excites, at least in some, passion and joy; and, beyond all this, the student just may experience that first mystical moment of wonder that will threaten, unchecked, to infect them with our own sense

of wonder and turn them into one of us: a lover of Latin.

Now, it is just that mystical moment I am concerned about here. What does it look like for a student who has come into contact with my passion to contract that same passion? I argue that more is required than just to see my passion: the student must also leap from this to some sort of intuition of what it might mean for their lives to be inflamed by a similar passion. It is only a similar passion: this is why my students who go on to study theology, even when they enter the same area of the field as me, do not do quite the same things I do. As in all things, every love is unique and non-repeatable. Since love is a relation between two things, something entirely new is created when one member of the pair is changed (that is, the two involved are not now the teacher and theology, but this student and theology). Thus, the student cannot simply see my passion and take it as a goal: what is required is a new vision inspired by my passion yet distinct from it. This leap, which conceives something new by going beyond the existing conditions (the student's self-understanding and the teacher's passion), is an act of the imagination.

Encouraging the Imagination of the Student

As the teacher casts a vision, it is the role of the student's imagination to catch this presentation of what could be. The imagination makes space within the student for a new version of that vision. It is helpful to the teacher to know this, for the teacher must cast the vision to summon the imagination to work. This was implicit in the extended example I gave of casting a vision for the study of Latin: why read students texts in a language they do not understand? So that the text, coming to them in a form they do not understand and cannot assimilate, may challenge their assumptions about the boundaries of the world, offer them a glimpse of riches just beyond their reach, and, by its very mystery, summon the imagination to work.

However, simply capturing the student's attention will not be enough. Imagination is equally important in keeping it and drawing the student forward in the dance of learning. Once we awaken the student's imagination, it must be continually fed.

> My job as a teacher is not to convert that student to like what I like, but to keep that student reading and to make sure that student's list of books they cannot wait to read feels like it is too long to finish in one lifetime.

Sterility is the enemy of imagination. Imagination will break through the toughest rock as long as the vein of mineral it is pursuing remains rich, but once the gold and the gems run out, it tires and turns to other endeavors. Thus, the pedagogue must not only introduce the student to the possibilities of this field of study but must also labor to demonstrate the inexhaustibility of its riches.

This has everything to do with curricular preparation, at the very least, in two ways. The first is the selection of materials. If a student has been hooked into literature by the promise of adventure and visiting other worlds, a steady diet of realistic fiction set in the student's home culture will disappoint. This was my childhood experience: an avid reader, I would devour hundreds of pages every week. I was drawn to books because

they took me to fantastical places to meet larger-than-life personalities. Adventure, transport, and possibility were my stock in trade. But in school I was handed a seemingly unending stream of the same depressing stories over and over again: boy loses beloved animal (*Old Yeller, The Yearling, Where the Red Fern Grows*), protagonist overcome by the inescapable difficulty of the real world (*The Grapes of Wrath, The Red Badge of Courage, The Call of the Wild*), or the evils of racism, which were, to me as an African-American man in the south, existentially urgent (*Huckleberry Finn, To Kill a Mockingbird*)—in short, all those things were what I was reading books to *avoid*. As a result, though I continued to read several books a week, English was my least favorite subject, and I would not do the reading for class.

On the other hand, if the student has been hooked by the power of literature to face the harsh realities of sinful human existence and to offer resources for finding a way forward through pain, continually asking them to read escapist fiction will not do. Not every student wants dragons, other worlds, or adventure. I may not understand it, being the sort who wants nothing more than these things. But my job as a teacher is not to convert that student to like what I like, but to keep that student reading and to make sure that student's list of books they cannot wait to read feels like it is too long to finish in one lifetime.

The teacher preparing a literature class can expect a variety of students who will have to be hooked in various ways. Since she cannot choose to build the class for one without disenfranchising the others, she will have to provide variety so that each student will have multiple books they can really resonate with, set at reasonable intervals throughout the school year.

But it also means that teaching a student the "wrong sort" of book, as will happen regularly in the model I am describing, is not just an exercise in telling a student to be patient. You do not tell the girls to be patient during *Treasure Island* because *Pride and Prejudice* is coming or tell the boys to be patient during *Pride and Prejudice* because *War of the Worlds* is coming. Teaching is not just about meeting students where they are; it is about moving them from where they are to some place they would never have imagined they could be– indeed, someplace they never could have reached had their imaginations not been shepherded with care. So, at every point, the teacher must be attentive to helping each student see how the "wrong sort" of book for them is not, in fact, the wrong sort but connects to and expands on their perceived interests.

Secondly, the inexhaustibility of the field's riches must be shown by challenging the students with material that is too hard for them. This is critical, for it shows them that there is still a long way to go, and this challenge draws them forward.

I cannot stress enough how important this is at every level of education: students must see that however far they think they have come, the rabbit hole goes much deeper. But care is required: overuse of this technique or presentation of material too far beyond the student will result in frustration. The imagination will shut down because the student will fail to see a path from where they are now to where they are trying to go. Therefore, one must not do this too often or present material too far beyond where the students' capabilities lie.

So what about the student who has been successfully drawn into this kind of relationship to the material to be learned? Such a student is characterized by wonder, which arises as a spontaneous and total response to the perception of and assent to the

vision presented. The imagination often begins in wonder, and it also leads to wonder.

It is important to think about this because we need to know what we seek in the student. Diligent attention in class and timely and conscientious completion of the assigned work are important and necessary for the student's progress, but they are not the goal.

A student is characterized by wonder, which arises as a spontaneous and total response to the perception of and assent to the vision presented. The imagination often begins in wonder, and it also leads to wonder.

One can be seized by more or less prosaic and external motivations and still display these traits. We are looking for an attitude of wonder, which looks different in different students but is always characterized by forward motion: the student longs to move on to the next thing and moves through the material eagerly, unselfconsciously, and sometimes even unconsciously. As George MacDonald says: "The right teacher would have his pupils easy to please, but ill to satisfy; ready to enjoy, unready to embrace; keen to discover beauty, slow to say, 'Here I will dwell.'"[5]

Think of a student in a seminar class who does not speak up but is actively engaged in following the conversation. One day, the conversation hits upon something important to him, and despite his concerns about social awkwardness or his firm intention to keep his opinions to himself, he enters the conversation as naturally and vigorously as if he had been participating all semester. Until the student arrives at this point, the teacher must continue to romance him, trying to draw him in. Once this point is reached, the teacher's task changes: now the goal is to feed the hunger that has been awakened, to provide a steady diet of suitable material so that he is not tempted to retreat back into his shell.

This, too, is a curricular point: the student who has been captivated and responds to material in wonder has made a personal connection, which will begin to take the student down paths specific to that student. Here, a one-syllabus-fits-all approach begins to fail: the student's love of Latin differs from the teacher's and will run to different sorts of texts. And one student will differ from another.

To take maximal advantage of the developing romance, we must be light on our feet with respect to our curriculum. We need room to allow one student to dive deeper into Caesar while another pursues an interest in Horace, and still another mines the riches of the liturgical tradition. If the goal is for the student to learn Latin well, the student may do so from any of these texts (however much certain ones will be privileged on the AP exam); if the goal is for the student to love Latin and learn it well as a result of that love, then not all of these texts will serve the goal equally well with different students. And so, as student capability expands, the course ought

5. George MacDonald, "The Imagination: Its Functions and Culture" in *A Dish of Orts*, accessible at https://www.gutenberg.org/files/9393/9393-h/9393-h.htm.

to build in more opportunities for each student to follow the lines of inquiry that he most wonders at and longs for.

A last word on romance: because we woo on behalf of another, we are not drawing the students to ourselves, but to stand alongside us in admiring what we also love. Indeed, since one is being led into rather than away from the web of interconnected relations that make up the world, this romance is not a seduction (leading apart) but an induction (leading into). There must therefore be a limit to the cult of personality; the teacher must decrease that the goal may increase in the student's eyes. When the student's admiration is primarily focused on the teacher, the student is being led away from the pulsing richness of the matrix of interconnected knowledge that is truth. The true teacher points away from herself: "You think me so fascinating because you are seeing in me the reflection of what I love. I am not fascinating, as you suppose; I only love what is fascinating beyond words."

The Goal of Education: A Corrective

All this indicates that we must retreat from the temptation to think that worthy educational goals are best described in terms of material mastery or even sets of skills. The reason, to reiterate, is that it is rare for a student to fall in love with mastering a body of material or acquiring a set of skills. A student may be greatly devoted to a subject because of some instrumental use to which they can put it, but they will rarely fall in love. The type of person who can fall in love with such a utilitarian goal lacks the imagination to realize the moral vision of a good life.

This phrasing already recommends one type of alternative goal or one feature that alternative goals might be expected to have: they would present the material as of intrinsic rather than merely instrumental value. I say "merely instrumental" to avoid a certain sort of over-correction that villainizes instrumentality in any apologetic for the study of a discipline. It is not the case that we must make sure the student has no thought at all for the usefulness of a body of knowledge, but we must help them to see why it is attractive in its own right, for this will engender a deeper passion that grounds not just perseverance when study gets difficult, but even joy.

Education aims most properly not at acquiring knowledge but at wisdom. This will satisfy the criteria for love, for a student may fall in love with wisdom, and there is little more worthy to be loved than wisdom.

What does intrinsic value look like? This is a hard question for us in our present cultural moment when everything is relentlessly interrogated for its utility. But even if we cannot give an exhaustive account, we can begin someplace fairly uncontroversial: beauty is intrinsically valuable. This is easy to test: we are all drawn to and esteem it, yet it is difficult to say why we should. It is one thing to ask why we find something beautiful and another to ask why we like beautiful things. The former question can be answered by pointing to various features of the beauty in question; the latter feels a bit like being asked why one likes Christmas, chocolate, or one's kids. I've never needed a reason to like chocolate; it is just good. And here we have an interesting clue: I have defended my love of chocolate (or rather, refused to defend it) by referring to

another transcendental: goodness. In a healthy mind, the transcendental properties of being (goodness, truth, beauty) need no justification to be desired—they are simply desirable.

This is why I have placed so much emphasis on the imagination. Something must be perceived for it to be judged beautiful, and the imagination can offer non-physical images to the mind for consideration.

So, the goal must be beautiful, but this is not yet an account of the proper goal; it is merely a descriptor. What more can we say? If the goal of education is to present something that a student can fall in love with, and that can communicate meaning to not only the rest of the student's studies but indeed to the student's entire life, our proper goal will not be a list of materials or skills, but a *vision*. The nature of this vision will differ depending on whether one is thinking at the level of a particular class, a discipline, or education in general. However, each lower level must point to and connect with the higher levels.

The following account is meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive.

At the class level, the teacher might pose a problem arising from consideration of the material. For example, in a history class, the teacher might ask the students to consider, as a guiding question for the year, what it means for a government to defend its people, and how the duty to do so might look different in different circumstances. A Latin class might highlight the tension between form and function (adjectives used as nouns and adverbs, participles as verbal adjectives, etc.). A literature class might keep returning to the question of what true friendship is (from David and Jonathan in the Bible to Bilbo and Thorin Oakenshield in *The Hobbit*), or what makes for a good king (*Beowulf*, Mallory's Le *Morte d'Arthur, Hamlet, Henry V*). In all of these ways, what we are offering the students is a vision of how the material in question belongs to deep questions about being human in the world, forming societies, and resolving one's duties.

At the level of a discipline, the scope broadens and grows closer to the true end of education. While a course in history may have the goal of tracking a certain dynamic through time, the history program as a whole might aim to argue that human societies tend to perpetuate certain types of behaviors and structures, which take on varying significance in light of the specific nature of their contexts. The Latin program as a whole might aim at a grasp of the Roman way of viewing the world, focusing on what the language reveals about the Roman mindset and values. The literature program could be oriented to the expansion of models for how to be in the world, brought about by the imaginative inhabiting of other lives and other worlds. These broader disciplinary goals help guide the way the individual courses in the sequence are planned.

At the level of education, we get to the purest version of the goal, which we are trying to instantiate at every level and in every class. Simply put, education aims to offer the student a vision of how to be in the world. Because there is no one right way to be in the world, and each individual has a unique, unrepeatable, and finite range of possibilities for being in the world, this will involve understanding the world, understanding human persons, and understanding the self. Because an integrated vision for how to be in the world requires adequating these components (the world, human persons, and the self) to one another, it will require wisdom.

Indeed, this wisdom is the most proper goal of education because understanding the

world, other persons, and the self facilitates wisdom. This is another of the major claims I wish to make: **Education aims most properly not at acquiring knowledge but at wisdom.** This will satisfy the criteria for love, for a student may fall in love with wisdom, and there is little more worthy to be loved than wisdom.

Formation of the Soul: Moral Vision and Education

It will be noticed, with considerable discomfort by some, that the type of education I am recommending is not able to be separated from moral vision precisely because to understand one's place in the world is to come to an understanding of ways one ought to and ought not to interact with other objects in that world.

Modernist pedagogical sensibilities may wish to push back here in the following ways: it is not our responsibility, they would say, to champion particular moral systems or codes. Our job is simply to give the students the tools to think for themselves so that they may determine what moral code is best for them. Or, to take a different approach, the moral order and the order of knowledge are just different things. To try to unite them in this way is to commit a category error. Because they are distinct, not only may one teach the one without the other, but it is perhaps desirable because the teacher may be an expert in history without being an expert in morality.

We must vehemently reply to these and any such objections that they are naive and self-contradictory. Western culture has always considered knowledge and morality to be linked: the Bible treats the knowledge of good and evil as integral to trespass,[6] and Plato and Aristotle seem to largely agree that the good is such that if it is known, it will be done—evil is committed out of ignorance.[7] Indeed, to teach students that we can give them the tools for moral living without commending to them specific norms of moral living is already to recommend a certain range of systems of morality, namely a range in which different moral systems compete under reason, subject to reason's investigation, deliberation, and selection. This is to teach that reason is amoral, which, in fact, gives an absolute moral mandate to the operations of reason.

> If we have anything worth teaching, it cannot be covered in a few or a dozen years, but can only be approached through a lifetime of curiosity, imagination, wonder, and passion.

No, there is no education apart from the transmission of morals. Our students will hope and dream, love and hate, serve and rebel based on the truths we teach them. Education is a fearsome responsibility, and we will not do it well by deceiving ourselves about the nature of the task we have taken up. To teach is nothing less than to shape and form the soul– not absolutely, for the student also has agency in learning. They will take up what we offer

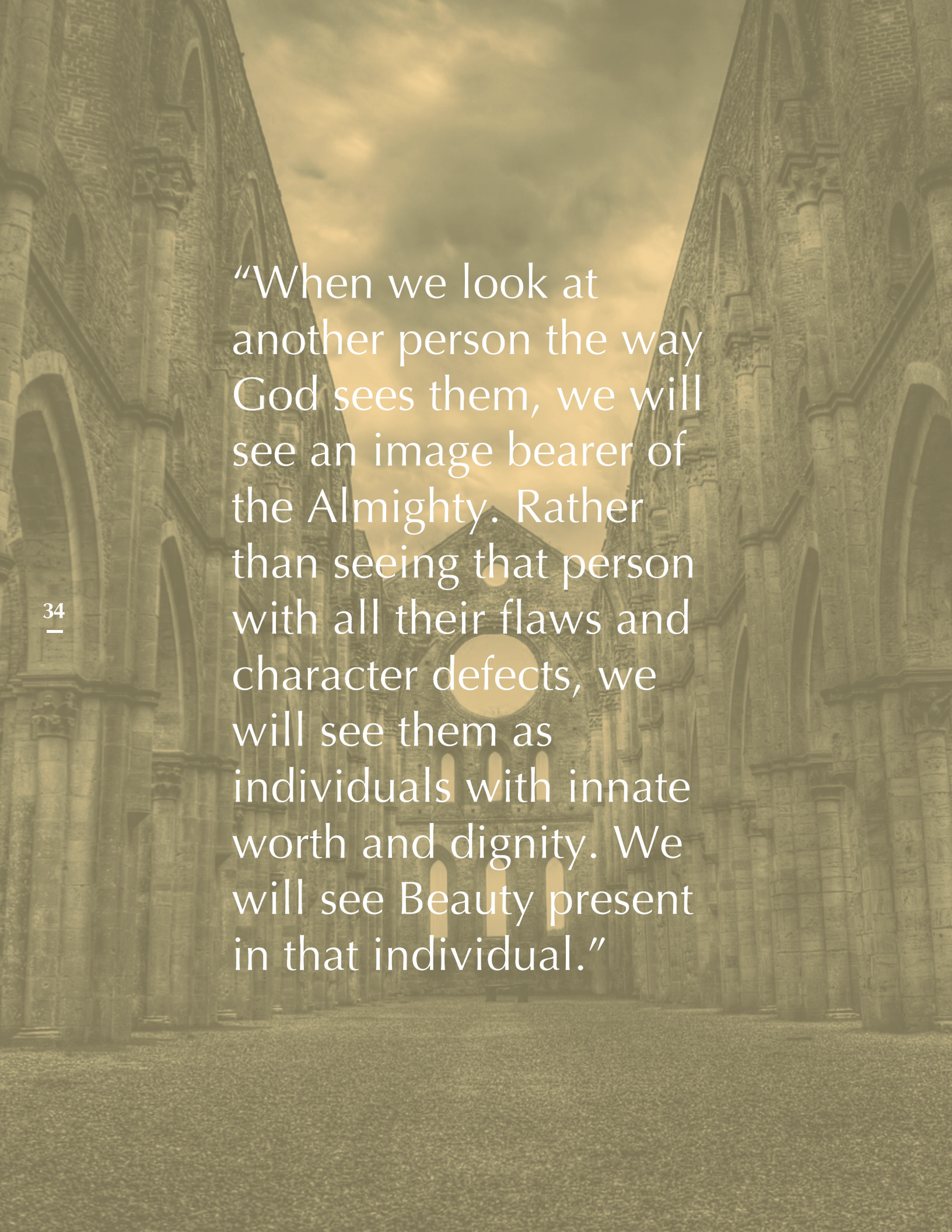
6. Genesis 2:17.

7. See for example Plato, *Protagoras* 352c, 358b-b.

more or less well and decide what to do with it to shape their identity. But make no mistake, we will leave our mark on the persons thus formed by our training.

Education is then the building up of students in wisdom using romance to commend to them a certain vision for how to be in the world. Such an approach to education is inherently transformative for both the students and the pedagogues. Good teaching cannot be reduced to techniques or strategies. You can revolutionize your classroom by flipping it, but you cannot revolutionize your students' souls in this way. The true art of the teacher is to take each student by the hand and lead her to stand at the edge of what they have always known to be possible: this is romance. As the student gazes out upon a landscape of possibilities previously unimagined, the teacher's art is to highlight key features in that landscape: this is casting a vision for the beautiful. This vision has to be received by the student's imagination if it is to become a catalyst for personal transformation, and so the teacher artfully displays this new land in ways that will best appeal to the student's desires and interests. And we must always keep in mind that this land we have brought her to is a land the student will ultimately explore without us, though we may travel with her for some time. If we have anything worth teaching, it cannot be covered in a few or a dozen years, but can only be approached through a lifetime of curiosity, imagination, wonder, and passion. To develop all this in the midst of a changing world and a changing self will require wisdom on the part of the student; to sow to this lifetime of change requires the exercise of the wisdom the teacher has built up through her own similar journey through the land of enchantment that is erudition.

Junius Johnson is a writer, teacher, speaker, independent scholar, and musician. His work focuses on beauty, imagination, and wonder, and how these are at play in the Christian and Classical intellectual traditions. He is the executive director of Junius Johnson Academics, through which he offers innovative classes for both children and adults that aim to ignite student hearts with wonder and intellectual rigor. An avid devotee of story, he is especially drawn to fantasy, science fiction, and young adult fiction. He performs professionally on the french horn and electric bass. He holds a BA from Oral Roberts University (English Lit), a MAR from Yale Divinity School (Historical Theology), and an MA, two MPhils, and a PhD (Philosophical Theology) from Yale University. He is the author of 5 books, including *The Father of Lights: A Theology of Beauty, On Teaching Fairy Stories,* and has authored volumes and been a contributing writer for the *Humanitas* series of history textbooks with Classical Academic Press. An engaging speaker and teacher, he is a frequent guest contributor to blogs and podcasts on faith and culture. He is co-host of The Classical Mind podcast and is a member of The Cultivating Project.



"When we look at another person the way God sees them, we will see an image bearer of the Almighty. Rather than seeing that person with all their flaws and character defects, we will see them as individuals with innate worth and dignity. We will see Beauty present in that individual."

Greater Hippias and the Objective Nature of Beauty[1]

Nick Duncan, *Ambrose School*

In 2008, Dirk van Keulen discovered a collection of handwritten journals comprising 1,100 pages at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. These journals were later established as the work of theologian and professor Herman Bavinck, written around 1895. What is interesting about these journals is that no one knew of their existence, and they had been sitting on the shelf, so to speak, for over 100 years. These journals were based on a class that Bavinck taught for several years: Reformed Ethics. After years of translating these journals from Bavinck's native Dutch to English, the first of three volumes were published in 2019 by scholar John Bolt.[2]

One of the brilliant observations that Bavinck makes in his *Ethics* is by starting out defending a correct view of ethics vs dogmatics (or doctrine). Bavinck highlights that doctrine and ethics go hand in hand and that trying to divorce one from the other can have devastating effects. For example, if one only knows doctrine, but never practices it, they can become pharisaical. On the flip side, if they focus on ethics apart from doctrine, then the daily practices of one's faith will ultimately be based on one's own standards of truth and correct conduct. This is folly. What is needed is a balance of both.

Simply, doctrine describes who God is, what God does, what His attributes are, and the relationship of God to mankind. Doctrine, then, consists of the objective truths of who God is and what God does. These dogmatic claims must inform our ethics. How mankind responds to or lives out these objective truths is ethics. To Bavinck, doctrines given to us by God are objective truths; mankind has no subjective say in what these truths are. However, we do have a subjective response to these truths. God sets the rules of religious worship and praxis. He determines what brings Him favor and what is correct worship. We respond by obedience. Whereas doctrine is something mankind passively receives, ethics is what we actively do in response to God's word.

Objective Reality and Subjective Response

Similarly, when dealing with the transcendentals of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, one must understand that these transcendentals have an objective existence. Their existence, however, is sourced from God. They are aspects of God's character and how He manifests Himself throughout eternity and in His creation. God is good. God is beautiful. God is true. These transcendentals are not created things because God has always, eternally, been good, beautiful, and true. That's why they are transcendentals. They transcend time and space and even creation itself. Because we can know the objective nature of who God is, we can also know that what God deems good *is* good. What God deems to be beautiful *is* beautiful. What God says *is* true.

Like the relationship between doctrine and ethics, mankind has no say in determining the

1. This article has been adapted from a chapter in an forthcoming book about teaching a theology of beauty.

2. For the full story of this remarkable discovery, see "Introduction to Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics*," *Reformed Ethics Volume One: Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity*, Dirk van Keulen and John Bolt, (Baker Academic, 2019), xxi.

objective nature of the transcendentals. Mankind does have a subjective response to them, however. Mankind can "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" or partake in wickedness. Mankind can call the beautiful, ugly, or the ugly, beautiful. And though mankind can have their own response to these transcendentals, their response in no way changes the nature of these transcendentals. What God deems beautiful will always be beautiful no matter what mankind says or thinks about it. This idea seems easy for mankind to grasp regarding Truth and Goodness. Most of all, mankind knows that truth is better than a lie. Most of mankind recognizes that the morality of good vs. evil is written onto their hearts.

Ultimately, I believe that our aesthetics can mature and that as we mature spiritually, we will also mature in our aesthetics. When we love what God loves, hate what God hates, and find beautiful what God deems to be beautiful, our human responses to God's objective beauty will give Him the glory.

Beauty is different for most people. The idea that beauty is in the eye of the beholder has become so ingrained into our modern Western psyche that even many Christians scoff at the idea of objective Beauty. That's why it's important to differentiate between a theology of Beauty proper and the discipline of Aesthetics. A theology of Beauty explores Beauty at an ontological level– what Beauty is, in and of itself. It looks at the transcendent nature of Beauty and Beauty's relationship to God and God's glory. Aesthetics comes from the Greek word for senses, which deals with what mankind can sense or experience on a subjective level. Aesthetics is how we receive or respond to beauty, but aesthetics cannot answer what beauty actually is. When we talk about *why* the Statue of David stops you dead in your tracks, we connect its majesty with transcendental beauty; when we consider our *response* of awe, we address aesthetics.

This is why teaching the dialogue of Plato called *Greater Hippias* or *Hippias Major* is so important in our classical schools. *Greater Hippias* is a dialogue that tries to answer, one way or another, the question, "What is Beauty in and of itself?" When thinking about Beauty and what Plato might say about it, the *Symposium* seems to be a natural dialogue to reference. However, I argue that the *Symposium*, when it does reflect on Beauty at all, is reflecting on mankind's subjective response to Beauty–aesthetics–and not what Beauty is in and of itself.[3] In essence, I believe *Greater Hippias* is trying to answer the objective nature of the platonic "Form" of Beauty, while the *Symposium* describes how mankind reacts to this Beauty. The former provides a rule or standard by which we measure all that we find beautiful; the latter considers how we are attracted to the beautiful and how we should respond in the presence of beauty.

3. There is an exception to this. In the *Symposium* there are a few lines where Diotima, through Socrates, describes what Beauty is. See lines 211a through 211b of the Symposium. It should be noted that this description of Beauty is what is determined through the whole of the *Greater Hippias* dialogue.

Greater Hippias

Greater Hippias starts with Socrates randomly meeting the great sophist Hippias. The meeting starts with some casual small talk, and Hippias eventually ends up talking about how successful he is in his sophistry and how much money he makes. Socrates's sarcasm (which Hippias, in his arrogance, never picks up on) informs the reader of Plato's disdain for sophists in general. Eventually, in their conversation, Hippias mentions the word *beauty*, which becomes the launching point for the rest of the dialogue.

Socrates claims that he once had an interlocutor asking him questions about beauty, to which he had no answer. As the reader, we know that there was no such interlocutor, but Socrates will now start a dialogue with Hippias about beauty. By having this fake interlocutor ask the hard questions, we will see Socrates being downright rude to Hippias under the guise of this interlocutor.

Socrates claims that his fictional opponent asked, "You, Socrates, pray how do you know what things are beautiful and what things are ugly? Come now, can you tell me what beauty is?"[4] As a follow-up to this question, Socrates confesses to Hippias that

> "In my incompetence, I was confounded and could find no proper answer to give him; so, leaving the company, I was filled with anger and reproaches against myself and promised myself that the first time I met with one of you wise men, I would listen to him and learn, and when I had mastered my lesson thoroughly, I would go back to my questioner and join battle with him again. So you see that you have come at a beautifully appropriate moment, and I ask you to teach me properly *what is beauty by itself*, answering my questions with the utmost precision you can attain. I do not want to be made to look a fool a second time by another cross-examination. Of course, you know perfectly, and it is only a scrap of your vast learning."[5]

What stems from this confession is a dialogue between Socrates and Hippias, wherein Socrates attempts to uncover the truth of what beauty actually is. When asking students how they may define Beauty, they rarely give a good, articulate answer. However, even the great Socrates couldn't even come up with an answer. I remind my students that they are in good company! Unlike Socrates or my students, Hippias arrogantly claims to know the nature of beauty and that no one can refute him. Socrates, however, thoroughly repudiates Hippias throughout the dialogue. But rather than get closer to a definition of beauty, the reader is presented with a list of things that cannot be.

> If beauty is relative and can be considered beautiful or ugly compared to other things, it can't be true beauty. Just as we can't describe a child's crayon scrawl as beauty if we would call it ugly next to a Van Gogh, we can't even equate the Van Gogh with beauty, for the painting fails to capture the slightest glimmer of heaven's brightness.

Socrates begins by claiming that beauty is a real existing thing. He asks Hippias whether the

4. Plato, "Greater Hippias," *The Dialogues of Plato*, 4th Ed., trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 286c.

5. Ibid., 286d-e. Emphasis added.

just are just because of the thing, Justice, and whether the wise are wise because of the thing, Wisdom. Hippias says yes. Socrates refers to the "Forms" of Justice and Wisdom, those transcendent, overarching Ideas in which all other just or wise things participate. When he asks whether it is "by justice … the just are just," he asks whether there is a Form of Justice, a transcendent, objective standard of justice. That is to say, when we claim that something is objectively just or unjust, we are appealing to

A theology of Beauty explores Beauty at an ontological level –what Beauty is, in and of itself. It looks at the transcendent nature of Beauty and Beauty's relationship to God and God's glory.

something "out there," a real Justice that gives meaning to our concept of justice; it is that standard by which we compare all other claims of justice. Socrates follows this by asking whether justice or wisdom are really existing things; again, Hippias claims that they are. If we claim that something is just or wise, then there must be something, a really existing something, that sets the ultimate standard. Both Hippias and Socrates agree that Justice and Wisdom are real things. Finally, Socrates asks if the beautiful is beautiful because of Beauty and if that is a real existing thing. Hippias agrees.[6]

Throughout the dialogue, Hippias will attempt to provide several definitions of Beauty. Socrates will cross-examine him each time and show that his answers are insufficient. Hippias's first definition of Beauty is a beautiful maiden. "…I will indeed tell him what is beauty, defying anyone to refute me. I assure you, Socrates, if I must speak the truth, that a beautiful maiden is a beauty."[7]

Socrates senses this is not a good answer and begins a chain of questions demonstrating why it is lacking.

> "SOCRATES: Now, Hippias, let me recapitulate to myself what you say. That man will question me something like this. Come, Socrates, give me an answer. Returning to your examples of beauty, tell me what must beauty by itself be in order to explain why we apply the word to them. And you want me to reply that if a beautiful maiden is a beauty, we have found why they are entitled to that name.
>
> HIPPIAS: Do you imagine that he will then try to refute you by proving that you have not mentioned a beautiful thing or that if he does attempt it, he will not look a fool?
>
> SOCRATES: I am sure, my worthy friend, that he will try to refute me. The event will show whether the attempt will make him look a fool. But allow me to tell you what he will say.
>
> HIPPIAS: Go on, then.
>
> SOCRATES: He will say, how delicious you are, Socrates! Is not a beautiful mare a beauty—the god himself praised mares in his oracle? How shall we reply, Hippias? Must we not say that the mare, too, or at least a beautiful one, is a beauty? We can hardly be so audacious as to deny that

6. Ibid., 287c-d.
7. Ibid., 287e.
8. Ibid., 288a-c

beauty is beautiful."[8]

Socrates provides a few more examples that support this line of thinking (e.g., a musical instrument or a cooking pot). In doing so, he argues that one can use the term "beautiful" to describe almost any good specimen object and perform the function for which it was created.

Aesthetics is how we receive or respond to beauty, but aesthetics cannot answer what beauty actually is.

However, the word "beautiful" is relative in these contexts. For example, he quotes a saying from Heraclitus that "the most beautiful of apes is ugly compared with the human race," and in the same way, the musical instrument or the pot will not be as beautiful as the maiden or the mare. Socrates shows that the subjective understanding of beauty–beauty is in the eye of the beholder–cannot adequately understand true beauty. There is an objectivity to true beauty that all things called "beautiful" are referencing. To claim that the maiden or the mare[9] or the pot or any other beautiful thing is beauty itself misses the real existence of Beauty.

For these things to be described as participating in the real existence of beauty, Beauty must be in a transcendent position over them. Socrates makes this exact point by comparing the beauty of a maiden to that of an immortal god. Would the maiden not be ugly in comparison? Hippias, a devout religious man, hurriedly agrees. A question now arises: how can something be both ugly and beautiful simultaneously? If beauty is relative and can be considered beautiful or ugly compared to other things, it can't be true beauty. Just as we can't describe a child's crayon scrawl as beauty if we would call it ugly next to a Van Gogh, we can't even equate the Van Gogh with beauty, for the painting fails to capture the slightest glimmer of heaven's brightness. True Beauty is always beautiful and never ugly. In other words, it can't be relative or subjective in nature. Hippias thus attempts another definition of beauty. He states,

> "HIPPIAS: You are looking, I think, for a reply ascribing to beauty such a nature that it will never appear ugly to anyone anywhere?
>
> SOCRATES: Exactly. You catch my meaning admirably.
>
> HIPPIAS: Now, please attend. If anyone can find any fault with what I say. I give you full leave to call me an imbecile.
>
> SOCRATES: I am on tenterhooks.
>
> HIPPIAS: Then I maintain that always. everywhere, and for every man, it is most beautiful to be rich, healthy, honored by the Greeks, to reach old age and, after burying his parents nobly, himself to be borne to the tomb with solemn ceremony by his own children."[10]

Hippias's definition here is what the Greeks called "*Eudaimonia*" or the "Good Life." In essence, Hippias states that the Good Life is what Beauty is. Socrates, however, rejects this definition outright. He declares that this definition is so absurd Hippias will become a laughingstock and be beaten with sticks. Not only would the answer deserve a beating, but any court of law would uphold the beating because it would be justified.[11] Socrates continues the mocking:

> "Are you incapable of remembering that I asked about beauty itself, that which gives the property of being beautiful to everything

9. Ibid., 289a

10. Ibid., 291d.

11. Athens was notorious for its frivolous lawsuits.

> to which it is added–to stone and wood, and man, and god, and every action and every branch of learning? I am asking, sir, what is beauty itself, and for all my shouting I cannot make you hear me. You might be a stone sitting beside me, a real millstone with neither ears nor brain."[12]

Socrates goes on to ask if true beauty is always beautiful. Beauty itself has already been asserted as something that really does exist. Socrates now claims that Beauty must always be beautiful—past, present, and future. To be true Beauty, it would not *become* Beauty; it must always have been Beauty. Furthermore, it can't *lose* its Beauty; it *will always be* Beauty. For Socrates, Beauty is eternal. Just as the purest light can bear no trace of darkness, this Beauty is so powerful that it cannot be other than what it is. It is transcendent and incorruptible. We cannot create or change it; it just *is*...

The Objective and Transcendental Nature of Beauty

For Socrates, true Beauty is objective. It *is* beautiful. It *is* the standard of beauty in all things. It *is* the Platonic Form of Beauty. This objective Beauty does not change, even when mankind's subjective perceptions do. Fundamentally, mankind's perception of beauty is irrelevant to Beauty's nature and existence. Mankind's perceptions are mutable and often incorrect; they are fallible. The subjective nature of mankind's perception of beauty must, therefore, be conformed to the objective reality of Beauty—not the other way around. "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" betrays an inherent arrogance; it claims that Beauty is not objective or transcendent but changeable and worldly; it says *my* perception of beauty takes precedence. Rather, for Socrates, the objective nature of Beauty is unchanging; it is mankind's subjective perception of beauty that can and should conform to the objective reality of Beauty.

If we claim that something is just or wise, then there must be something, a really existing something, that sets the ultimate standard.

Finally, on pages 296 and 297, Socrates recognizes that Beauty must also be good and beneficial otherwise, it is ugly. The dialogue glosses over this idea fairly quickly, but it may be the most important point. While Beauty must be good, it is not the Form of the Good; it is distinct yet closely related. In fact, he calls Beauty the cause and "father" of the Good. Interestingly, for Plato, the Good was the highest Form. If Beauty is the cause and father of the Good, then Plato's esteem of Beauty is high indeed. Most scholars believe that this dialogue was written before the *Republic*, where Plato firmly established that "the Good" is the source of all reality. Somewhere along Plato's philosophical journey, he must have concluded that the Good was paramount. However, we gleaned from *Greater Hippias* that Beauty was also in the lineup for consideration as the highest Form. Whether or not one agrees with Plato here, it is interesting to note that Beauty is recognized by Plato as not just a Form but one of the highest Forms.

In *Greater Hippias*, even though Plato could not find a definition of beauty, It is still very helpful

12. Ibid., 292d.

because it lays out with simple logic what Beauty cannot be—relative, subjective, in the eye of the beholder. While Beauty's definition remains elusive, this dialogue provides a glimpse of what true Beauty must be. First, beauty is a real existing thing "out there." Second, Beauty is objective and unchanging; human perception is subjective, fallible, and ignorant. Third, Beauty is eternal; it has always existed. Fourth, Beauty and the Good are somehow intertwined and interrelated.

As Bavinck illustrates with the relationship between dogmatics and ethics, there is a human response to objective truths and reality. Likewise, there will be a human response to Beauty. In the Christian life, there is room for individual taste in aesthetics. *Greater Hippias* doesn't address the individual tastes and subjective responses to objective Beauty, other than hinting that objective Beauty is the standard that should be used to form one's taste. At the school where I teach, there are several "Goals of a Graduate" that we believe we are helping our students achieve while under our care and guidance. One of these goals is for a student to have an "Established Aesthetic." However, it is hard to determine what that means. What is an established aesthetic? Who determines what is beautiful or not? Is this goal even possible?

These are great questions. However, I don't believe having an established aesthetic is as ethereal as some may claim. I believe that understanding the objective nature of Beauty can help us start the Herculean task of having an established aesthetic. By understanding that the standard for Beauty is beyond the individual, we can look outside ourselves and ultimately to God and what He states in Scripture as the starting point of forming our tastes and aesthetics. It requires humility and wisdom to determine what is truly beautiful or not, just like in our determination of truth and goodness. Our tastes are formed in *conjunction with* our desiring Truth and loving the Good, not *separate from* these other transcendentals. Ultimately, I believe that our aesthetics can mature and that as we mature spiritually, we will also mature in our aesthetics. When we love what God loves, hate what God hates, and find beautiful what God deems to be beautiful, our human responses to God's objective beauty will give Him the glory.

For example, when we look at another person the way God sees them, we will see an image bearer of the Almighty. Rather than seeing that person with all their flaws and character defects, we will see them as individuals with innate worth and dignity. We will see Beauty present in that individual. When we realize that we don't set the standard for Beauty, we simply respond (hopefully) in a way that glorifies God. Our aesthetic towards people has been formed and conformed to how God sees his people. Likewise, when our aesthetic towards all of God's creation has been formed and conformed to the will of God, that is what it means to have an established aesthetic. The search for Beauty is a worthy, life-changing exercise that will conform our hearts, minds, and souls to the Creator. The great thing about this search is that by the goodness of God, we don't have to search very far: Beauty is all around us.

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Credulitas and The Way Back to the Real

Devin O'Donnell, *Association of Classical Christian Schools*

On any given day of the school year, one might walk into the average classroom of an Humanities course situated in the Rhetoric school and find students gathered around a text. Surely, there would be a teacher present, either at the front of the room, on a stool, addressing students from behind a podium, or seated with them around a table, asking questions about the text *sotto voce*. If the text were written before the seventeenth or eighteenth century—be it from the Golden Age of Greece or from Late Antiquity in Carthage or at the high noon of Renaissance Italy—then the author of that text almost certainly shares an epistemology which the students reading do not. This is revealed quickly, especially when the text is the historical record of a medieval monk living in Anglo-Saxon England."

Consider an account in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*. In Book 2, Bede the Venerable recounts the conversion of King Eabald. The story is told almost in passing—a small vignette in the larger drama of the gospel going forth among the pagan Anglo-Saxons. But Britania has proven a hard field to plow. In Chapter VI, Laurentius, a rather exasperated bishop and fellow missionary, is frustrated with the uncouth barbarians. He is about to give up and quit England for good. Before leaving and following Mellitus and Justus back to Rome, Laurentius sleeps in the Church of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul. That night he is visited by St. Peter in a dream.

"In the dead of night," Bede tells us, "the blessed prince of the apostles appeared to him, and scourging him a long time with apostolical severity, asked of him, 'Why he would forsake the flock which he had committed to him? Or to what shepherds he would commit Christ's sheep that were in the midst of wolves?'" Peter continues to rebuke Laurentius, leaving the stripes on his back to remind him of his oath to shepherd the flock. Immediately after he wakes up, Larentius does what any medieval bishop would do next. He presents his wounds from St. Peter's chastisement to King Eabald, who, being a wise pagan, does not doubt the story but was instead "much frightened when he heard that the bishop had suffered so much at the hands of the apostle of Christ for his salvation." Thus, the culture was transformed by the virtue of *credulity*: "Then," writes Bede, "abjuring the worship of idols, and renouncing his unlawful marriage, [King Eabald] embraced the faith of Christ, and being baptized, promoted the affairs of the church to the utmost of his power."

A glorious story. In fact, Bede includes in his record the many miracles which took place in the conversion of Britain. This raises a few questions: What is the role of a proper historian? Does he record only those things that a materialist would accept? Or does he record even the mysterious things he cannot explain? In my experience, students seem convinced of the former. What interests students more than the conversion of a pagan kingdom is whether any of the miracles actually happened. They might ask, "Did that thing about Laurentius getting flogged in his sleep *really* happen?" Or, "Was it true that St. Alban's beheading caused a miraculous spring to flow from the ground?" It may even be that the

teacher approaches the text with similar suspicion, and if we are honest with ourselves, such questions immediately come to mind when we read such things. Whenever I have encountered skepticism in my students, convincing them otherwise—that miracles, dragons, fairies, and ghosts are real—is an experience not unlike an exorcism. Students do not ask such questions out of joy but out of skepticism. They often want teachers to comfort them with safe answers that affirm their jaded disbelief in even the possibility of such accounts.

Some students might possibly reach for a psychoanalytic explanation of things, that St. Peter was really a projection of Laurentius's own guilt or something along those lines. But this is tenuous, and most students maintain a default reluctance to accept any record that sounds too fantastical. Keep in mind that these students come from Christian families. They grow up reading in Scripture the unambiguous accounts of angels and demons and—if they pay attention to pre-World War II translations of the Bible—monsters and dragons and satyrs (and so on). They read in the Book of Acts how Paul's handkerchief, like some kind of talisman, mysteriously becomes a relic to heal the infirmities of those who touch it. And yet, upon hearing similar claims in other texts, these 15-year-old students are suddenly transformed into 55-year-old materialists, looking at events reported from the past with a sideways glance, their squinted eyes jaundiced with incredulity.

And in the end it may be sufficient for students to give a mild assent to the plausibility of Bede's account. This may be enough for the seed of learning to flourish. But we are not in the business of chronological snobbery. The goal for the instructor is not to make students *believe* in whatever fantastical claim comes from old books simply on the basis that it is old. The goal for classical educators is to preserve the small candle of *possibility* that the winds of modern skepticism would otherwise blow out. Whether it is Bede's account of Laurentius or Herodotus's camel-killing ants, Plato's Atlantis, or Monmouth's Arthur, the point is not to *state*, "This could not happen," but to *ask*, "Why couldn't this happen?"

The Discarded Virtue of Learning

Old books are not easily thrown down. They bear the weight of glory. As the reader interprets this kind of text, the text interprets the reader. What does this mean? For one thing, it means that if we read books that come before the seventeenth century, we should not be surprised when a kind of functional atheism is revealed. But materialism is neither Christian nor classical.[1] This disposition constitutes a poor study of history. The most important parts of history, G. K. Chesterton argued, are the strange, the mysterious, the miraculous elements that often go overlooked by the modern historian, who looks to physical causes as the more authentic and authoritative explanation.

For instance, the modern historian might find the legends of Arthur, however charming they might sound, to be silly and dubious historical evidence. Instead, "The nineteenth-century historians went on the curious principle of dismissing all people of whom tales are told and concentrating upon people of whom nothing is told."[2] But while modern progressives fuss over whether "legend" can be validated as historically reliable, Chesterton argues that "credulity is certainly much more sane than incredulity."[3] It is nothing more than common sense. "That fictitious stories are told about a person is, nine times out of

1. And before any pedant wants to clarify the record with *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius is not an atheist, nor is he a *modern* materialist. For him, physical things were not merely matter.

2. G. K. Chesterton, *A Short History of England*, from the 1917 Chatto & Windus Edition (Ægypan Press: La Vergne, TN: 2011) 18.

3. For another defense of legend and traditional folk talk, see also his "Prefatory Note" in *The Ballad of the White Horse.*

ten, extremely good evidence that there was somebody to tell them about." A "thoughtless skepticism" is the only other alternative. "I do not understand," says Chesterton, "the attitude which holds that there was an Ark and a man named Noah, but cannot believe in the existence of Noah's Ark."[4]

It may be easy to blame modern historians who seek to diminish or debunk the almost fairytale-like events on which the course of history often turns. But students and teachers in classical Christian schools are functionally not much different. Perhaps the greatest threat to handing on a classical Christian paideia is the besetting sin of our secular world: unbelief. For those who can no longer wonder at a God who can break into the cosmos in such a way as to allow for St. Alban's executioner to miraculously fall dead, the ability to learn is lost. The student is not benefited by his incredulity. The student is in no way advantaged by his skepticism. Faith is the basis of knowledge. How can a student gain knowledge if he does not first believe?

In *The Discarded Image*, C. S. Lewis makes this point almost in passing. Credulity, he argues, must come first. It is an idea of massive consequence and one that is not only the byproduct of an older Christian worldview. In a passage dealing with Plato's *Timaeus*, Lewis comments on the way in which Plato enjoins his readers to accept the claims of past authors, which seems to mark a classical standard for "reception" of a text.[5] The context for this passage is about the "God who created the gods," and all the genealogies of the gods that follow. Plato writes,

> 'We must accept what was said about them by our ancestors who, according to their own account, were actually their descendants. Surely they must have been well informed about their own progenitors! And who could disbelieve the children of gods?'[6]

Lewis takes this opportunity to hammer the point home. "By telling us to believe our forebears," writes Lewis, "Plato is reminding us that *credulitas* must precede all instruction."[7] If we have human virtues and theological virtues, then *credulitas* is what we might call an educational or intellectual virtue.[8] This does not mean that the student mustn't learn to ask questions. Rather, it means that the student must learn to ask the *right* questions. Instead of asking, "Is that story real?" Students would do better to ask themselves, "Why should such a story not be real?" Why couldn't St. Peter scourge a faltering bishop in the middle of his sleep? For all their sins, men in the ancient and medieval periods seemed to possess a more believing posture of the heart and mind, which allowed them to learn, imagine, and create.

On Being Taken In

Owen Barfield once remarked on what he called C. S. Lewis' great "presence of mind," that "somehow what he thought about everything was secretly present in what he said about anything."[9] Alan Jacobs believes Barfield's observation was rooted in something deeper: "that Lewis's mind was above all characterized by a willingness to be enchanted and that it was this openness to enchantment that held together the various

4. Chesterton, *A Short History of England*, 19.

5. This is a jab at Critical Theory. I am, of course, contrasting this older and more charitable form of "text reception" with the modern interpretative positions of Critical Theory.

6. C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 53.

7. Ibid.

8. The word "intellectual" is technical here. I am referring to the medieval distinction between two types of mental activity: the reasoning labor of the "ratio" and the leisured, open perception of the "intellectus." For additional treatment of these terms, see Joseph Peiper's *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*.

9. Owen Barfield, *Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis*, ed. G.B. Tennyson (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 22.

strands of his life." It is no surprise, then, that Lewis seems to defend *credulitas* in narrative form as well, particularly upon initiation into the land of Narnia. When Peter and Susan first hear of Lucy's experience in that country, they do not believe her. Professor Digory Kirke later reproaches them for their incredulity, for their small and cramped vision of the world, and for their *illogical* disbelief in their sister's report. Similarly, Eustace must also learn to see the universe with new eyes. Ramandu admonishes Eustance that even in his "real" world, stars are more than the mere composition of collected flaming gas.[10] There is a difference here: on the one hand, we have an analytic knowledge that is limited by our attention to only physical things; on the other, we have wonder, which is open and calibrated rightly enough to behold those things beyond our most immediate senses.[11]

But what if Lucy were deceived? What if she were wrong about the wardrobe? We moderns are terribly afraid of being "taken in" by anything that could be untrue. We would rather play the part of cool-headed Theseus, "I never may believe these antique fables, nor these fairy toys."[12] Skepticism might sound wise and knowing and perfectly fitting for the Christian since it is our duty to care about the truth. But Christians educating in the modern world face a different problem. We are not in danger of too readily believing in what Michael S. Heiser calls "The Unseen Realm."[13] *Whether* a supernatural reality exists is an incoherent inquiry. To be Christian necessarily means one accepts and believes in a Reality that comprises "all things visible and invisible."[14] Where we ought to aim our skepticism instead is at the atheistic fables of materialism and the cunning myths of Marx, which are far more corrosive than the old pagan myths. In the modern stories, the gods are dead, and the world beyond a lie. The modern stories tell us that man was not made in God's image "a little lower than the angels" yet "crowned with glory and honor" but that "his grandfather was a chimpanzee and his father a wild man of the woods, caught by hunters and tamed into something like intelligence."[15] The Museum of Natural History in Washington, D. C. is a monument to this effect, complete with the epic hymnody of Australopithecus and Cro-Magnon man.

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Note, credulity is present in any case. It is the old "not *whether* but *which*" situation: which account of the world is closer to Reality, the modern skeptic or the medieval mystic? An unfair choice, perhaps, but it does raise the questions about the orientation

10. C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (San Francisco: HarperTrophy, 1998) 209.

11. See the work of The neuroscientist and philosopher Iain Migilcrest (*The Master and His Emissary, The Matter With Things*, etc.) for a treatment on the way in which "attention" affects our ability to properly grasp reality. In his lecture on "The Mystery of Consciousness," Migilcrist notes that even our grasp of matter is weak. "Materialists," he argues, "are not people who overvalue matter; they're people who undervalue matter." Accessed 15 Nov. 2024: https://youtu.be/3V3_Y_FuMYk?si=dfgWbMbUvzoOTqLR.

12. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Vi.3-5.

13. See *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* by Michael S. Heiser (Lexham Press, 2015).

14. *The Nicene Creed.*

15. G. K. Chesterton, *A Short History of England*, 20.

of our epistemology: Upon what foundation does our understanding rest? What do we really want to believe about the world? In his masterful work *Charles Dickens*, Chesterton puts it this way:

> The fierce poet of the Middle Ages wrote, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here," over the gates of the lower world. The emancipated poets of today have written it over the gates of this world. But if we are to understand the story that follows, we must erase that apocalyptic writing, if only for an hour. We must recreate the faith of our fathers, if only as an artistic atmosphere. If, then, you are a pessimist, in reading this story, forego for a little the pleasures of pessimism. Dream for one mad moment that the grass is green. Unlearn that sinister learning that you think so clear; deny that deadly knowledge that you think you know. Surrender the very flower of your culture; give up the very jewel of your pride; abandon hopelessness, all ye who enter here.[16]

It would seem credulity requires not only a charitable epistemology but some amount of courage as well. It is easier to be a skeptic, and it is often preferable to the prospect of being made a gullible fool. Chesterton reminds us, "His soul will never starve for exploits or excitements who is wise enough to be made a fool of." Consider how a bit of marshwigglian wisdom can allay the fear of being "taken in" by stories of a cosmos haunted by the numinous and stalked by the Transcendent.

Towards the climax of *The Silver Chair*, Puddleglum summons up the courage to break the spell of the Witch, who has told them that there is no outside world—no sun, no moon, and nothing called "Overland":

> Suppose we have only dreamed, or made up, all those things—trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours is the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And that's a funny thing when you come to think of it. We're just babies making up a game if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world that licks your real-world hollow. That's why I'm going to stand by the play-world. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can, even if there isn't any Narnia.[17]

Behold the stubborn *credulitas* of Puddleglum. Although it may make some uncomfortable, Lewis gives us a daring model of how credulity is a kind of talisman against philosophical naturalism, a spell that still hangs in the air of modern life like a fog.

As for the fear of being taken in, keep in mind the warning of stricter judgment comes against those who deceive rather than against those who believe. There perhaps are worse things than being bamboozled. In his chapter on "Pickwick" in *Charles Dickens*, Chesterton defends even the gullible, arguing that the believing man is the one who gets the most out of life. The credulous are those who possess that "god-like gullibility, which is the key to all adventures."[18] For those who avoid being "taken in," however, to them is given the reward of a dull life. But "To be taken in everywhere," writes Chesterton, "is to see the inside of everything. It is the hospitality of

16. G. K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens* (Cornwall, UK: House of Stratus, 2001) 10.

17. C. S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair* (San Francisco: HarperTrophy, 1998) 181-182.

18. G.K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens*, 42.

circumstance. With torches and trumpets, like a guest, the greenhorn is taken in by Life. And the skeptic is cast out by it."

The Higher Naiveté

Consider a final application of this principle for classical educators. In a lecture on the Dark Ages of Greece, former Yale professor Donald Kagan surveys the ways in which the "critical" schools of the eighteenth century affected a significant change in the epistemological attitude towards the past:

> [I]f you look at people, say an Englishman writing about Ancient Greece in the late eighteenth century, they tell the story of the early days based upon the legends as though the legends were reliable information to some degree. When you get to say the middle of the nineteenth century and the work of the great English historian of Ancient Greece, George Grote, he begins his story in 776 with the Olympic Games. He does tell you all about the legends first, but he puts them aside and says they're just legends—now let's talk history, and he doesn't begin that until the eighth century B.C. And so there is this critical school that says, "I won't believe anything unless it is proven to me." At the other extreme, there's me, the most gullible historian imaginable. My principle is this. I believe anything written in ancient Latin or Greek unless I can't. Now, things that prevent me from believing what I read are that they are internally contradictory, or what they say is impossible, or different ones contradict each other, and they can't both be right. So, in those cases I abandon the ancient evidence. Otherwise, you've got to convince me that they're not true.[19]

Note how Kagan does not shy away from playing the "gullible" historian but wears it almost as a badge of honor. And to make his points further he cites the case study of Heinrich Schliemann and his discovery of ancient Troy.[20]

Schliemann, the then unlearned businessman, did not merely believe *in* Homer as the single poet behind *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. He also believed in the gods and in the events of the Homeric epics, and at a time when the academic world relegated such things to the fictions of deluded poets or to the clever tricks of national sophistry. Almost no scholar at the time took Schliemann's claims seriously. Then he found Troy, along with Helen's jewelry and the death "Mask of Agamemnon." Although Kagan tempers his view of Schliemann's discoveries, he nevertheless admits that it has forced him to arrive at an epistemological position he calls the "Higher Naiveté." We come to the Higher Naiveté by a combination of two virtues: serious study and scholastic humility. Kagan explains:

> Now, you might think of this as, indeed, gullible. . . . I like to claim this approach, the position of scholarship, which we call the higher naiveté. The way this works is, that you start out, you don't know anything, and you're naïve. You believe everything. Next, you get a college education and you don't believe anything, and then you reach the level of wisdom, the higher naiveté, and you know what to believe even though you can't prove it. . . . I'm a practitioner of

19. Donald Kagan, "Introduction to Ancient Greek History - Lecture 3 - The Dark Ages," Open Yale Courses, Accessed 19 Nov. 2024, https://oyc.yale.edu/classics/clcv-205/lecture-3.

20. Heinrich Schliemann, *Troy and its Remains: A Narrative of Researches and Discoveries Made on the site of Ilium, and in the Trojan Plain*, (London: J. Murray Publishers, 1875).

> the higher naiveté. So, I think the way to deal with legends is to regard them as different from essentially sophisticated historical statements, but as possibly deriving from facts, which have obviously been distorted and misunderstood, misused, and so on. But it would be reckless, it seems to me, to just put them aside and not ask yourself the question, 'Can there be something believable at the root of this?"

The "Higher Naiveté" is but the seed of full-fledged belief. Here Kagan puts skepticism in its proper place, and thus, the full revolution of modern learning has been achieved. To borrow Chesterton's mighty image in *Orthodoxy*, the student goes out in search of giants in his primary education; in college, however, he is told giants don't exist; later, he finds at the return of his long scholarly pilgrimage that he was living on the grandest of all giants the entire time. But how much better to simply begin with the educational virtue of *credulitas*, and not end with it? It seems that modern people are doomed to rediscover as true and good and beautiful those things that were told to us in the nursery.

God has made the world, and Solomon tells us that He has made it with glorious matters hidden and "concealed" within. God has also made the universe with the expectation that man, as a king, will "search out a matter."[21] We might even say that man is given the burden and blessing of searching out matter itself for the truth behind the physical appearance. In this sense, the example of Henry Schliemann offers a fitting object lesson for all classical educators: learning is a kind of treasure hunt. Classical Christian education is an excavation of the past, a labor that begins not with skepticism but with credulity. For the claims of the past will necessarily collide with the claims of the modern mind. And so our task as classical educators in the modern world is to suspend our disbelief—to, as Chesterton says, "Unlearn that sinister learning that you think so clear; deny that deadly knowledge that you think you know."

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21. Proverbs 25:2

* Portions of this essay were previously published by this author on the CiRCE Institute Blog.

“The appearance of beauty must be reconciled with the reality of moral corruption. In the process, the transcendent nature of true Beauty is confirmed as not mere ornamental appearance, but as linked fundamentally to virtue and faithfulness.”

Lines of Life: Transcendent Beauty in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*

Robert Kirkendall, *St. Thomas More Academy*

In an era when love, art, family, and even life itself are threatened by the shifting storms of institutionalized narcissism and personal preference, defenders of the objective, transcendent order of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness will find in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, perhaps surprising allies. The Renaissance sonnet tradition of Francesco Petrarcha, Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, and others includes over-wrought overtures of ornately hyperbolic love, focusing mostly on erotic (unrequited) affection for the Beloved. But Shakespeare's *Sonnets* compound the oddities of this poetic tradition by praising the Beloved and his beauty and calling the Beloved to heed the transcendent Beauty of virtuous family life.

The speaker in the *Sonnets*, or the Lover, is a man who is addressing his Beloved, a younger and beautiful man. In the earlier sonnets, the older man uses desperate rhetorical gymnastics to persuade the beautiful young man that he should preserve his beauty by having a child. The younger man, referred to as the "better spirit," is contrasted with the "worser spirit," an anonymous female who poses an unclear problem for the two men. Eventually, the speaker is betrayed by the young man, who, in some way, involves the mistress or wife of the older man. The later sonnets are preoccupied with the Lover coping with the Beloved's immorality, betrayal, and distance, but the sequence climaxes in what scholars term "Friendship Triumphant," a Shakespearean twist on the old theme of "Love Triumphant," wherein the speaker maintains his filial love despite the Beloved's infelicities.[1] What unites this strange drama is its focus on beauty as immanent and transcendent, visible and invisible, mutable and eternal. This is part of what makes the sonnets so odd: they are not expressions of homoerotic love (to the chagrin of contemporary *literati*) but are exhortations from an older man to a younger man, encouraging the younger to settle down, marry a woman, and have a family. Read as a whole, Shakespeare's *Sonnets* recommend family life, children, and virtue as integral to the transcendent nature of Beauty. Within the tradition of highly-wrought love poetry, Shakespeare contrives a setting for a love deeper than infatuation and a beauty deeper than skin.

The early sonnets explore diffuse metaphors and rhetoric but retain one bottom line: procreate. The older man exhorts the younger man to have children and goes to great lengths to accuse the young man of narcissism for not doing so. Sonnet XVII is a particularly amusing example:

> Who will believe my verse in time to come,
> If it were filled with your most high deserts?
> Though yet, heaven knows, it is but as a tomb
> Which hides your life and shows not half your parts.
> If I could write the beauty of your eyes,

1. Israel Gollancz, "Preface" to *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1902), xii-ix.

And in fresh numbers number all your graces,
The age to come would say 'This poet lies;
Such heavenly touches ne'er touched earthly faces.'
So should my papers, yellowed with their age,
Be scorned, like old men of less truth than tongue,
And your true rights be termed a poet's rage
And stretched meter of an antique song:
But were some child of yours alive that time,
You should live twice–in it and in my rhyme.[2]

Poetry itself, the "rhyme," is one method for preserving and proclaiming the beauty of the Beloved. But Shakespeare's *Sonnets* always emphasize literal procreation, "some child of yours," as a more effective and permanent method for preserving beauty, partly because the young man would thus wed physical beauty to moral beauty: virtuous love and family life.

So, the speaker's odd use of imagery about physical beauty is instrumental to his persuasive purpose about child-bearing. The young man is selfish and vain, so he will only consider family life (the speaker seems to reason) if he sees it as a way to keep his youthful gorgeousness around. But there is an even deeper poetic structure: it is not just that life-begetting might pass on beauty, but that beauty-begetting might pass on life. The willful act of bearing children, passing on the torch of generations, and saying yes to the demands of parenting is itself a participation in transcendent Beauty, the glory of a good moral life manifested in physical beauty. At least, the poetic persona of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* seems to think so.

This is part of what makes the sonnets so odd: they are not expressions of homoerotic love but are exhortations from an older man to a younger man, encouraging the younger to settle down, marry a woman, and have a family.

To see transcendent Beauty in the *Sonnets*, one must establish a richer definition of Beauty than modern culture offers. For ancient philosophers and classic Christian thinkers, Beauty is not the preference or whim of the beholder's eyes, although it is essentially related to sight. Beauty is something more like observing the glory of moral order in the visible and invisible world. Ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius used a musical word, "harmony," to describe how good moral choices should align with the universal moral order (*chungyung*). In Plato's Greek philosophical work *Phaedrus*, Socrates argues that someone who is head-over-heels in love is not ignoble. Rather, his desire for physical beauty is a spiritual knee-jerk to the soul's memory of invisible, transcendent Beauty. The later Greek philosopher Plotinus picked up this Platonic notion of an invisible beauty behind visible beauty, suggesting that Beauty is the soul's vision of what is most deeply real. The soul, caught under a "spell of love" for the "splendor" of ultimate reality, suffers "wonderment and a delicious trouble" whenever visible beauty is perceived because it reminds the soul of transcendent Beauty.

2. The Oxford *Shakespeare: Complete Sonnets and Poems,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 415.

In this classical sense, recognizing Beauty is akin to pausing in awe over the communicability, or knowability, of reality. It is a wonder that things are ordered to one knowing them. In Plotinus's definition, it is a recognition of that which is "essentially symmetrical, patterned," and thus designed to be known. While Plotinus tends to denigrate the body in favor of the bodiless realm of Idea and Spirit, he nonetheless lays the groundwork for the Christian idea of a transcendent God, who St. Augustine literally refers to as "Beauty" in his famous lament in Book X of *The Confessions*: "Late have I loved you, Beauty, so ancient and so new, late have I loved you!"[3]

20th-century philosopher Jacques Maritain, in his book *Art and Scholasticism*, distills how Christian theologians perfected classical thought on Beauty:

> If beauty delights the intellect, it is because it is essentially a certain excellence or perfection in the proportion of things to the intellect. Hence the three conditions St. Thomas [Aquinas] assigned to beauty: *integrity*, because intellect is pleased in fullness of being; *proportion*, because the intellect is pleased in order and unity; finally, and above all, *radiance* or *clarity*, because the intellect is pleased in light and intelligibility. A certain splendor is, in fact, according to all the ancients, the essential characteristic of beauty… it is a splendor of intelligibility: *splendor veri* [splendor of truth], said the Platonists; *splendor ordinis* [splendor of order], said St. Augustine, adding that "unity is the form of all beauty"; sple*ndor formae* [splendor of form], said St. Thomas…[4]

Love and Order bind the transcendentals of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness. Beauty, in particular, is the delight in realizing that one can know something that was made to be known. It is the "splendor of the form on the proportioned parts of matter," wherein the intellect delights in its own act of knowing something intelligible, recognizing what St. Augustine, in the *City of God*, calls the *ordo amoris* (order of love) behind all things. Physical beauty is a sign of invisible Beauty, made out of God's eternal love, for man to intelligently participate in.

Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are best understood within this classical and Christian stream of the transcendentals; outside of this stream, readers of the *Sonnets* descend quickly into ideological mud-slinging, closing their eyes and ears after scooping up a few phrases or poems out of context. Rather, the *Sonnets* as a whole bear witness to Beauty, Goodness, and Truth as objective partners with Life and Love.

The early sonnets, especially, present procreation as a participation in the objective moral order of Beauty, and thus most true for the young man, in the sense of faithful family life. Sonnet I declares that "fairest creatures" have a kind of moral obligation to "increase," to provide a "tender heir," so that "beauty's rose might never die." The poem goes on to describe how the Beloved young man, as one who is supremely beautiful, is, in fact, viciously selfish for not desiring procreation but is "contracted to [his] own bright eyes… making a famine where abundance lies." The young man is obsessed with his own beauty, reluctant to offer it to the world in the form of a child. He must "Pity the world, or else this glutton be, / To eat the world's due by the grave and thee." To the Lover, the speaker, this moral obligation is more than forceful rhetoric; "beauty's rose" is at stake, which suggests that physical offspring are the visible manifestation of a deeper beauty that is not merely ornamental but is mysteriously ever-present even as roses, creatures, and children come and go.[5]

3. Saint Augustine of Hippo, *The Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B., ed. David Vincent Meconi, S.J. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press Critical Editions), 296.

4. Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), 24.

Beauty is not the preference or whim of the beholder's eyes, although it is essentially related to sight. Beauty is something more like observing the glory of moral order in the visible and invisible world.

Sonnets II, III, IV, V, and VIII maintain this argument, urging the young man to procreate. Sonnet II argues that the young man will merit the highest praise for "beauty's use" in a "fair child," who shall "sum [his] count, and make [his] old excuse" when he is old. Sonnet III develops this multi-generational vision of beauty's "succession" by describing how the beloved is his "mother's glass" who reflects "the lovely April of her prime." If the young man procreates "through windows of thine age," he shall see, "Despite the wrinkles, this thy golden time." The speaker challenges the young man's narcissism: "For where is she so fair whose unear'd womb / Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry? / Or who is he so fond will be the tomb / Of his self-love to stop posterity?" Amongst such eligible bachelorettes, and in light of the great good of posterity, the speaker thinks the young man is without excuse.[6]

Sonnet IV explores why this makes sense, echoing Sonnet I's description of the Beloved's selfishness in refusing to procreate, calling it a rebellion against Nature: "Nature's bequest gives nothing but doth lend, / And being frank, she lends to those are free: / Then, beauteous niggard, why dost thou abuse / The bounteous largess given thee to give?" The speaker goes on to accuse the Beloved of being a "Profitless usurer," who uses up the "sum" of his beauty in himself but cannot "live" by giving out beauty in the form of a child. The poet here defines beauty as what theologians call a "spiritual good," a gift designed to be given that paradoxically increases the more it is given away and decreases the more it is kept, unlike physical goods that simply run out. So, the young man's intransigent singleness is spiritual decay, a failure to "live" the natural design of Beauty in family life, which increases the more it is given away.[7]

Sonnet V diverges from the procreation rhetoric but reveals that the poet considers beauty a spiritual good, a transcendent reality. It laments how the "tyrant" time leads to summer's beauty into "hideous winter," and there makes beauty a "liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass." Although in icy "bareness everywhere," it is merely "beauty's effect," not Beauty itself, that is unseen, since "flowers distilled, though they with winter meet / Leese but their show; their substance still lives sweet." Beauty is, in fact, something that never leaves the world but only appears to be gone in its physical manifestation while time cycles creatures through seasons, birth, youth, age, and death. Beauty is merely "o'er-snowed;" its "substance still lives sweet."[8]

In subsequent sonnets, the poet explodes into even more erratic metaphors and rhetorical conceits to persuade the beloved of the good of procreation. Sonnet VIII employs a musical metaphor to portray the beauty, harmony, and natural good of family life:

> Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?

5. Oxford Shakespeare, 383.

6. Ibid., 385.

7. Ibid., 389.

8. Ibid., 391.

Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy:
Why lov'st thou that which thou receiv'st not gladly,
Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy?
If the true concord of well-tunèd sounds
By unions married, do offend thine ear,
They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear.
Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,
Strikes each in each by mutual ordering;
Resembling sire and child and happy mother,
Who, all in one, one pleasing note do sing:
Whose speechless song being many, seeming one,
Sings this to thee, 'Thou single wilt prove none.'[9]

The poet describes a lute, a guitar-like Renaissance instrument with eight pairs of strings, each pair tuned to a single note (except one string, the highest note). Thus, a single string is a "sweet husband to another" string, which is the "happy mother" that creates in a pair "one pleasing note" or "child." The "mutual ordering" of paired lute strings toning a single note is compared to the "mutual ordering" of family life, which sings to the young man his need to cease being a bachelor.

For the Lover, the family is the moral order of beauty's propagation in the world, which the young man is called to participate in. Family life itself is beautiful, manifesting physical beauty through offspring. Family life is the "substance" that "still lives sweet" and gives rise to new spring times of physical beauty when children are born. Across the sonnets, especially XIII and XIV, truth is qualified as fidelity, constancy, and commitment—a kind of love praised throughout Shakespeare's dramatic *corpus*—and it thrives with "beauty" so long as they are mutually ordered to the good of procreation.

Shakespeare weaves the transcendentals into love language at once conventional and *Avant-garde* in the Renaissance sonnet tradition. The Beloved's beauty receives high praise, and the poems are self-described as preserving that beauty. For Shakespeare, this beauty is threatened by the "bloody tyrant Time," who will one day sweep it away in death and decay. In a multi-faceted phrase, Sonnet XVI proposes the "lines of life that life repair" as a remedy. The poems do not only describe the beauty of the Beloved, but are "lines of life" in that they seek to "repair" the decaying "life" of the Beloved's beauty by persuading him to procreate. In a double sense, the young man is also called to enter into the "lines of life," the generational "line" of child-bearing, by having a family.[10]

The poet imagines the artifice of his poems, "time's pencil or my pupil pen," as partly successful in fighting against time. But child-bearing is the only lasting solution: "To give yourself away keeps yourself still, / And you must live, drawn by your own sweet skill." This deft reference to intercourse is not promoting unchastity; it suggests giving away the self as a gift to mother and potential child, denying the self to find true self in a wider vista of love. There are two meanings here. The young man will literally see his beauty in his child. He will also experience the beauty of selflessness, breaking out of his narcissism and living for the sake of others. Giving oneself to another in matrimony and parenting is to participate in God's endless spiritual economy, what St. Pope John Paul II called a "hermeneutics of the gift," by which we interpret our bodies as signs of our capacity to be freely given gifts of love, rightly ordered.[11] Shakespeare shares in this

9. Ibid., 397.

10. Ibid., 413.

vision flowing from Genesis 2 and 3, ratified by Jesus in Matthew 19, and elaborated by St. Paul in Ephesians 3: humans are made, in their whole body-soul make-up, to be self-sacrificing gifts to others, the highest expression of which is God's institution of marriage as life-long, monogamous fidelity between one man and one woman.

These rich layers of Shakespeare's marital meaning continue in the famous Sonnet XVIII, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" The poet decrees, "thy eternal summer shall not fade … when in eternal lines to time thou grow'st." On one level, the poems are the "eternal lines" containing the "eternal summer" of the Beloved's beauty. But the final couplet adds more: "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee." On the literal level, "this" stands for "eternal summer" or "eternal lines," which refers to the poetry itself. However, "this" is also something that "gives life," which cannot be just poetry, strictly speaking. It includes all that the poems bear witness to: the moral good and selfless virtue of family life and the transcendent order of Beauty that one participates in when choosing to bring new life into the world, which in turn brings new spiritual life through the generous donation of one's self for another—most truly an "eternal summer" of "eternal lines."[12]

As the sequence progresses, Shakespeare's *Sonnets* deepen allusions to Beauty, Truth, and Goodness despite a dark turn. Somewhere around Sonnet XLII, the Beloved commits a horrible deed that somehow betrays the Lover. This betrayal is the source of much agony for the Lover, who must reconcile his immense love with the Beloved's betrayal. He must also reconcile the appearance of beauty with the reality of moral corruption. In the process, the transcendent nature of true Beauty is confirmed as not mere ornamental appearance but as linked fundamentally to virtue and faithfulness. Sonnet LIII introduces the young man's "external grace" in contrast to his immense lack of a "constant heart." Sonnet LIV seeks to find true beauty beneath superficial beauty. The poet denounces those whose "virtue only is their show" and remarks how "much more beauty beauteous seem[s] / By that sweet ornament which truth doth give." The ending couplet implies that, in confronting the young man's wrongs, it is the poet's "verse" that "distills your truth," testing and discovering where superficial beauty ends and where true beauty, allied to truth, begins.

> Shakespeare's Sonnets are best understood within this classical and Christian stream of the transcendentals…the Sonnets bear witness to Beauty, Goodness, and Truth as objective partners with Life and Love.

Sonnet LXIX is even more scathing of the young man's immorality, noting the deep discord between the "fair flower" of the Beloved's physical beauty and the "rank smell of weeds," an "odor" that "matcheth not thy show," effervescing out of his disordered life of vice. The same crowds that praise the Beloved's external beauty "In other accents do this praise confound / By seeing farther than the eye hath shown," peering into the "beauty of thy mind," which turns out to be viciously ugly, and "thy deeds," which turn out to be corrupt. This and many other poems are clearly framed by the assumption that true beauty involves harmony with moral order and virtue.[13]

11. Pope John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 2006) 162-164, 178-190.

12. Oxford *Shakespeare*, 417.

The young man's beauty is spoiled by immorality. The final couplet of Sonnet XCIII summarizes this connection: "How like Eve's apple doth thy beauty grow, / If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show." The Lover's own beauty becomes a source of temptation if divorced from virtue. The poems then transition into various meditations upon the deep concord between Truth, moral Goodness, and Beauty in light of the Beloved's immorality and the speaker's abiding love. Sonnet XCIV continues to denounce the young man for possessing artificial beauty with no virtue: "For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds; / Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds." Lacking self-control, the young man spoils his beauty, unlike those who "inherit heaven's graces" because "They are lords and owners of their faces, / Others but stewards of their excellence." In Sonnet CI, the Lover's agony over the Beloved's immorality plunges into deeper philosophical ground: "Both truth and beauty on my love depends; / So dost thou too, and therein dignified." The only dignity the Beloved can claim to possess is the love of the Lover, which is united to "truth and beauty." The Beloved must choose to likewise participate in "truth and beauty" if he hopes to be "dignified."[14]

Sonnets CXVII, CXXIV, CXXV, CXXVI, CXXX, and CLIV assert similarly. And, climaxing these themes, Sonnet CV praises the Beloved despite his misdemeanors, reaching a self-reflective pitch wherein the poet realizes the transcendental fruit of all his love poems:

> Let not my love be called idolatry,
> Nor my beloved as an idol show,
> Since all alike, my songs and praises be
> To one, of one, still such, and ever so.
> Kind is my love today, tomorrow kind,
> Still constant in a wondrous excellence;
> Therefore, my verse, to constancy confined,
> One thing expressing, leaves out difference.
> 'Fair, kind, and true,' is all my argument,
> 'Fair, kind, and true,' varying to other words;
> And in this change is my invention spent,
> Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords.
> 'Fair,' 'kind,' and 'true' have often lived alone,
> Which three till now never kept seat in one.[15]

Since the Beloved has proved himself unfaithful, the poet meditates on his own love and poems, which have exercised totally faithful love. The sum of the poet's "argument"—the sum of the *Sonnets*—is "fair, kind, and true," which he simply repeats over and over in other words, and which are together "one." "Fair" is the Beautiful, "Kind" is the Good, and "True" is the True. They are brought together "in one" by Love, the most truly Beautiful, Good, and True, without which all else is a clanging gong, empty aestheticism, or vain appearance. Sonnet CXVI allows for no ambiguity in Shakespeare's definitions:

> Love is not love
> Which alters when it alteration finds,
> Or bends with the remover to remove.
> O no! It is an ever fixed mark
> That looks on tempests and is never shaken…[16]

Faithful Love is the singular unity of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness. Not finding constancy in Beloved's immoral life and despite attempts to persuade him of the objective Beauty of faithful family life, the poetic speaker is, perhaps, at least consoled by reflection upon his own love and the transcendent unity it reveals.

As one sees this transcendent order emerge from the *Sonnets*, it is important to observe their particular form. They are written as a whole sequence, not a private confession, in dramatic

13. Ibid,. 519.
14. Ibid., 567, 569, 583.
15. Ibid., 591.
16. Ibid., 613.

monologue. They form a carefully constructed story about the faithful Lover and the prodigal Beloved. While The Lover's overtures reveal Shakespeare's vision of transcendent Beauty as participation in the moral good of family life, the specific argument of the poems does not necessarily become a universal exhortation to every individual. The poems are not saying that every human being is wrong for not having children, nor is it villainizing the infertile, the celibate, or those not called to family life. Rather, it is commending family life to a particular young man whose reasons to avoid it amount to selfishness, vanity, and vice. Thus, the *Sonnets* call into question those who might willfully avoid child-rearing for ignoble reasons, out of mere vanity, prodigality, or social convenience. The young man's "self-love" is continually contrasted with procreation. The Beloved's refusal of marriage reveals his physical danger of dying with no heir to carry on his beauty and his spiritual danger of failing to redeem himself from narcissism. This specific man has no excuse except for his licentious pride and self-absorption.

However, Shakespeare's *Sonnets* still offer a timeless lesson that is all the more timely in today's culture of death and relativism, wherein the whims of mindless sentiment disfigure art, family, and life. Many today, like the Beloved, need to hear the Lover's exhortations about the Beauty of family and children. But it is difficult to hear the harmonious order of Love above the chirps of devices, grunts of automobiles, and shouts of advertisements promising instant pleasure. On the contrary, Shakespeare's *Sonnets* show that strength and salvation are found in the quietness and rest of family life. True Beauty is manifested by choosing to enter the "lines of life," to uphold the goodness of the married vocation, to devote to the permanence and stability of the family, and to say yes to new life generously. The "lines" of Shakespeare's sonnets reveal Beauty as participation in the "life" of new generations, ordered to the "eternal lines" of God's unending fecundity, who continuously calls his beloved creatures to his Beauty and Life.

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Beauty in the Word: Rethinking the Foundations of Education Book Review

David Seibel, *Coram Deo Academy*

In *Beauty in the Word: Rethinking the Foundations of Education*, Stratford Caldecott (1953-2014) shines a fresh light on the classical Trivium to remove the activist fog hanging over schools today. This is not a manual for acting but a contemplation of foundational truths beneath the surface of a healthy classical Christian school utilizing the ancient Trivium. In a digital and polarized age obsessed with knee-jerk action and reaction, a sturdy text on stable foundations provides a needed perspective for classical Christian thought leaders. The foundation of this book is Caldecott's recasting of Grammar, Dialectic, and Rhetoric as Remembering, Thinking, and Speaking in a handy triad. The bulk of this review will focus on that Trivium triad with two preliminary thoughts on foundations and two parting thoughts on the work as a whole.

At first glance, it might seem unnecessary to many educators to consider the transcendent foundations of a concept as practical as the Trivium. Because we live in a time that worships the self and wants to tear down institutions, authorities, and transcendent foundations, we need Caldecott's clarion call to protect those absolute load-bearing beliefs that provide a structure to reality and unity to the classical Christian curriculum. *Beauty in the Word* focuses on the language arts of the Trivium, whereas his other work, *Beauty for Truth's Sake*, examines the mathematical arts in the Quadrivium. *Beauty in the Word* focuses on the philosophical and theological foundations of the classical Trivium and was first published in 2012. As the floods of hostility against absolute truth continue to rise in the 2020s, it is only a matter of time before one's hidden foundations become visible and obvious. Warren Buffet once noted that you can see who is swimming naked when the tide goes out. What Caldecott does in *Beauty in the Word* is clothe us with transcendent truths that undergird the ancient Trivium popularized by Sayers in the 20th century.

On second glance, Caldecott helps the reader more deeply see the need for Trivium foundations by noting, "It is as though we were attempting to construct the top floor of a building without bothering with the lower floors or foundations." In other words, Caldecott is describing a shifting sand culture that shows curricular fragmentation, historical amnesia, and methodological incoherence. Caldecott is echoing Mortimer Adler (1902-2001), who decried the "barbarism of specialization" and the "decline of the cultured generalist." Specialized training has largely replaced the classical model in the United States. Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) also noticed the need for foundations when he wrote, "In our modern forms of specialized education, there is a tendency to lose the whole in the parts, and in this sense, we can say that our generation produces few truly educated people."[1] Instead of training, true education thinks across disciplines to discover a unity of truth that is only possible through firm foundations. Our classical schooling movement needs a new generation of foundation-strengthening thought leaders to carry

1. Francis Schaeffer, The God Who is There, (InterVarsity Press, 1998), pg 32.

forward the intellectual work of Adler, Schaeffer, and Caldecott. Without these educational foundations, our civilization settles for mere specialized training, and Western civilization forgets its spiritual and intellectual inheritance.

The Remembering–Thinking–Speaking (RTS) triad is the heart of *Beauty in the Word*. The RTS triad is first announced in the introduction and then developed through chapters two, three, and four. While there are six chapters, these three are the meat. Protestant Evangelical readers may be unconvinced at some point by some of Caldecott's Roman Catholic distinctive, but this in no way needs to diminish the validity of his use of the RTS triad to elucidate the Trivium.

First, in the RTS triad, Caldecott represents "Grammar" with the foundational "Remember." Remembering highlights the fundamental need for stocking the memory of our students with true words of delight, stories that form the moral imagination, and the history of cultural and spiritual inheritance. In Remembering, Caldecott exposes our constant and collective forgetting from generation to generation. This section calls for preservation through memorizing key facts and truths. He points out that the rise of the internet, like the printing press, has led to memory decline in our schools. Why memorize something when Siri, ChatGPT, and Google are able servants? Caldecott notes, "The computer has become an indirect cause of our inner poverty due to leaning on these mental crutches."[2] The iPad or iPhone is a digital pacifier if the computer is a mental crutch. While forgetting can be a mark of weakness, it can also be a dangerous sign that certain truths are neglected and priorities are out of order. Chesterton wrote, "Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another." Neglecting grammar means losing our spiritual and intellectual inheritance, which is the soul of any society. Caldecott highlights that the machine-like and mechanical instantaneous transfer of information is a threat to meaningful spiritual formation.[3] For schools that subscribe to the classical Trivium, remembering is the first stage of foundational learning.

> Instead of training, true education thinks across disciplines to discover a unity of truth that is only possible through firm foundations.

Second, in the RTS triad, Caldecott represents "Dialectic" with the foundational "Think." Thinking is the natural fruit of Remembering as the child matures and moves forward in the classical curriculum. Here, Caldecott shows that all boys and girls are philosophers who need to place the Bible in conversation with philosophy. Caldecott has Moses punching back against the intellectual viruses inherited from Rene Descartes.[4] Rene Descartes (1596-1650) was a famous mathematician and metaphysician who famously said *cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am), claiming that beginning with doubt of all but the self was the pathway to certainty and truth. Caldecott writes, "The problem.. is that Descartes did not begin with memory, with Grammar; he went straight to Thinking before going through Remembering.… he confined his reflection to the present moment." Caldecott notes that a better starting point for self-existence would be the statement from God in Exodus 3:14, "God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "I am has sent me to you."'" Caldecott says faith and divine relation are a far more certain foundation than doubt and human

2. Stratford Caldecott, *Beauty in the Word*, (Angelico Press, 2012), pg. 51.

3. Ibid., pg. 47.

4. Ibid., pg. 75.

reason. Without Remembering in Grammar, students have no meaningful content for Thinking in Dialectic.

Remembering highlights the fundamental need for stocking the memory of our students with true words of delight, stories that form the moral imagination, and the history of cultural and spiritual inheritance.

Third in the RTS triad, Caldecott represents the "Rhetoric" with "Speaking." Although this chapter lacked the clarity of the Remembering and Thinking chapters, it answered the question, "How do we teach ethics and morality to children?" Caldecott writes, "...the best way to communicate morality is not through endless dry lists of what should and should not be done, but once again through the imagination – through stories, drama, and living examples."[5] Upper School teachers must remember that Rhetoric is all about being persuasive–charts and lists comparing worldviews rarely penetrate to the inner man. The beauty and glory of truth and goodness merit a combination of show and tell. Carl Trueman has been known to quip that the best and most persuasive argument against Christian marriage is not a syllogism but the sitcom "Will and Grace," where homosexuality is normalized and made to look human, harmless, and ordinary, which is ultimately a rhetorical move rather than a propositional tactic of logic. The best Speaking is the fruit of previous Thinking and Remembering, so we must learn these arts to counter-catechize the next generation in Truth, Goodness, and Beauty rather than the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Glancing at the whole, the book's length is manageable, with 159 pages including endnotes, yet its philosophical argument punches well above its weight. The six pages of bibliographic data include intellectual heavyweights such as Aristotle, Augustine, Bonaventure, Chesterton, Lewis, Mason, Pieper, Plato, and various Popes from the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, the book is more of a 201 intermediate text for those in liberal arts circles than a 101 popular-level treatment. Teachers coming to this book for real-world applications, as found in Gregory's *Laws of Teaching*, will leave disappointed. This is a book about ideals. The best person for this book is one looking for a fresh perspective on the task of education rather than a set of application steps. While many lower school teachers have a Trivium application chart somewhere in their desk or their employee manual, this is insufficient for the philosophical and theological foundations of the Trivium. There has been debate around Sayers's ages and stages model, and the RTS triad could be a helpful framework to find common ground between Sayers's fans and those who want a more historically accurate way of describing the Medieval Trivium. Caldecott only mentions Sayers twice in the work, demonstrating he has more than the 20th century in mind when he describes the three language arts of the Trivium.

At a final glance, the book is creative and original, as shown by the chart on page 16, which connects the Trivium to the Father, Son, and Spirit as well as *Mythos, Logos, and Ethos* in a figure entitled, "A Key to the Book: Eight Threes." Any fan of Protestant theologian Dr. John Frame will rejoice in such a table of triads. Frame has an appendix in *The Doctrine of God* with more than 100 triads in life and he even includes the classical Trivium in his list (#67). While comparing the Trivium to the Trinity may feel like a stretch to some, Caldecott is not alone in doing so. Caldecott's *Beauty in the Word* is

5. Ibid., pg. 87.

worth the investment of attention primarily due to the RTS triad but also due to some spectacular quotes spread throughout the work. An example is: "We have been searching for foundations and the natural place to expect them is under our feet. But we have been looking in the wrong place. The foundations of reason, of Logic, are over our heads. The world does not stand on them; it hangs from them. … it is in the vertical dimension that universals exist." Human reason is most useful when it hangs from the foundation of divine revelation. *Tolle lege*.

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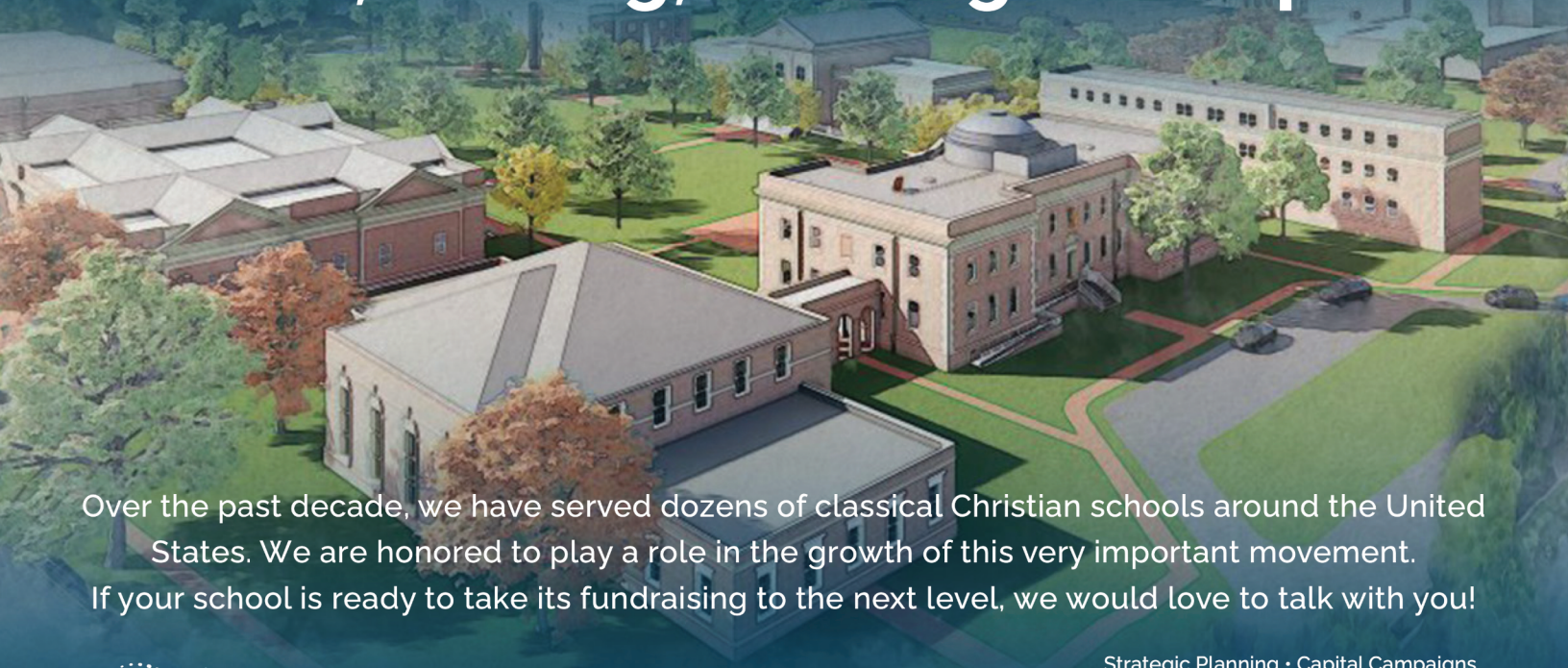

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COMMONPLACE

The Allure of Yesterday: Longing for What Was, in Search of What Will Be

Romelio Fleming, *Trinitas Christian School*

Robert Burns walked silently down the alleyway of some impoverished village in the slums of Ayrshire. As he turned a corner, a delicate sound escaped the frames of a dilapidated porch. There sat an old man, with an ancient melody on his lips. Burns paused to give the sacred song of this worn soul his unmitigated audience. A pleasant strain whispered from a cracked mouth:

> Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
> And never brought to mind?
> Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
> In the days of auld lang syne?

The man stopped and looked good-humoredly towards Burns. Burns returned the smile.

Auld Lang Syne, translated literally from the Scots language, means Old Long Since. Robert Burns, a renowned poet, and songwriter, endeavored to seek out and preserve many old and beloved Scottish songs that constituted tradition, and Auld Lang Syne is the most popular byproduct of that endeavor.[1] The lyrics describe the meeting of friends to reminisce and delight in the memory of the good old days, discouraging forgetfulness and the neglect of the past. The performance of such a song highlights that bittersweet nature of nostalgic reminiscence—those who sing along rejoice in the pleasure of recounting past times and the "Old Long Since," but may simultaneously sorrow in their disconnect from the past. Here is found one of the greatest plights of mankind, and its effects were only felt after man realized that he was suddenly separate and forever cut off from paradise—Adam took that irrevocable bite and thus decided against the unaltered and unscathed Bliss, which cries after the hearts of man. It is no wonder that the world decays, and man with it. Deprived as he is, why should he not suffer such disgrace? And it is no wonder that man so desires to turn back time. How else could he return to the Garden?

The concept of time has troubled man for nearly as long as man has existed. It is the inexorable medium through which physical reality must travel, and within it, all of creation is bound. Man cannot affect time, and he is thus confined by a perpetually moving force that numbers his days and severs him from the ages preceding him, and the eon which succeeds his death—"for who can bring him to see what will happen after him?" (Ecclesiastes 3:22). Time paradoxically severs a man from experiences in his own life, so that a man can have what is called a "past" and a "future," without access to anything belonging to that past or that future, save through his memories and imagination. Here the little vantage man has over time is found: in memory, and the ability to reflect on the past and the future.

But as Augustine points out in his Confessions, neither the past nor the future exist.[2] To exist is to have being, and being is associated directly with the present. And thus it is only the memory of the past and the expectation of the future that has existence (in the mind)—not the past itself nor the future itself. In order to contemplate the grand and abstract idea of time,

1. Robert Lewis, "Auld Lang Syne," Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed 4 Dec. 2023: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Auld-Lang-Syne.

2. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: The Penguin Group, 1961), 269.

Augustine localizes the discussion to a simpler sphere of thought, and studies time as it relates to the minds of men. Time is best understood through man's relation to it through his memories of the past, his perception of the present, and his expectation or "imagination" of the future, hence the Great Idea of Memory and Imagination. And so a problem of time becomes the problem of how people perceive it, and it is only through these God-given faculties that mankind is able to ponder the glory of the ever-progressing force that is time.

Aristotle, in his essay "On Memory," attempts to wrap his mind around the concept by analyzing the human functions of recollection, perception, and association.[3] He, too, pieces together time and memory, suggesting memory as a necessary factor for the human perception of time. As true as that might be, there is certainly a purpose beyond mere convenience that man cannot only possess memory and expectation as the animals do, but that he can also use his intellect to form conclusions from past experiences and to anticipate the future and make decisions in light of that anticipation. The Christian knows that this purpose is established by God.

In the discussion of memory, an intriguing topic arises, one that has a significant implication on the purpose and nature of memories. This is the topic of nostalgia. Nostalgia is a distinct feature of human memory, associated with emotion and intellect. The term "nostalgia" is relatively recent; it was coined in the 17th century. Johannes Hofer, a Swiss doctor, inspired by the German word *heimweh*, meaning "homesickness," coined the term from the Greek words *nostos* and *algos*, respectively, "homecoming" and "pain." Dr Hofer saw nostalgia as a medical issue. The symptoms were found in many Swiss soldiers who felt deprived, forced away from their homeland to fight, becoming depressed and sick, even to the point of death. This "disease" was identified as an extreme case of homesickness and an intense longing for a certain place or thing. In those days, people saw it as pathetic and shameful.[4]

The modern world brought about a new connotation, however—men once saw nostalgia as a vile disorder, but many today would be surprised at that definition. Still, not everyone views nostalgia as a good thing, especially when it comes to Christianity. The question remains: is nostalgia a thing to be shamed or praised—shunned as a disease or sought as a remedy for the affliction of longing? And for the Christian, how should he respond to nostalgia, to strengthen himself spiritually and renew his homesick heart?

Some questions arise when determining whether and how Christians should engage in nostalgia. First, does nostalgia benefit one's mentality and spirituality? Second, can nostalgic emotion contribute to a healthy Christian walk? Lastly, does nostalgia bring glory to God?

As for whether nostalgia benefits one's mentality, many studies have been conducted to find that it does. A similar question inspired Constantine Sedikides and other professors to initiate a study intent on discovering the nature and functionality of nostalgia. They showed how nostalgia is associated with memory and imagination, describing nostalgia as a "predominantly positive, albeit bittersweet, and self-relevant" emotion. The study also demonstrated how some people who experience nostalgia tend to think abstractly about their memories and ignore the details—which means that their memories can be easily augmented by the imagination.[5]

After identifying the nature of nostalgia, Sedikides continued by revealing its various effects. In sentimental longing, people can find experiences or places in their memories that can help them feel better about themselves or about life in general. Nostalgia gives people meaning. Often the good things that have been carried away by time can motivate people to keep on fighting, to get through the difficult times in their lives, with the hope of "returning" to those happy

3. Aristotle, *On Memory and Reminiscence*, trans. by J. I. Beare (Blacksburg, Virginia Tech, 2001), http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/memory.html.

4. Douglas Harper, "Etymology of Nostalgia," *Online Etymology Dictionary*, December 7, 2023, https://www.etymonline.com/word/nostalgia.

5. Sedikides, Constantine et al. "To Nostalgize: Mixing Memory with Affect and Desire," *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology 51*, (2015): 207. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0065260114000045?via%3Dihub.

days—perhaps through better experiences or opportunities in the future. And nostalgia draws people together. Individuals who share similar feelings about certain things from their pasts will relate to each other, thus building stronger social connections.[6]

From all of this, it is evident that nostalgia benefits the human mind by fortifying connections to certain things in memory, inducing an overall positivity towards the future and life in general, and increasing one's social affinity and sense of belonging. But how does nostalgia benefit one's spirituality?

Memory, as discussed earlier, is one of God's most profound gifts to man. One way that the scriptures show the importance of memory is through memorials and covenants. After Noah and his family leave the ark, God establishes the memorial of the rainbow, saying: "The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth" (Genesis 9:16). If the God of the universe considers it necessary to remember His own covenants, should not his children do the same? "I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember Your wonders of old" (Psalm 77:11). Scripture bids men to remember—and to remember well.

A strong memory of the works and statutes of God will not only strengthen one's relationship with His Creator—it will instill in him a spiritual fortitude. With the word of God written on his heart, his spirit is fastened to the truth and bound to the promises of the Lord. He fulfills his covenant with Yahweh, he lives with confidence in the Law, and his soul rests easy.

Returning to the main inquiry, the second question asks whether nostalgic emotions can contribute to a healthy Christian walk. While research and science might make the mental utility of nostalgia as evident as can be, it is ultimately God who sets the core guidelines for mental health. God had the future generations of mankind in mind when he instituted his rainbow, as he had the future generations of Israel in mind when he had the people establish the twelve memorial stones at Gilgal, so that when their children asked the meaning of these stones, they might know of the deeds of their God, and "that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty…" (Joshua 4:24). But God's memorials are not mere devices for preserving knowledge. They are the lodestars of time, the beacons of ages past and future occurrences. They remind the world not only of what has been but what is and is to come. What Christians are commissioned to remember, they are to act upon and preserve. And it is through preserving the truths of the past, the hopes of the future, and the responsibilities of the present that Christians are empowered to destroy the lethal lethargy wherewith many believers find themselves inundated.

Society is infected with a vast hopelessness that has led many believers to barter the truths they know for the lies they fear. It is dangerous to forget the truth, but even more dangerous to ignore it. What good is there in knowing truth if Christians do not pursue it, and do not seek to shine a light onto what is so shrouded in darkness and vanity? When believers illuminate the truth, they, in turn, reflect hope upon others led by disbelief and the deceptions of the devil, leading others to partake in what is essentially the universal nostalgia of mankind. C.S. Lewis sheds light on this matter in his analysis of glory and what that means for the Christian, describing a "lifelong nostalgia," which he defines as "our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside..."[7] According to Lewis, nostalgia is a thing nearly inescapable, because in a certain way, it is felt by everyone—a way which leads nonbelievers to substitute earthly things in lieu of an indescribable aspiration which they could ascertain or reach for, but oft so stubbornly refuse to.

The Christian is that enduring Swiss soldier, far from home, choking on the stale air of remote and foreign nations. He wistfully dreams of one day

6. Ibid, 190.

7. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory And Other Addresses* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), 12.

returning to the land he has been taken from, beached on an alien shore by bitter war and universal disputes that are well out of his control. But the more he aches for his homeland, the more he feels its radiance. The greater his longing, the greater his love—and this is where the Christian must differ from that Swiss soldier. The Christian should not despair at the realization of his deprived state, falling to his knees as burning bullets fly overhead, wilting because he feels that there is no hope. He fights to return home, yes—but even more, he fights to defend his nation. He fights for his family, his friends, and most of all, his God.

This leads to the last question: does nostalgia bring glory to God? Just as the morality of anger depends upon its righteousness—that is, if it is anger pleasing to God, which is provoked for His sake and defense and not for one's own—in like manner must a Christian's nostalgia be focused. While it is easy to find charm in dying fantasies, nothing in the past will ever be greater than what lies ahead, and this is Biblical truth. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (I Corinthians 2:9). There is something far beyond any glory man has ever known lying at the end of time, awaiting them who love God and eagerly wait for Him. Christians must avoid the snare of turning healthy nostalgia into bitter indignation toward the present. Nostalgia can bring glory to God, as does righteous anger. But at the same time, as "the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (James 1:20), neither does a selfish nostalgia desiring an earthly past over a heavenly future warrant any praise. The nostalgia which concerns the Christian is that which looks up to glory, and not down to fleeting things—looking outwardly, not inside.

Unfortunately, there are many who argue against the idea of Christians indulging in nostalgia. Dr. Leroy Huizenga claims the following in a brief article: "Nostalgia is a sin, a form of sloth, and engaging in it enervates discipleship and devotion."[8] This claim only stretch to claim that nostalgia is altogether sinful in the way that Huizenga does—he might also contend that it is wrong for Christians to feel safe because it promotes carelessness or a false sense of security. The feeling of nostalgia, like the feeling of safety, is not in itself sinful. Rather, it is the individual's response towards nostalgia which may or may not leave room for iniquity.

Another common argument uses Ecclesiastes 7:10 to discourage nostalgic reminiscence altogether. "Do not say, 'Why were the former days better than these?' For you do not inquire wisely concerning this." Some will use this passage to say that nostalgia is utterly

describes a specific kind of nostalgia or a certain response that one might have to the feeling. It's a

> Time is best understood through man's relation to it through his memories of the past, his perception of the present, and his expectation or "imagination" of the future, hence the Great Idea of Memory and Imagination. And so a problem of time becomes the problem of how people perceive it, and it is only through these God-given faculties that mankind is able to ponder the glory of the ever-progressing force that is time.

8. Leroy Huizenga, "Nostalgia Is A Sin", *First Things*, October 5, 2012. https://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2012/10/nostalgia-is-a-sin

sinful—but primarily, Solomon sought to rid the faithful of a melancholic memory of the past which leads one to despise the present and dread the future. Paul reminds us that "the sorrow of the world produces death" (2 Corinthians 7:10). What Solomon describes is a worldly sorrow, fraught with a woeful disposition and a heart that has wholly surrendered to the allure of the past, and has completely overlooked the blessings of the present and the promises of the future.

Others say that nostalgia frustrates the Christian in his struggle for detachment from the world, going against the truth that Paul proclaimed in his letter to the Philippians, that "our citizenship is in heaven" (3:20), and therefore not in earth. They say that because of this, it is wrong to have any attachment to things in the past. Certainly, detachment from the world is one of the core components of the Christian walk. If the believer cannot separate himself from the temporary, how can he ever be joined with the eternal? When one finds value in the things of this world, his nostalgia must take that affinity for the physical and redirect it toward the metaphysical—that which is valued on earth must point to what ought to be valued in heaven. Whoever loses himself to selfish nostalgia becomes just like the Corinthians, "restricted by [their] own affections" (2 Corinthians 6:12), ignorant of blessings present and to come, and ultimately destined to sink with a millstone of vain and fleeting things about his neck.

To summarize: first, nostalgia benefits one's mentality and spirituality—the former by fortifying attachments to things preserved in the memory and inciting a positive outlook on one's life, in addition to increasing social affinity and a sense of belonging, and the latter by encouraging a stronger connection with God in the memory and desire of His covenants and promises. Second, nostalgic emotion strengthens the Christian walk, leading to positive emotions like joy, serenity, and gratitude, which are some of the very necessities of those who seek Christ. Third, unselfish nostalgia, which craves the fulfillment of prophecy instead of focusing on things vain and fleeting, is nostalgia that brings glory to God. Though many rebuke Christians for engaging in nostalgia, as long as the affections of the heart are rightly ordered as not to hinder one's faith or distract one's gaze from Christ, let the nostalgist rest assured in the pleasant memory and the fruitful imagination of the "Old Long Since."

Without nostalgia, Christianity becomes a simple ruse—faith is not compelled by desire, and ultimately dwindles, leaving anyone who believes in Christ but does not crave Him drained of the joy of their salvation. And without a fervent desire to "turn back the clock" and erase the horrors of a world that has fallen from grace, and to return to the Garden—praise God, for the promise of eternity is infinitely greater than even the paradise of Eden—without nostalgia, the Christian labors in vain. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). Let every Christian foster a kind of pain as they strive for Christ—not a pain which diminishes, but a pain which elevates. Not a nostalgia which despairs, but a nostalgia which rejoices with hope and is filled with pure felicity. Cherish the past, remain grounded in the present, and hope for the future. Yearn eternally, without interval, for "Auld Lang Syne."

Romelio Fleming graduated from Trinitas Christian School in Pensacola, Florida, in the spring of 2024. This paper is from his senior thesis, which was presented and defended in April 2024.

OLD VOICES

Greater Hippias[1]

Plato

Greater Hippias is considered either one of Plato's early or middle dialogues. It deals primarily with the Idea of Beauty and whether or not mankind can really know what Beauty itself is. For classical Christian schools, *Greater Hippias* is a great dialogue to teach, as it demonstrates the objective reality of Beauty. The outline for this dialogue is as follows:

I. Socrates and Hippias meet, exchange greetings, and discuss whether Hippias (and the Sophists) are the greatest teachers of virtue. (281a-286c)

II. Socrates asks Hippias about what Beauty is. (286d-287d)

III. Hippias gives three answers of what Beauty could be and all three are refuted by Socrates. (287e-295e)

IV. Socrates offers three alternatives and speculates that the Beautiful is father to the Good (295a-297e)

V. Socrates and Hippias come to no conclusion, though they believe that they could be close to a definition. More thought and contemplation are needed. (298a-304e)

The reading selection of the dialogue included here comes from sections II and III of this outline. The Hippias's definitions and Socrates's responses illustrate how Beauty is neither subjective nor relative, but there is, in fact, a "Form" of Beauty that is transcendental in nature. Using simple logic that is easy for students to understand, Plato shows that a subjective view of Beauty–beauty is in the eye of the beholder–cannot represent true Beauty. Hippias tries to offer examples of beautiful things (a person, a horse, a woman, a good life, etc...) as the definition of Beauty, but Socrates shows how things that are perceived as beautiful cannot be the definition of Beauty. In fact, an individual's perceived tastes cannot account for Beauty, as true Beauty must always be beautiful.

To get the most out of this dialogue, it's important to note some aspects of ancient Greek culture. For example, understanding who the sophists were tells the reader how they should understand Hippias, a sophist. Sophists, in many cases, were itinerant teachers who would travel from city-state to city-state to be hired to educate the wealthy youth. In most cases, sophists were paid extremely well–we find in this dialogue that Hippias boasts that he makes more than any two sophists combined. Socrates never challenges this and although unimpressed, his engagement with Hippias highlights the significance of this conversation.

Beauty is an important topic reserved for only the most brilliant men and the most qualified teachers and philosophers. In essence, Plato shows his teacher debating against the best of the sophists. Interestingly, even these

1. Plato, *"Greater Hippias," The Dialogues of Plato*, 4th Ed., trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953).

two brilliant men cannot come to a definitive answer regarding what Beauty *is*, but they logically show what Beauty *cannot be*–all while giving important clues as to what Beauty *could be*. This dialogue is an important addition for challenging students' assumptions about Beauty and progressing toward an understanding of the nature of Beauty.

Stephanus pages 285-297c
SOCRATES: You maintain that it is more beneficial for Lacedaemonians to be brought up in your education, a foreign one, than in the native form?
HIPPIAS: Yes, and I am right.
SOCRATES: And that what is more beneficial is more lawful— you maintain this also, Hippias?
Hippias: I said so.
SOCRATES: Then on your argument it is more lawful for the sons of Lacedaemonians to be educated by Hippias, and less lawful for them to be educated by their fathers if they will in fact get more benefit from you?
HIPPIAS: They certainly will get benefit from me.
SOCRATES: Then Lacedaemonians break the law by not entrusting their sons to you, and paying you handsomely for it.
HIPPIAS: I agree. As you appear to be arguing my own case, I do not see why I should go into opposition.
SOCRATES: Then, my friend, the Lacedaemonians prove to be lawbreakers, and lawbreakers in the most vital matters—the very people who are reputed to be the most law-abiding. In heaven's name, Hippias, on what kind of subject do they listen to you with such pleasure and applause? Clearly it must be the one on which you are a great authority, the stars and the celestial phenomena?
HIPPIAS: Not in the least. They won't tolerate it.
SOCRATES: Then they like to hear about geometry?
HIPPIAS: Not at all. Many of them do not even know how to count, so to speak.
SOCRATES: Then they must be a far from appreciative audience when you address them on arithmetic?
HIPPIAS: Very far indeed.
SOCRATES: Well then, what about the problems which you of all men know best how to analyze—the properties of letters and syllables and rhythms and harmonies?
HIPPIAS: My dear sir! Harmonies and letters indeed!
SOCRATES: What then are the subjects on which they listen to you with pleasure and applause? Pray enlighten me; I cannot see.
HIPPIAS: They delight in the genealogies of heroes and of men and in stories of the foundations of cities in olden times, and, to put it briefly, in all forms of antiquarian lore, so that because of them I have been compelled to acquire a thorough comprehension and mastery of all that branch of learning.
SOCRATES: Bless my soul, you have certainly been lucky that the Lacedaemonians do not want to hear a recital of the list of our archons, from Solon downward; you would have had some trouble to learn it.
HIPPIAS: Why? I can repeat fifty names after hearing them once.
SOCRATES: I am sorry, I quite forgot about your mnemonic art. Now I understand how naturally the Lacedaemonians enjoy your multifarious knowledge, and make use of you as children do of old women, to tell them agreeable stories.
HIPPIAS: Yes, indeed, and, what is more, Socrates I have lately gained much credit there by setting forth in detail the honorable and beautiful practices to which a young man ought to devote himself. On that subject I have composed a discourse, a beautiful work distinguished by a fine style among its other merits. Its setting and its exordium are like this. After the fall of Troy, Neoptolemus asks Nestor what are the honorable and beautiful

practices to which a man should devote himself during his youth in order to win the highest distinction. Then it is Nestor's turn to speak, and he propounds to him a great number of excellent rules of life. This discourse I delivered in Sparta, and at the request of Eudicus, the son of Apemantus, am to deliver it here, as well as much else worth listening to, in the schoolroom of Phidostratus, the day after tomorrow. Please be sure to come yourself, and bring with you other good critics of such dissertations.
SOCRATES: Certainly, Hippias, all being well. But now answer me a trifling question on the subject; you have reminded me of it in the nick of time. Quite lately, my noble friend, when I was condemning as ugly some things in certain compositions, and praising others as beautiful, somebody threw me into confusion by interrogating me in a most offensive manner, rather to this effect. You, Socrates, pray how do you know what things are beautiful and what are ugly? Come now, can you tell me what beauty is? In my incompetence I was confounded, and could find no proper answer to give him; so, leaving the company, I was filled with anger and reproaches against myself, and promised myself that the first time I met with one of you wise men, I would listen to him and learn, and when I had mastered my lesson thoroughly, I would go back to my questioner and join battle with him again. So you see that you have come at a beautifully appropriate moment, and I ask you to teach me properly what is beauty by itself, answering my questions with the utmost precision you can attain. I do not want to be made to look a fool a second time, by another cross-examination. Of course you know perfectly, and it is only a scrap of your vast learning.
HIPPIAS: A scrap indeed, Socrates, and of no value, I may add.
SOCRATES: Then I shall acquire it without trouble, and nobody will confound me again.
HIPPIAS: Nobody at all, if I am not a bungling amateur in my profession.
SOCRATES: Bravo, Hippias, how splendid, if we do defeat the adversary! Will it be a nuisance to you if I act as his understudy and fasten on your answers with my objections, so that you may put me through some vigorous practice? I have had a fair amount of experience of his objections. If, therefore, it makes no difference to you, I should like to play the critic. In this way I shall get a firmer grasp of what I learn.
HIPPIAS: Certainly, put your criticisms. As I said just now, it is not a big question. I might teach you to answer much more difficult ones with such cogency that no human being would be able to confute you.
SOCRATES: How magnificent! Well now, on your invitation let me assume his role to the best of my ability, and try to interrogate you. If you were to deliver to him the discourse to which you refer —the discourse about beautiful practices—he would hear you to the end, and when you stopped, the very first question he would put would be about beauty—it is a kind of habit with him. He would say, Stranger from Elis, is it not by justice that the just are just? Would you answer, Hippias, as if he were asking the question?
HIPPIAS: I shall answer that it is by justice.
SOCRATES: Then this, namely justice, is definitely something.
HIPPIAS: Certainly.
SOCRATES: Again, it is by wisdom that the wise are wise, and by goodness that all things are good?
HIPPIAS: Undoubtedly.
SOCRATES: That is, by really existent things—one could scarcely say, by things which have no real existence?
HIPPIAS: Quite so.
SOCRATES: Then are not all beautiful things beautiful by beauty?
HIPPIAS: Yes, by beauty.

SOCRATES: Which has a real existence?
HIPPIAS: Yes, what else do you think?
SOCRATES: Then tell me, stranger, he would say, what is this thing, beauty?
HIPPIAS: By putting this question he just wants to find out what is beautiful?
SOCRATES: I do not think so, Hippias. He wants to know what is beauty—the beautiful.
HIPPIAS: What is the difference between them?
SOCRATES: You think there is none?
HIPPIAS: There is no difference.
SOCRATES: Obviously you know best. Still, my good sir, look at it again; he asks you not what is beautiful, but what is beauty.
HIPPIAS: I understand, my good sir, and I will indeed tell him what is beauty, defying anyone to refute me. I assure you, Socrates, if I must speak the truth, that a beautiful maiden is a beauty.
SOCRATES: Upon my word, Hippias, a beautiful answer—very creditable. Then if I give that answer I shall have answered the question, and answered it correctly, and I can defy anyone to refute me?
HIPPIAS: How can you be refuted when everyone thinks the same and everyone who hears you will testify that you are right?
SOCRATES: Quite so. Now, Hippias, let me recapitulate to myself what you say. That man will question me something like this. Come, Socrates, give me an answer. Returning to your examples of beauty, tell me what must beauty by itself be in order to explain why we apply the word to them? And you want me to reply that if a beautiful maiden is a beauty, we have found why they are entitled to that name?
HIPPIAS : Do you imagine that he will then try to refute you by proving that you have not mentioned a beautiful thing, or that if he does attempt it he will not look a fool?
SOCRATES: I am sure, my worthy friend, that he will try to refute me. The event will show whether the attempt will make him look a fool. But allow me to tell you what he will say.
HIPPIAS: Go on, then.
SOCRATES: He will say, How delicious you are, Socrates! Is not a beautiful mare a beauty—the god himself praised mares in his oracle? How shall we reply, Hippias? Must we not say that the mare, too, or at least a beautiful one, is a beauty? We can hardly be so audacious as to deny that beauty is beautiful.
HIPPIAS: Quite right. I may add that the god, too, spoke quite correctly; the mares we breed in our country are very beautiful.
SOCRATES: He will now say, Very well, but what about a beautiful lyre? Is that not a beauty? Are we to agree, Hippias?
HIPPIAS: Yes.
SOCRATES: Judging from his character, I feel pretty sure that he will then go on, What about a beautiful pot, my dear sir? Is not that a beauty?
HIPPIAS: Who is this fellow? What a boor, to dare to introduce such vulgar examples into a grave discussion!
SOCRATES: He is that sort of person, Hippias—not at all refined, a common fellow caring for nothing but the truth. Still, he must have his answer and I give my own first. If the pot is the work of a good potter, smooth and round and properly fired, like some very beautiful pots I have seen, the two-handled ones that hold six choes —if he were to ask his question about a pot like that, we should have to admit that it is beautiful. How could we assert that what is a beautiful thing is not a beauty?
HIPPIAS: No, we could not.
SOCRATES: Then even a beautiful pot, he will say, is a beauty? Please answer.
HIPPIAS: Yes. I suppose so. Even this utensil is beautiful when it is beautifully made, but generically it does not deserve to be judged beautiful in comparison with a mare or a maiden, or all the other things of beauty.

SOCRATES: Very well. I understand, Hippias, that when he puts these questions I should answer, Sir, you do not grasp the truth of Heraclitus' saying that the most beautiful of apes is ugly compared with the human race, and the most beautiful of pots is ugly when grouped with maidens—so says Hippias the wise. That is correct?
HIPPIAS: Quite the right answer.
SOCRATES: Now mark my words, I am sure that he will then say, Yes, Socrates, but if maidens are grouped with gods, will not the result be the same as when pots were grouped with maidens? Will not the most beautiful maiden appear ugly? Does not Heraclitus, whom you adduce, employ these very words, "The wisest of men, when compared to a god, will appear but an ape in wisdom and beauty and all else?' Shall we admit, Hippias, that the most beautiful maiden is ugly in comparison with the race of gods?
HIPPIAS: That no one can deny, Socrates.
SOCRATES: If then we make this admission, he will laugh and say, Socrates, do you remember what you were asked? Yes, I shall answer. I was asked what beauty by itself is. He will rejoin, Then when you are asked for beauty, do you offer in reply that which you yourself acknowledge to be no more beautiful than ugly? Apparently, I shall say. What do you advise me to reply?
HIPPIAS: As you do reply, for of course he will be right in saying that in comparison with gods the human race is not beautiful.
SOCRATES: He will continue, If I had asked you at the beginning what is both beautiful and ugly, and you had answered me as now, would not your answer have been correct? But do you still think that absolute beauty, by which all other things are ordered in loveliness, and appear beautiful when its form is added—do you think that that is a maiden, or a mare, or a lyre?
HIPPIAS: But still, Socrates, if this is what he wants, it is the easiest thing in the world to tell him what is that beauty which orders all other things in loveliness and makes them appear beautiful when it is added to them. The fellow must be a perfect fool, knowing nothing about things of beauty. If you reply to him that this about which he is asking, beauty, is nothing else than gold, he will be at a loss and will not attempt to refute you. For I suppose we all know that if anything has gold added to it, it will appear beautiful when so adorned even though it appeared ugly before.
SOCRATES: You do not know what a ruffian he is. He accepts nothing without making difficulties.
HIPPIAS: What do you mean? He must accept an accurate statement, on pain of ridicule.
SOCRATES: Well, my friend, this answer of yours he will not only refuse to accept, but he will even scoff at me viciously, saying, You blockhead! Do you reckon Phidias a bad artist? I suppose I shall answer, Not in the least.
HIPPIAS: Quite right.
SOCRATES: Yes, so I think. But when I agree that Phidias is a good artist, he will say, Then do you fancy that Phidias was ignorant of this beauty of which you speak? I shall reply, What is the point? And he will rejoin, The point is that he did not give his Athena eyes of gold or use gold for the rest of her face, or for her hands, or for her feet, as he would have done if supreme beauty could be given to them only by the use of gold; he made them of ivory. Clearly he made this mistake through ignorance, not knowing that it is really gold that confers beauty on everything to which it is added. How are we to answer him then, Hippias?
HIPPIAS: Quite easy. We shall reply that Phidias was artistically right, for ivory too is beautiful, I suppose.

SOCRATES: Why then, he will say, did he not also make the eyeballs of ivory? He made them of stone, finding out stone as like as possible to ivory. Or is the stone that is beautiful itself a beauty? Shall we say that it is?
HIPPIAS: Yes-it is beautiful, at least, whenever it is appropriate.
SOCRATES: But ugly when not appropriate? Am I to agree?
HIPPIAS: Yes-when not appropriate.
SOCRATES: He will go on, Well then, O man of wisdom, do not ivory and gold cause a thing to appear beautiful when they are appropriate, and ugly when they are not? Shall we deny it or admit that he is right?
HIPPIAS: We shall at any rate admit that whatever is appropriate to a particular thing makes that thing beautiful.
SOCRATES: He will continue, Then when a man boils the pot of which we spoke, the beautiful pot full of beautiful soup, which is the more appropriate to it-a ladle of gold or a ladle of figwood?
HIPPIAS: Really, Socrates, what a creature! Please tell me who he is.
SOCRATES: You would not know him if I told you his name.
HIPPIAS: I know enough about him at this moment to know that he is a dolt.
SOCRATES: He is a terrible nuisance, Hippias. Still, how shall we answer? Which of the two ladles are we to choose as appropriate to the soup and the pot? Obviously the one of figwood? For it gives the soup a better smell I suppose, and moreover, my friend, it would not break our pot and spill the soup and put out the fire and deprive the guests at our dinner of a truly noble dish, whereas that golden ladle would do all this. And therefore, if you do not object, I think we should say that the wooden ladle is more appropriate than the golden.
HIPPIAS: Yes, it is more appropriate, but I should not myself go on talking with the fellow while he asks such questions.
SOCRATES: Quite right, my friend. It would not be appropriate for you to be contaminated by such language, you who are so well dressed, and wear such good shoes, and are renowned for wisdom throughout the Greek world. But to me it does not matter if I am mixed up with that fellow; so fortify me with your instruction, and for my sake answer the questions. He will say, If indeed the wooden ladle is more appropriate than the golden, will it not also be more beautiful, since you Socrates, have admitted that the appropriate is more beautiful than the inappropriate? Can we then avoid the admission that the wooden ladle is more beautiful than the golden?
HIPPIAS: Would you like me to give you a definition of beauty by which you can save yourself from prolonged discussion?
SOCRATES: Certainly, but first please tell me which of the two ladles I have just mentioned is appropriate, and the more beautiful?
HIPPIAS: Well, if you like, answer him that it is the one made of figwood.
SOCRATES: Say now what a moment ago you were proposing to say, for following your answer, if I take the line that beauty is gold, I shall apparently have to face the fact that gold is no more beautiful than figwood. Now, once more, what according to you is beauty?
HIPPIAS: You shall have your answer. You are looking, I think, for a reply ascribing to beauty such a nature that it will never appear ugly to anyone anywhere?
SOCRATES: Exactly. You catch my meaning admirably.
HIPPIAS: Now please attend. If anyone can find any fault with what I say I give you full leave to call me an imbecile.
SOCRATES: I am on tenterhooks.
HIPPIAS: Then I maintain that always. everywhere, and for every man it is most beautiful to be rich, healthy, honored by the

Greeks, to reach old age and, after burying his parents nobly, himself to be borne to the tomb with solemn ceremony by his own children.
SOCRATES: Bravo, bravo, Hippias, those are words wonderful, sublime, worthy of you, and you have my grateful admiration for your kindness in bringing all your ability to my assistance. Still, our shafts are not hitting our man, and I warn you that he will now deride us more than ever.
HIPPIAS: A poor sort of derision, Socrates, for in deriding us when he can find no objection to our view, he will be deriding himself and will be derided by the company.
SOCRATES: Perhaps so. Perhaps, however, when he has the answer you suggest he may not be content just to laugh at me. So I forebode.
HIPPIAS: What do you mean?
SOCRATES: If he happens to have a stick with him, he will attempt to get at me with it very forcibly, unless I escape by running away.
HIPPIAS: What? Is the fellow somehow your lord and master? Surely he will be arrested and punished for such behavior? Or has Athens no system of justice, that she allows her citizens to commit wrongful assaults on one another?
SOCRATES: She forbids it absolutely.
HIPPIAS: Then he will be punished for his wrongful assaults.
SOCRATES: I do not think so, Hippias- emphatically not, if that were the answer I gave him. I think his assault would be justified.
HIPPIAS: Since that is your own opinion, well, I think so too.
SOCRATES: But may I go on to explain why, in my own opinion, that answer would justify an assault upon me? Or will you too assault me without trial, refusing me a hearing?
HIPPIAS: No, such a refusal would be monstrous. But what have you to say?
SOCRATES: I will continue on the same plan as a moment ago, pretending to be that fellow but not using to you the kind of offensive and grotesque words he would to me. He will say, I feel sure, Do you not think, Socrates, that you deserve a thrashing after chanting so badly out of tune a dithyramb so long and so irrelevant to the question you were asked? What do you mean? I shall say. What do I mean? Are you incapable of remembering that I asked about beauty itself, that which gives the property of being beautiful to everything to which it is added – to stone and wood, and man, and god, and every action and every branch of learning? I am asking, sir, what is beauty itself, and for all my shouting I cannot make you hear me. You might be a stone sitting beside me, a real millstone with neither ears nor brain. Would not you, Hippias, be indignant if in terror I were to answer him, But this is what Hippias declared beauty to be, although I kept on asking him, exactly as you do me, for that which is beautiful always and for everyone. Frankly, will not that answer make you indignant?"
HIPPIAS: I am quite sure, Socrates, that what I specified is beautiful to all, and will so appear to all.
SOCRATES: He will reply, and will be so in the future? For beauty, I take it, is always beautiful?
HIPPIAS: Certainly.
SOCRATES: And it was beautiful, too, in the past?
HIPPIAS: It was.
SOCRATES: Then he will go on, So this stranger from Elis asserted that it would have been beautiful for Achilles to be buried after his parents, and similarly for his grandfather Aeacus, and for the other children of gods, and for the gods themselves?
HIPPIAS: What is this? Tell him to go to— glory! These questions of his are irreverent, Socrates.
SOCRATES: Surely it is not exactly irreverent to say that these things are so, when someone else has asked the question?

HIPPIAS: Well, presumably not.
SOCRATES: Presumably he will then say, It is you who affirm that it is beautiful always and for everyone to bury his parents and be buried by his children. Does not 'everyone' include Heracles and all the others we mentioned a moment ago?
HIPPIAS: I did not mean to include the gods.
SOCRATES: Nor the heroes either, apparently.
HIPPIAS: Not if they were the children of gods.
SOCRATES: But if they were not?
HIPPIAS: Certainly.
SOCRATES: Then from your own argument, it now appears that the fate which is terrible and impious and shameful for Tantalus and Dardanus and Zethus is beautiful for Pelops and the other heroes of similar parentage?
HIPPIAS: I think so.
SOCRATES: He will go on, Then you think, contrary to what you said just now, that to bury one's parents and be buried by one's children is sometimes, and for some persons, shameful, and it looks more than ever impossible that it should become, or be, beautiful to everyone. So this definition meets the same fate as those we discussed earlier—the maiden and the pot—it is an even moxe ludicrous failure, offering us that which is beautiful to some men, and not to others. And to this very day, Socrates, you cannot answer the question you were asked—beauty, what is it? These and other like reproaches he will hurl at me with some justice, if I give him this answer. For the most part he talks to me about something after this fashion, but sometimes, as if in pity for my inexperience and lack of education, he himself proffers a question, and asks whether I think beauty is such and such, or it may be on some other subject—whatever he happens to be thinking about, and we are discussing.
HIPPIAS: What do you mean, Socrates?
SOCRATES: I will explain. My worthy Socrates, he says, don't give answers of that kind, and in that way—they are silly, easily torn to rags—but consider this suggestion. In one of our answers a little while ago we got hold of, and expressed, the idea that gold is beautiful or not beautiful according as it is placed in an appropriate setting, and similarly with everything else to which this qualification can be added. Now consider this appropriateness, and reflect on the general nature of the appropriate, and see whether it might not be beauty. Myself, I am in the habit of invariably agreeing to such surmises, for I can never think of anything to say, but you, do you think that the appropriate is beautiful?
HIPPIAS: Certainly, Socrates.
SOCRATES: Let us consider, and make sure that there is no deception.
HIPPIAS: So we ought.
SOCRATES: Come on then. Do we define the appropriate as that which by its presence causes the things in which it becomes present to appear beautiful, or causes them to be beautiful, or neither?
HIPPIAS: In my own opinion, that which causes things to appear beautiful. For example, a man may be a figure of fun, but when he wears clothes or shoes that fit well he does seem a finer man.
SOCRATES: But then if the appropriate really makes things appear more beautiful than they are, the appropriate is a kind of fraud in relation to beauty, and would not be that for which we are looking, would it? We were looking, I think, for that by which all beautiful things are beautiful, corresponding to that by which all great things are great, namely, excess-by this all great things are great, and great they must certainly be if they exceed, even though they do not appear so. Similarly we ask about beauty, by which all

beautiful things are beautiful whether they appear so or not-what can that be? It cannot be the appropriate, for on your own view this causes things to appear more beautiful than they are, and does not leave them to appear such as they are in reality. We ought to take that which causes things to be beautiful, as I said just now, whether they appear so or not, and try to define it-this is what we are looking for, if we are looking for beauty.
HIPPIAS: But, Socrates, the appropriate causes things both to be and to appear beautiful, when it is present.
SOCRATES: Then it is impossible for things that are in fact beautiful not to appear beautiful, since by hypothesis that which makes them appear beautiful is present in them?
HIPPIAS: It is impossible.
SOCRATES: Then it is our conclusion, Hippias, that all established usages and all practices which are in reality beautiful are regarded as beautiful by all men, and always appear so to them? Or do we think the exact opposite, that ignorance of them is prevalent, and that these are the chief of all objects of contention and fighting, both between individuals and between states?
HIPPIAS: The latter, I think. Ignorance prevails.
SOCRATES: It would not, if the appearance of beauty were but added to them, and it would be added if the appropriate were beautiful and moreover caused them to appear as well as be beautiful. It follows that if the appropriate is that which causes things to be in fact beautiful, then it would be that beauty for which we are looking, but still it would not be that which causes them to appear beautiful. If, on the other hand, that which causes things to appear beautiful is the appropriate, it is not that beauty for which we are looking. That for which we are looking makes things beautiful, but the same cause never could make things both appear and be either beautiful or anything else. We have then these alternatives—is the appropriate that which causes things to appear beautiful, or that which causes them to be so?
HIPPIAS: To appear, I think.
SOCRATES: Oh dear! Then the chance of finding out what the beautiful really is has slipped through our fingers and vanished, since the appropriate has proved to be something other than beautiful.
HIPPIAS: Upon my word, Socrates, I should never have thought it!
SOCRATES: But still, my friend, do not let us give up yet. I have still a sort of hope that the nature of beauty will reveal itself.
HIPPIAS: Yes indeed, it is not hard to discover. I am sure that if I were to retire into solitude for a little while and reflect by myself, I could define it for you with superlative precision.
SOCRATES: Hippias, Hippias, don't boast. You know what trouble it has already given us, and I am afraid it may get angry with us and run away more resolutely than ever. But what nonsense I am talking, for you, I suppose, will easily discover it when once you are alone. Still, I beg you most earnestly to discover it with me here, or, if you please, let us look for it together as we are now doing. If we find it, well and good; if not, I imagine I shall resign myself to my fate, and you will go away and discover it easily. Of course, if we find it now, you will not be annoyed by inquiries from me about the nature of your private discovery. So please look at your conception of beauty by itself, I define it as—pray give me your whole attention and stop me if I talk nonsense—well, let us assume that whatever is useful is beautiful. My ground for the proposition is as follows. We do not say that eyes are beautiful when they appear to be without the faculty of sight; we do when they have that faculty and so are useful for seeing. Is that correct?

HIPPIAS: Yes.
SOCRATES: Similarly we say that the whole body is beautifully made, sometimes for running, sometimes for wrestling, and we speak in the same way of all animals. A beautiful horse, or cock, or quail, and all utensils, and means of transport both on land and on sea, merchant vessels and ships of war, and all instruments of music and of the arts generally, and, if you like, practices and laws-we apply the word 'beautiful' to practically all these in the same manner. In each case we take as our criterion the natural constitution or the workmanship or the form of enactment, and whatever is useful we call beautiful, and beautiful in that respect in which it is useful and for the purpose for which and at the time at which it is useful, and we call ugly that which is useless in all these respects. Is not this your view also, Hippias?
HIPPIAS: It is.
SOCRATES: Then are we right in saying that the useful rather than everything else is beautiful?
HIPPIAS: We are right, surely, Socrates.
SOCRATES: Now that which has power to accomplish anything is useful for that for which it has power, but that which is powerless is useless, is it not?
HIPPIAS: Certainly.
SOCRATES: Power, then, is beautiful, and want of power is disgraceful or ugly.
HIPPIAS: Decidedly. Now other things, Socrates, testify for us that this is so, but especially political affairs; for in political affairs and in one's own state to be powerful is the most beautiful of all things, but to be powerless is the most disgraceful of all.
SOCRATES: Good! Then, for Heaven's sake, Hippias, is wisdom also for this reason the most beautiful of all things and ignorance the most disgraceful of all things?
HIPPIAS: Well, what do you suppose, Socrates?
SOCRATES: Just keep quiet, my dear friend; I am so afraid and wondering what in the world we are saying again.
HIPPIAS: What are you afraid of again, Socrates, since now your discussion has gone ahead most beautifully?
SOCRATES: I wish that might be the case; but consider this point with me: could a person do what he did not know how and was utterly powerless to do?
HIPPIAS: By no means; for how could he do what he was powerless to do?
SOCRATES: Then those who commit errors and accomplish and do bad things involuntarily, if they were powerless to do those things, would not do them?
HIPPIAS: Evidently not.
SOCRATES: But yet it is by power that those are powerful who are powerful for surely it is not by powerlessness.
HIPPIAS: Certainly not.
SOCRATES: And all who do, have power to do what they do?
HIPPIAS: Yes.
SOCRATES: Men do many more bad things than good, from childhood up, and commit many errors involuntarily.
HIPPIAS: That is true.
SOCRATES: Well, then, this power and these useful things, which are useful for accomplishing something bad — shall we say that they are beautiful, or far from it?
HIPPIAS: Far from it, in my opinion, Socrates.
SOCRATES: Then, Hippias, the powerful and the useful are not, as it seems, our beautiful.
HIPPIAS: They are, Socrates, if they are powerful and useful for good.
SOCRATES: Then that assertion, that the powerful and useful are beautiful without qualification, is gone; but was this, Hippias, what our soul wished to say, that the useful and the powerful for doing something good is the beautiful?

HIPPIAS: Yes, in my opinion.
SOCRATES: But surely this is beneficial; or is it not?
HIPPIAS: Certainly.
SOCRATES: So by this argument the beautiful persons and beautiful customs and all that we mentioned just now are beautiful because they are beneficial.
HIPPIAS: Evidently.
SOCRATES: Then the beneficial seems to us to be the beautiful, Hippias.
HIPPIAS: Yes, certainly, Socrates.
SOCRATES: But the beneficial is that which creates good.
HIPPIAS: Yes, it is.
SOCRATES: But that which creates is nothing else than the cause; am I right?
HIPPIAS: It is so.
SOCRATES: Then the beautiful is the cause of the good.
HIPPIAS: Yes, it is.
SOCRATES: But surely, Hippias, the cause and that of which the cause is the cause are different; for the cause could not well be the cause of the cause. But look at it in this way was not the cause seen to be creating?
HIPPIAS: Yes, certainly.
SOCRATES: By that which creates, then, only that is created which comes into being, but not that which creates. Is not that true?
HIPPIAS: That is true.
SOCRATES: The cause, then, is not the cause of the cause, but of that which comes into being through it.
HIPPIAS: Certainly.
SOCRATES: If, then, the beautiful is the cause of good, the good would come into being through the beautiful; and this is why we are eager for wisdom and all the other beautiful things, because their offspring, the good, is worthy of eagerness, and, from what we are finding, it looks as if the beautiful were a sort of father of the good.

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