

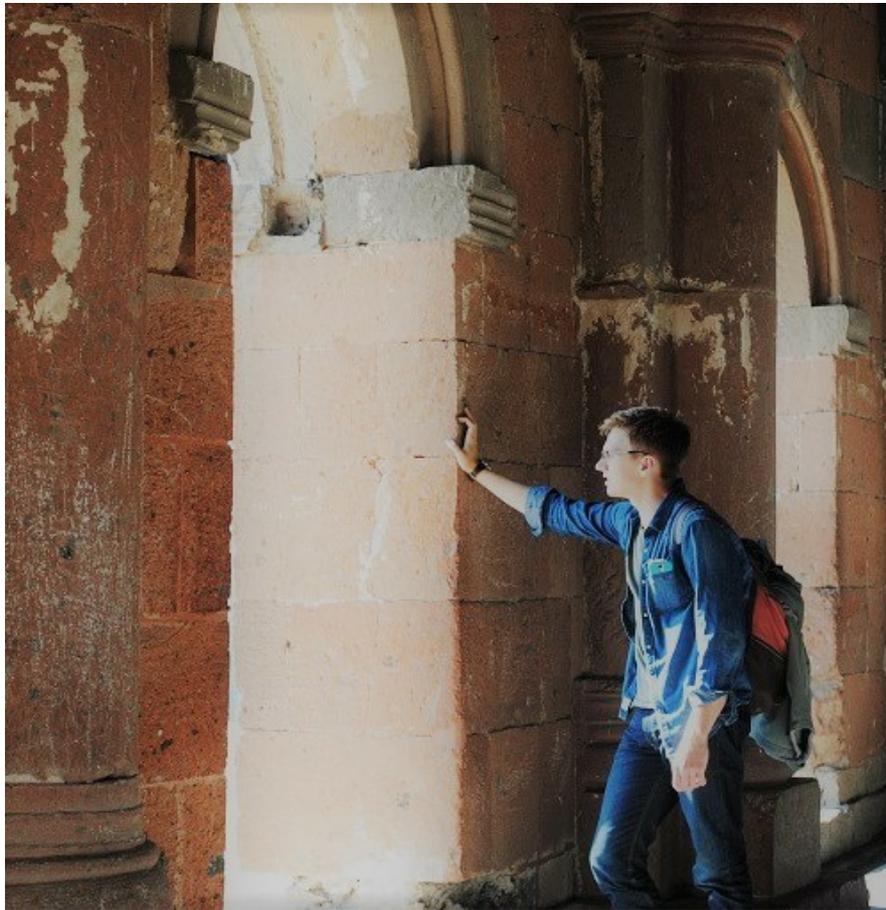


Humanum

ISSUES IN FAMILY, CULTURE & SCIENCE

2019 - ISSUE TWO

Adulthood: Entering the School of Life





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Educating To What End?

MARGARET HARPER MCCARTHY

An adult is someone who has ripened to the point of maturity, a grown-up. He or she has “graduated from school,” so to speak. Now what? The dreaded platitude intoned at every graduation comes to mind: “‘commencement’ means a beginning not an end.” But what is it we are about to begin? Or, better, into what precisely are we about to be initiated? A life of **faith**, or a life of skepticism about everything that brought us to this point in the first place, and the gradual dissipation of our vitality? This issue proposes instead: a “school of life” where “students”—now on their own two feet—test the truth they have received as they continue to seek it, and become teachers themselves.

This issue is about school (**again**) and its central pursuit: the truth about the world, and the One who made it. But what happens if school becomes the place that shuts that central pursuit down? Former Yale Professor **William Deresiewicz** contends that this is exactly what has happened in modern universities—above all in the Ivies—which are no longer liberal because they no longer place students before the end (telos) of human desire, the institution having become a mere means to other end-less means (money, prestige, another degree, a job, and retirement next to a golf course). Says Deresiewicz, students enter college as zombies, herded in by helicopter parents who have orchestrated their admission to it. There, they spend four more years adding the next line to their eventual resume, at the end of which they are then herded out to join the rat race, with no wherewithal to know that there might be something else [for which they might even sacrifice the rat race]. All of this makes them “excellent sheep,” on the way to the slaughter of success: soulless, fragile and anxious.

The re-issue of Christopher Lasch’s **Culture of Narcissism** is timely because the book goes to the heart of the matter. The “sheep” that populate the current landscape are not simply selfish. Rather, they are enfeebled, even self-loathing, because of their inability to consent to the fundamental goodness of their being, and ultimately, the very Source of it, the end of the liberal arts, as the soon-to-be canonized **John Henry Newman** said. Doubting the very principle by which they can grow and mature

narcissists cling to themselves, and, as a result, shrink from others.

Adults, on the other hand are open to others. One of the primary ways they are so is in helping young “plants” come to the same security in being they have, [by educating them](#). This issue looks at that pursuit, taking full advantage of reviewers and authors who are actually undertaking it: [headmasters of new schools](#), teachers, and teachers of teachers. These educators provide a much-needed discussion about the new school movement sweeping the English-speaking world. Now that the qualifier “classical” risks becoming an empty marketing tool, they ask what exactly it means, beyond “safety,” “conservative values,” even “[tools of learning](#).” Then, what it means for the [art of teaching itself](#), even the way we look at the [natural world](#) or learn [Shakespeare](#).

Reading this animated discussion, readers will see that something hopeful is afoot: an extensive, thoughtful, intelligent, self-correcting movement that is taking the long view about what is needed to restore life to our culture: the education of the next generation of real grown-ups.

Margaret Harper McCarthy is an Assistant Professor of Theology at the John Paul II Institute and the US editor for Humanum. She is married and a mother of three.

Keep reading! Our next article is Blessed John Henry Newman's "[Intimately Knit: Religious Knowledge in College Education](#)."

Intimately Knit: Religious Knowledge in College Education

BLESSED JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

Soon-to-be Saint John Henry Newman, set to be canonized on October 13, 2019, converted from Anglicanism to the Catholic Church in 1845. Anglicans and Catholics alike hail him as one of the greatest thinkers of the 19th century. Famous for his sermons, Newman also wrote major influential works on central themes such as truth, the Church, dogma, the development of doctrine, university education, and the relationship between faith and reason. Reflecting his own deep sense of the presence of God, Cardinal Newman's works invite us into a vital and personal relationship with God in the communion of the Church. Newman had a high view of how we can come to know God through reason, because of how He implicated himself in creation; he also had a high view of the Church as the "pillar of the cloud" that leads us with the kindly light of truth revealed in Jesus Christ. For Newman the light of truth is dogmatic and forms the context for coming to know God. As his motto said, "heart speaking unto heart."

The following excerpts are taken from *The Idea of a University* and reflect a positive view of our natural capacity for knowing God as our Creator and the claim this knowledge has on us. This passage also expresses the fatherly goodness of God in creating a world full of His many "impressions." For Newman, God is central to all knowledge. Thus, seeking the truth and loving all that is good and beautiful is a pursuit that opens us toward a life of faith so that we may know, love, and serve God and gain happiness with him in this world and the next.

—Fr. Richard Kramer is the Director of Vocations and Clergy Formation for the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter. A former Episcopal priest, Fr. Kramer is a married and lives with his family in Houston, TX.

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...I lay it down that all knowledge forms one whole, because its subject-matter is one; for the universe in its length and breadth is so intimately knit together, that we cannot separate off portion from portion, and operation from operation, except by a mental abstraction; and then again, as to its Creator, though He of course in His own Being is infinitely separate from it, and Theology has its departments towards which human knowledge has no relations, yet He has so implicated Himself with it, and taken it into His very bosom, by His presence in it, His providence over it, His impressions upon it, and His influences through it, that we cannot truly or fully contemplate it without in some main aspects contemplating Him....(38)

...For instance, I mean, for this is the main point, that, as in the human frame there is a living principle, acting upon it and through it by means of volition, so, behind the veil of the visible universe, there is an invisible, intelligent Being, acting on and through it, as and when He will. Further, I mean that this invisible Agent is in no sense a soul of the world, after the analogy of human nature, but, on the contrary, is absolutely distinct from the world, as being its Creator, Upholder, Governor, and Sovereign Lord. Here we are at once brought into the circle of doctrines which the idea of God embodies. I mean then by the Supreme Being, one who is simply self-dependent, and the only Being who is such; moreover, that He is without beginning or Eternal, and the only Eternal; that in consequence He has lived a whole eternity by Himself; and hence that He is all-sufficient, sufficient for His own blessedness, and all-blessed, and ever-blessed. Further, I mean a Being, who, having these prerogatives, has the Supreme Good, or rather is the Supreme Good, or has all the attributes of Good in infinite intensesness; all wisdom, all truth, all justice, all love, all holiness, all beautifulness; who is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent; ineffably one, absolutely perfect; and such, that what we do not know and cannot even imagine of Him, is far more wonderful than what we do and can. I mean One who is sovereign over His own will and actions, though always according to the eternal Rule of right and wrong, which is Himself. I mean, moreover, that He created all things out of nothing, and preserves them every moment, and could destroy them as easily as He made them; and that, in consequence, He is separated from them by an abyss, and is incommunicable in all His attributes. And further, He has stamped upon all things, in the hour of their creation, their respective natures, and has given them their work and mission and their length of days, greater or less, in their appointed place. I mean, too, that He is ever present with His works, one by one, and confronts everything He has made by His particular and most loving Providence, and manifests Himself to each according to its needs: and has on rational beings imprinted the moral law, and given

them power to obey it, imposing on them the duty of worship and service, searching and scanning them through and through with His omniscient eye, and putting before them a present trial and a judgment to come.... (46□47)

...All that is good, all that is true, all that is beautiful, all that is beneficent, be it great or small, be it perfect or fragmentary, natural as well as supernatural, moral as well as material, comes from Him. (50)

...I say then, if the various branches of knowledge, which are the matter of teaching in a University, so hang together, that none can be neglected without prejudice to the perfection of the rest, and if Theology be a branch of knowledge, of wide reception, of philosophical structure, of unutterable importance, and of supreme influence, to what conclusion are we brought from these two premises but this? That to withdraw Theology from the public schools is to impair the completeness and to invalidate the trustworthiness of all that is actually taught in them.

...I say, then, secondly:—if this Science, even as human reason may attain to it, has such claims on the regard, and enters so variously into the objects, of the Professor of Universal Knowledge, how can any Catholic imagine that it is possible for him to cultivate Philosophy and Science with due attention to their ultimate end, which is Truth, supposing that system of revealed facts and principles, which Constitutes the Catholic Faith, which goes so far beyond nature, and which he knows to be most true, be omitted from among the subjects of his teaching? In a word, Religious Truth is not only a portion, but a condition of general knowledge. To blot it out is nothing short, if I may so speak, of unraveling the web of University Teaching. It is, according to the Greek proverb, to take the Spring from out of the year; it is to imitate the preposterous proceeding of those tragedians who represented a drama with the omission of its principal part. (52□53)

Excerpted from John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907). Available online through [The National Institute for New Studies](#).

Blessed John Henry Newman (1801□1890) was a renowned British theologian and convert to Catholicism. He was created a cardinal in 1878.

Keep reading! Our next article is Peter D. Crawford's "[Education Right Side Up](#)."

Education Right Side Up

PETER D. CRAWFORD

The contemporary discourse on education is dominated by thoughtlessness. As we argue and debate educational issues on radio, television, internet, and social media, these exchanges rarely consider the essence of education itself. Mainstream discussions have little to do even with pedagogy or curriculum. Insofar as education is held hostage to the struggles that grip the adult world—tied to concerns about money and temptations to power—the horizon of the child is held hostage. All of this is no more than to observe with Chesterton or Pieper that we live in a world that is “upside down.”

The issue of what education is all about is seemingly self-evident, and therefore easily passed over. Conventionally, we recognize the importance of education as an effective way to launch into what we refer to as the “real world.” Education unlocks the door to a prestigious college and eventually a job that is likely to grant stability. This sort of education will grant us technical skills, expertise, and applicable computational ability. In other words, we most easily use the word “education” as if it were merely a tool. Education is about the acquisition of knowledge not for its own sake, but because it opens the door to power.

The result of this conventional notion of education is the industrial model realized in most public schools, with its emphasis on immediate specialization, teaching to the test, an early and stringent concentration on STEM, and greater levels of technological utilization in the classroom. Education in this context is perceived in technological terms. A student’s pursuit of knowledge acquisition is conceived of as a computer uploading data. Without even addressing the philosophical concerns one might have with this mode of education, it so often fails by its own standards. And, not being reflective enough, educators are at a loss to realize the source of its fault.

This mainstream stance has been challenged by the classical education movement, a much-needed new forum for meaningful discussion about education. This movement staunchly adheres to a tradition of education which favors great works of literature and philosophy and a dialectical pedagogy. Without a doubt, when implemented well, these classical programs are superior on every level to the industrial style of schools,

often dominating conventional schools by their own measures. This is because the classical impulse has deeper intuition about what a human person is and how a person learns.

As the term “classical” has grown into a brand, however, it risks being reduced to something secondary, however important that may be. For example, as classical programs continue to spread, they are becoming increasingly guilty of the very utilitarianism they originally mean to oppose. The argument goes something like this: whereas other forms of education rely on the assimilation of data, the classical approach teaches children how to think and speak well. (Very good.) And, why is it important to be able to think well or to speak well? Because our children will be even more competitive when applying to colleges or when entering the job market! This line of thinking, however true, still presupposes that the purpose of education is found in career achievement.

Another reduction that degrades the vitality of classical academies is that of making them the tools of political agendas. Given the violence of social debate there are many who see education as a means to effect change in the world. Whether progressive, neo-conservative, or conservative, these camps identify education as an opportunity to arm the ascending future with weapons and tools needed to push the battle lines in one direction or the other. This impulse also treats education as if it were a tool.

Finally, the modifier “classical” is often just a code word for “safe” and wholesome, with good books and a Latin requirement.

Such reasons for establishing, and sending children to, a classical school are by no means insignificant. The importance of technical ability, dependable work, preparation for taking a courageous stand on the battlefield of our social topography, not to mention safety, are no small matters. That said, it seems obvious that the term “classical” has been watered down. These issues, however important they may be, do not get to the essence and purpose of education.

What is education? In its essence, education is concerned with human formation. While not particularly earth shattering, the importance of this central concern lies in the answer we give to the question about what it means to be human. In his pivotal essay on education, “[Education as an Introduction to Reality](#),” Robert Spaemann answers it when he says that human formation is an “introduction to reality,” which reality is, in the first instance, love, beginning with the love of his mother or father.

That education is an introduction to love implies that the most important aspect of

education occurs on the dialectical interpersonal level. The fundamental soil of education is culture and community. The implication is that we must gather tutors who are living lessons of the wisdom, sanctity, and heroism we wish to form in our youth. Our immediate impulse as a society is to focus on models, curricular packages or systems that will fix our educational dilemmas and then hire experts to facilitate these models. In the years that I have worked in schools, both as a teacher and as headmaster of two classical schools, the vast majority of questions I have received from prospective parents revolve around curricular questions and are generally never about the culture of the school. But at the most fundamental level, schools are not models of curricular patterns—they are communities, small poleis. These communities require a good curriculum, but the single most important aspect of the school is found in the people, beginning with the teachers.

This means that the first question we should ask is not about book lists, but about how one builds a human community. The classical curriculum has rich, deep wells for students to drink from. The objects of study in a true classical academy are most conducive to a truly human education. Nevertheless, this curriculum alone is not sufficient to address the deepest concerns of education. Where will we find the passionate, dynamic, engaging, and holy faculty members who will serve as the first living lessons for our children? If it is true that our teachers are the most powerful lesson for our students, how can we mentor and challenge our teachers to be better than themselves, always growing, always hungry to be the saints and heroes that our children need to be exposed to? How can we teach these teachers to teach powerfully? If we have well thought out and meaningful answers to these questions and can also expose students to Sophocles, Euclidean Geometry, Latin, and Jane Austen, then we have truly achieved something. How do we, as faculty members, foster a culture that inspires a sense of wonder and holy awe in our young? How do we found traditions? What opportunities are there for rites of passage in a modern school? How can we foster sanctifying habits in the lives of the children we serve?

If the fundamentally communal nature of a school is overlooked—as it often is, the full depth of the human person is forgotten. While lip service is frequently paid to “educating the whole person,” it is clear that the education of the heart has been done little justice. When we see the number of young Catholics leaving the Church, or the tremendous suffering so common in our teenagers, we must ask whether we have given them the “manna” of the heart, so desperately needed, especially now in our current cultural wasteland. We have forgotten to educate the child’s heart, or perhaps thought it someone else’s responsibility, or perhaps just impossible.

What does it mean to educate a child's heart? To answer this question, we must understand what motivates the heart. On the most rudimentary level, the child's heart is the throne of spiritedness, or thumos as the Greeks called it. This thumos must be formed. The risk is that a child's spiritedness be either suppressed or directed to the bad. How can the teacher direct that spiritedness to the Good? By being invited upon an odyssey, an epic quest filled with wonders and opportunities for feats of courage and daring. This is what inspires the "warrior spirit." Attached to the physical education that our children require, it falls to us to develop an emotional athleticism in our students. Though we may be tempted to blame emotional imbalances on puberty and fluctuations of hormones, we must help our children develop stalwart hearts that can withstand the attacks that are bound to arise as they reach adulthood.

But to educate the heart means much more than to educate spiritedness. If we are to take seriously this idea of a formation of the heart, then we must ask what a formation of love will provide for our children. Here we must be very specific. A formation of love means at least two things. First, we must attend carefully to the objects of love. What are our children falling in love with? The human heart longs for the depths and hungers for the heights. Our task as educators is to reveal to it that for which it already longs. Second, we must help students in the action of love. What is it to love? What response does true love demand of us? Here we can see most clearly the importance of the living, vibrant community that acts as a living lesson of love for our children.

We cannot claim to educate the whole person without a serious consideration of the body. Physical education programs have continued to shut down in schools throughout the country, including many classical academies. This trend is generally justified insofar as sports are available to students after school. But physical formation cannot be left to sports. While conventional sports develop many important attributes in our children, they are insufficient to the fundamental education of the body. Rather, they develop specialized physical skills that presuppose a more fundamental education of the body, which most children never receive.

True physical education entails the pursuit of embodied excellence. It considers the structure of the human body, comes to understand its nature, and begins with fundamental bodily excellences. In our sedentary culture, basic human movements and postures are challenging for most children, including athletes. Children should be able to squat, roll, crawl, run, sprint, jump, throw, swim, dance, wrestle, lift or carry a load, and climb. These movements should be treated both as skills to be perfected and

forums for play. This understanding of physical training is classical going back to Greek athletics which were built upon the proper human movements just described. If every classical school required a gymnastics class each morning, then their educational engagement would be unparalleled. In the English-speaking world, the word “gymnasium” came to mean a physical study. In continental Europe, on the other hand, the word designates a prestigious intellectual academy. The underlying connection goes back to Plato who understood that the physical education of a child was a fundamental need at the heart of education as such.

If we are willing to admit that the body and heart must also be included, are we confident that we have done justice to the intellectual sphere? Conventionally, schools tend to reduce intellectual formation to an encyclopedic dimension. Classes focus primarily on factoids and computation. While the memorization of facts is important, it is also essential that students be brought into the narrative level of understanding. To know that the Battle of Hastings occurred in 1066 is good, but primarily for the sake of telling a better story. These facts are important because they draw the students into the drama of Harold Godwinson’s defense of the Anglo-Saxon crown against a new order of power represented by the Norman Conquest of William. While it is significant for students to memorize the fact that one adds the numerators and not the denominators of like fractions, they should come to understand why: because a fraction represents the relation between a part and a whole. This fundamental ripple of understanding gives rise to larger circles of inquiry. How does the Norman Invasion alter the English institution of kingship? How is a denominator different from any number we have seen in arithmetic up to this point? Ultimately, philosophical questions are raised: What is the purpose of political power? What is a number? Listening to the smallest whispers can lead us to ask the most majestic questions. This is the cradle of wonder.

Classical academies provide richer courses of study than their conventional counterparts. Their students read better literature, study classical languages, and, if they are fortunate, many even develop as mathematical thinkers rather than mere computational experts. In the very best schools, these intellectual virtues are explicitly fostered. Here we begin to see the glimmer of formation—not just knowledge acquisition, but the cultivation of understanding—that is possible with a deep curriculum. Still, too frequently the intellectual formation provided here is restricted to ratio and all too rarely fosters intellectus, thereby leaving behind the higher portion of reason.

All this begs the question—could one have a great education without the classics? I

believe a good deal could be accomplished with humble children, a good faculty, and no other curriculum or classroom than a healthy garden. Anyone who doubts this has overlooked the epic battles of insects, the flaming fire of the sun illuminating a pool, the language of earth and roots. He has not met the summer swallow, witnessed a dragonfly draw flame, known the wisdom of dirty hands, or uttered a prayer of thanks for the gift of a light breeze. The light of truth illuminates the world. Add to this encounter the study of Latin, astronomy, and the writings of Homer, Sophocles, Aquinas, and Dante, and what is possible is something to be marveled at. But take away the vibrant community, the virtue of humility, or the love of the teacher, and the classics alone may be insufficient to form the minds, hearts and bodies of our young. It is true that Plato or Aquinas or Dostoyevsky plumb the depths of humanity, but it is also the case that reading their works will only truly form our children in the context of a holy culture.

What we study—whether a star, a beetle, a poem, an angle, or a philosophical treatise—should cause us to be filled with wonder. We must ask not only what will my child know but also, what will my child marvel at? What will my child grow to love? What will inspire her hopes and her fears? Here we see the intricate crossroads of the full human dimension, the stage for a right side up education. Education is a formation in reality. This means that it introduces our children to the “right side up” world. To study a reality is to learn that this thing is a gift, that we are blessed insofar as this gift calls us by name and asks us to enter into the posture of the fiat before the generosity of the Creator, Christ. This is the world that is illuminated in the truth. As Dante wrote: “All things created have an order in themselves, and this begets the form that lets the universe resemble God” (Paradiso I, 103–105). It is within this culture of love that, as if by accident, the student begins to softly discern that sacramental structure of his or her own being. “I am imago dei.” At the heart of a true education is the introduction to this sacramental structure.

Peter Crawford is the headmaster of the [Saint Jerome Institute](#), a liberal arts high school in Washington, D.C. He lives in Hyattsville, Maryland with his wife and five children.

Keep reading! The next article is [Christine Myers' "Crisis and Opportunity: The Drama of Growing Faithful"](#), a must for all those who interested in the work of Fr. Romano Guardini.

Crisis and Opportunity: The Drama of Growing Faithful

CHRISTINE MYERS

The statistics are alarming. Around sixty-six percent of young adults (age 18–24) are not affiliated with any religion, and thirty percent say they do not believe there is a God. Even young adults who grew up with a religious identity are falling away from their faith and are less likely to return to it than previous generations.[1] Americans in general are less religious than they used to be.

It seems that our society is undergoing a large-scale crisis of faith. We who continue to believe in God do not want our sacred places to be secularized as they have been in parts of Europe, with churches converted into clothing shops and skate parks.[2] Most of all, we want both our contemporaries and future generations to drink from the same life-giving streams that vivify us and give us hope.

What could turn back the tidal wave of secularization? Faith. As St. John assures us, “This is the victory that overcomes the world” (1 Jn 5:4b).

Faith itself is the answer to the crisis of faith. But the term “faith” has many dimensions as you can quickly see by opening the Catechism of the Catholic Church. There we read that faith is the only adequate response to God’s Revelation; it is the complete submission of the whole person, intellect and will, to God who reveals; it is a personal adherence to God; faith is belief in Jesus Christ, the only Son of the Father, and in the Holy Spirit; it is a gift of God, a supernaturally infused virtue; faith is also a human act accomplished with the interior help of the Holy Spirit; it is a foretaste of eternal life.[3]

Growth and perseverance in faith has always been a challenge. St. Paul writes, “Fight a good fight by holding faith and a good conscience. Some, by rejecting conscience, have made a shipwreck of their faith” (1 Tm 1:18–19). Quoting this Scripture, the Catechism warns us that we can lose the gift of faith. If we want to keep it, “we must nourish it with the word of God,” “beg the Lord to increase” it, and live a life of charity and hope while being “rooted in the faith of the Church” (CCC, 162).

It would be impossible to discuss all of these elements here. Taking for granted that God is generous with His grace and is blessing our children with the gift of faith in Baptism, I would like to look at one aspect of the growth and development of faith: its human side.

To shed some light on the issue, I will take up several helpful observations from Romano Guardini, a 20th-century Italian-German theologian and masterful educator. The life of faith and its development was his subject of study. First, he reminds us that faith will not grow to maturity except by its being integrated into the whole life and personality of the believer, but this integration often occurs by way of crisis. A faith that is never tried never grows to maturity.

Guardini was no stranger to trials of faith. Growing up in an Italian family in Germany, he found himself caught between two cultures and struggled to find his way as a young person. For reasons he could not identify, his faith in God began to wane in adolescence: God seemed not to exist. Remaining faithful to his prayers and moral sense, he passed through this crisis and emerged with greater conviction and trust than he had before, but Guardini's faith was never static. After spending decades allowing the light of faith to shed its rays on the culture and thought of his time, the priest and professor again faced the impression of God's "distance," now experienced in old age. His writings on the subject are some of his most poignant. I will return to them later.

What is needed to grow more faithful through the trials of life instead of less?

The divine gift of faith is given (we might say incarnated) in each individual believer with his particular characteristics and situation. The faith belongs to the Church, yes, but it is received and lived by each person. For this reason, Guardini surmises that a crisis of faith is rarely about the fine points of doctrine. Since faith involves the whole human person, there are many reasons why it may become problematic. He lists several sources for such a crisis: 1. disillusionment and scandals, 2. false ideas about faith and God, 3. changes in religious environment, and 4. moral struggles. In each form of crisis there is both danger and opportunity for the individual, and when the crisis is wide-spread, there is danger and opportunity for the Church as a whole.

Let us consider the four possibilities in turn.

1. Disillusionment

Disappointment or scandal caused by the failure of leaders and mentors can shake our faith in what they taught us. We might be suspicious that their teaching is tainted by their own moral corruption—and it might really be so. Take, for example, Marcial Maciel Degollado. The double life of this corrupt founder of the Legion of Christ was protected in part by the rule of “charity” he gave the community—it forbade any criticism of a superior. I also once met a woman from another country who practiced her Catholic faith but confessed to having serious doubts. She had been molested by a priest when she was much younger. The local bishop ignored the complaints that she and other women had brought against the cleric. She spent years struggling with anger before she found peace in separating the misdeed and its mishandling from God himself. “I learned that God is one thing and the Church is another,” she said to me, with both her words and her tone of voice betraying a wound that was not quite healed.

Less dramatic examples of scandal come in ordinary ways. Similar to the realization that our parents are only human, we must come to terms with the weaknesses and character flaws of our religious mentors...without giving up on Christ, the Church, or our religious mentors.

Hopefully, in more cases than not, our religious leaders help us come through a crisis with renewed faith. Sometimes a small thing matters immensely. I experienced the power of many seemingly ordinary gestures of kindness at times of faith crisis in my own life. One such gesture stands out in my mind. While living abroad and pursuing a time of formation in a religious community, I recall passing through something like a spiritual fog. God seemed distant and unreal. I began to experience troubling temptations against the faith. One evening, a group of monks from Africa visited us. The prior of their community came over to me, asked my name and shook my hand. His eyes were so kind and loving. When I returned to my room that night, I thought to myself, “I don’t know if God exists, but I can’t live without the love I saw in that monk.” I knew the love that he expressed had come from his faith in Jesus Christ. His kindness affirmed my own faith in that love. The spiritual fog I had been living under dissipated as soon as I renewed the gift of my life to that love’s Source.

2. False Ideas

This first set of examples about scandal leads us directly to the second: false ideas about God, faith, and the Church can cause a crisis of faith. For example, apart from the scandal of sinful actions themselves, there can be a set of false ideas about God and

the Church that must be purified and refined. How is it that God chooses sinful human beings to represent him? Or viewed from the other direction, can God forgive me and call me into a relationship with Him? To answer these questions, faith must seek understanding through prayer, study, and holy conversation. The only remedy to an unformed faith is a timely formation. It must take objections to the faith seriously if it is to be convincing or helpful.

Guardini cites the apparent contradiction between faith and science as one of the main sources of crisis in his time. Many young Christians—Catholics being numbered among them—list the **contradiction between faith and science** as a reason why they no longer practice the faith.

The difficulty of reconciling modern science with the ancient science of the faith is found not so much in the apparent contradiction of certain doctrines, such as evolution versus creation, but, rather, in a clash of worldviews. How can we reconcile our culture's exaltation of radical self-determination with our faith's message that we are lovingly fashioned by our Creator? These are more than mere ideas: they take concrete forms, reinforced by our technology and sanctioned by our government. We are applauded for manipulating realities that were once simply received with the given structure of our world and bodies, such as gender, the differentiation of species, and human reproduction. Where this contemporary worldview contradicts Divine Revelation, we need a serious and refined intellectual formation. Moreover, we need a Catholic culture that offers a lived alternative. When faith is strong enough to shed its light on thought and culture, it purifies what is antithetical to human dignity and humbly keeps what is authentically human.

There is no way around the difficulty of this encounter between commonly-held but antithetical cultural views and the faith of the Church, which has its own authority and generative power. If we were to give a name to the widespread crisis of faith that is carrying away the younger generations in its wake, it might well be the absence of a faith that is fruitful in the production of a vibrant culture. Some Catholic writers such as Fr. Matt Fish and Robert Royal are reminding us that faith needs culture to survive. A faith without culture is a dying thing.

3. Environment

Another cause for a crisis of faith, according to Guardini, is the change in one's religious environment. He has in mind the student who leaves home and finds himself surrounded by an environment that dramatically differs from home. The structures

that supported his religious life now give way, and he is challenged to stand on his own two feet. Often enough the young person fails to take responsibility for his own faith and religious practice. Guardini states that this situation isn't so much a faith crisis as a revelation of the weakness of the young person's convictions. He never had a serious faith to call into question. Unlike the young adults of previous generations, who came back to the practice of faith as they married and began raising a family, current statistics show that the young adults of today are not returning to the faith. Is this evidence of the weakness of their faith convictions? Is it a consequence of the increasing hostility of the popular culture to traditional beliefs?

Regarding the need to build a Catholic home life and culture, this point made by Guardini also reminds us that young people need to be challenged to take responsibility for themselves and their faith even before they leave home. If the lack of culture is deadly for faith, so too is a superficial personal faith that has no depth.

4. Morality

The faith crisis caused by a moral struggle is perhaps the type of difficulty I have encountered most among my friends and in my work at a Catholic parish. How often have we heard the story of a Catholic couple that marries only to later divorce, and because of this, to leave the practice of the faith? Likewise, other difficulties with sexual morality and identity (premarital sex and cohabitation, contraceptives, gender identity and same-sex attraction) have caused a number of people to part ways with the Catholic Church. Jean Twenge states in her book *iGen* that the young adults she interviewed consistently cited their variance with traditional teachings regarding sexual morality (including sex outside of marriage, "gay marriage," and LGBT issues) among their reasons for not attending church.^[4] The promotion of sins by the broader culture only increases the sense that Christ's teachings—particularly regarding marriage and sexuality—are impracticable and oppressive. And in some ways, we must agree. Without Christ in our lives, these moral teachings are impracticable! It is the grace of Christ that strengthens us to live the Christian moral life. Without recourse to prayer, the Sacraments, and the communion of the Church, we find ourselves too weak to live according to the teachings of Christ. Our crises of faith that stem from moral struggles come in part from our "boot-strap" mentality and individualism. We think we should be able to do it all on our own, and we expect it to be relatively easy.

We must also admit the objective reality of sin. Our rationalization of sin does not mitigate its consequences in our lives, especially when we have turned a blind eye to

our faults or convinced ourselves they are not that bad. Conceding to sin and acting on temptation has a dramatic effect on the life of grace in our souls. Less serious sins dispose us to greater sins. All sin weakens our will and darkens our intellect. We deaden our spiritual senses and eventually lose the life of grace. Unprepared for sacrifices at the beginning of our spiritual lives and proudly self-confident, we can easily lose our faith.

What does faith need to grow and thrive?

I began this article with a summary of points from the Catechism on faith and how we can nourish ours. If we are to keep the faith, we must read God's Word, pray, live the life of charity and hope, and remain rooted in the faith of the Church (cf. CCC, 162). The passage reads as a summary of the Christian life. Are we doing these things?

Guardini's own crisis of faith as a young man is quite instructive. Whatever the reason for his difficulty, one can identify key behaviors on his part that helped him resolve it. Guardini was formed in philosophy and made use of St. Thomas Aquinas' famous proofs of God's existence to strengthen his belief, but he also sought the answer to his faith crisis in prayer and Sacred Scripture. He and his friend Karl Neundörfer, who was going through a similar trial, were praying and reading in the upstairs part of the Guardini family residence when they both received the insight they needed. Opening the Scriptures spontaneously, Guardini came upon Mathew 16:25, "For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." He understood that he must give his life away fully to God, but also reasoned that the only way this would be possible was through the objective reality of the Church. The Church, with its authority and structure, would prevent him from an illusion of self-gift when he was really holding fast to himself. Not long after this time of prayer, Guardini and his friend would both decide to enter the seminary. This decision would come after being impressed by the peace and devotion of Benedictine monks. Guardini would not himself become a monk, but he was inspired by their witness, becoming a Benedictine oblate and diocesan priest.

These biographical details highlight several important elements for passing through a faith crisis successfully: intellectual formation, prayer, Scriptures, holy friendship, Christian witness. These all flow from the life of the Church and bring us back to the Church. The young Guardini did not give up his moral life or succumb to his temptations; rather, he sought God in prayer, Scripture and holy friendship. He recognized that the Church was the place God would meet him with certainty and

welcome the gift of his life. This is true regardless of the specific vocation one might have.

There is one more element that Guardini can give us to help us through our own faith crises. Like St. John of the Cross, Guardini came to hope beyond hope and believe without any sensible consolation. His is a faith that comes to rely upon God absolutely, hoping to receive from God everything promised by Him. Guardini intuited that his experience would become more common, because the less the world is shaped by faith, the more that faith must survive without exterior help. The faith of our times has to be pure and ready for sacrifice. Faith comes to fulfillment in our loving union with Christ's self-offering. Such a faith has come of age. It is fruitful. It will be passed on. It will give birth to genuine culture.

We can do nothing better to promote the growth of our faith than to open our heart to [loving God]; to be generous enough to desire the existence of a being who surpasses us; to wish to encounter the Most High in order to give ourselves to Him; to adopt the bold, joyous attitude of one who does not fear for himself, for he knows that the gift of oneself is stronger and more creative than self-containment can be.[5]

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Keep reading! The next article is on [science education with the help of educational genius Charlotte Mason](#).

[1] Jean M. Twenge, *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood—and What That Means for the Rest of Us* (New York: Atria Paperback, 2018), 121, 124.

[2] *Ibid.*, 119.

[3] CCC, 142–143, 150–152, 154, 163.

[4] Twenge, 139.

[5] Romano Guardini, *Living the Drama of Faith* (Manchester: Sophia Institute Press, 1998), 62.

Growing Time: Thoughts on Charlotte Mason and Teaching a More Natural Science

SOPHIA O'BRIEN

When Keats praised the mellow fruitfulness of autumn, he was describing the changes of the natural world around us. But as students return this fall to a new school year, I cannot but meditate on the inward maturing and ripening that must accompany the labor of learning. For many of the youngest students, however, the expectations of early academic preparedness have become an oppressive regime. Certainly, there are schools where “high mental discipline” may be found combined with “conscientious development of character,” and with “such spiritual insight and teaching as help the child into a better life,” but of course, there are schools and there are schools.^[1] Discerning the difference is essential, but difficult. Happily, the earnest parent who desires a better life for his child may find help and inspiration in an unlikely place—the writings of a late-19th-century British educator of whom most will have never heard: Charlotte Mason.

Mason gave her life to education. She founded the House of Education in Ambleside, England, and developed a “working and philosophic theory of education.”^[2] Her years of teaching, administration, and reflection yielded a series of six volumes, produced over the course of her life: *Home Education*, *Parents and Children*, *School Education*, *Ourselves*, *Formation of Character*, and *A Philosophy of Education*. In the first of these volumes, Mason suggests a remedial course for what she describes as a time of extraordinary social and educational pressure:

perhaps a mother’s first duty to her children is to secure for them a quiet growing time, a full six years of passive receptive life, the waking part of it spent for the most part out in the fresh air. And this, not for the gain in bodily health alone—body and soul, heart and mind, are nourished with food convenient for them when the children are let alone, let to live without friction and without stimulus

amongst happy influences which incline them to be good.[3]

In contrast to the pervasive method of educating the very youngest children through instructional lessons over many hours at school, Mason's approach is to nourish the child's physical, mental, and spiritual needs on long hours in the open air of the countryside, left mostly to himself—his mother's quiet, interested presence (what Mason termed "masterly inactivity") is all that is required. There he communes directly with the things of the created world. The business of the educator is simply to bring the child into a relationship with as many things and thoughts as possible—not the signs of things, as presented in abstract lessons, but the vital things themselves.[4] Her contention is that this period of "fieldwork" for the young child is the necessary preliminary labor which establishes habits of life and learning that lay the foundation for later scientific, "laboratory" work. As a more mature student, the child will be able to abstract, dissect, and argue fruitfully, but in the early years he must first wonder and delight in nature and love its Creator. It is precisely this quiet growing time which produces the child who fits Irenaeus' maxim: the glory of God is man fully alive.

Mason believed that the physical and intellectual needs of young children are intertwined: what the body requires for health (ample air, movement, and sustenance), so too does the mind (mental rest, mental work, and ideas from observing nature and from worthy stories). The child that spends "twenty-two of the twenty-four hours ...pent within the four walls of a house" suffers not only from bodily atrophy, but also mental. The mind must be fed and worked in order to be vigorous, and Mason believed that the "eager, active, curious, hungry mind" of a child requires the "name and look and behavior in situ of every natural object he can get at." [5] The child of today faces even greater dangers of bodily and mental inanition than those of Mason's day, but the real danger lies not in giving the child too much mental work, but in giving him the wrong kind:

there is no sort of knowledge to be got in these early years so valuable to children as that which they get for themselves of the world they live in. Let them once get touch with Nature, and a habit is formed which will be a source of delight through life. We were all meant to be naturalists, each in his degree, and it is inexcusable to live in a world so full of the marvels of plant and animal life and to care for none of these things.[6]

To first observe the natural world, then to delight in it, and finally to care for it are the hallmarks of Mason's method of education for the young child. If the ultimate aim of

education, as she claims, is to “give a full life,” then to ask, “How much does he care” is tantamount to asking, “How full is the life he has before him?”[7]

The child’s engagement with the created world engenders reverence for life as a “wonderful and awful gift” of the Creator even as it establishes the groundwork for a scientific education. The child acquires such invaluable scientific habits of mind as attention, accuracy, truthfulness, training in noticing differences and resemblances, and the power to classify.[8]

Of the teaching of Natural Philosophy, I will only remind the reader...that there is no part of a child’s education more important than that he should lay, by his own observation, a wide basis of facts towards scientific knowledge in the future. He must live hours daily in the open air...must look and touch and listen; must be quick to note, consciously, every peculiarity of habit or structure, in beast, bird, or insect; the manner of growth and fructification of every plant. He must be accustomed to ask why—Why does the wind blow? Why does the river flow? Why is a leaf-bud sticky? And do not hurry to answer his questions for him; let him think his difficulties out so far as his small experience will carry him. Above all, when you come to the rescue, let it not be in the ‘cut and dried’ formula of some miserable little text-book; let him have all the insight available and you will find that on many scientific questions the child may be brought at once to the level of modern thought. Do not embarrass him with too much scientific nomenclature. If he discover for himself (helped, perhaps, by a leading question or two), by comparing an oyster and his cat, that some animals have backbones and some have not, it is less important that he should learn the terms vertebrate and invertebrate than that he should class the animals he meets with according to this difference.[9]

Throughout the early sections of *Home Education*, Mason describes the most enchanting scenes of children making discoveries of the world around them, taking in what they can “of the beauty of earth and heavens.”[10] I recommend to the reader the sections “How to See” and “The Educational Uses of Sight-Seeing” for examples of the liveliness of the science lesson derived from an “exploring expedition.” The scene that plays out shows both the vitality and spontaneous delight of the children’s lessons in nature, but also enumerates the kinds of intellectual habits they are forming all the while. Once they have had their romp of vigorous play in the open air, the children turn to a number of pursuits which form the backbone of Mason’s approach to teaching a “more natural science.” These pursuits include lessons like “picture-painting” and “sight-seeing,” keeping a calendar of firsts and a nature diary

with brush-drawings of the flowers and fruits—the whole plant, when possible—that interest them.

And while Volume 1 provides a description of the kind of scientific work a young child (under the age of 9) is doing in their out-of-door life, it should be understood that this is not where scientific learning ends; only where it begins. The later volumes indicate how the early work of the child comes to fruition. In the sixth and final volume, *A Philosophy of Education*, Mason uses Huxley's axiom that science teaching in school should be of the nature of "common information" and afford children "a wide syllabus introducing them...to those branches of science of which every normal person should have some knowledge.[11] She also takes the words of British scientist Sir Richard Gregory, deprecating the trend of specialization in scientific studies prior to university, as confirmation of her methods. She quotes from Sir Gregory's Presidential Address in the Education Science Section of the British Association to show how "the teaching of science in our schools has lost much of its educative value through a fatal and quite unnecessary divorce between science and the 'humanities'":

The essential mission of school science [should be] to prepare pupils for civilised citizenship by revealing to them something of the beauty and the power of the world in which they live, as well as introducing them to the methods by which the boundaries of natural knowledge ha[ve] been extended. School science, therefore, [is] not intended to prepare for vocations, but to equip pupils for life.[12]

Mason recognizes that the inexperience and ignorance of children in no way detracts from their personhood, but dictates the physical, mental, and spiritual food proper to them. The child cannot be fed on exactly the same food as the adult ("I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able" [1 Corinthians 3:2]; "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known" [1 Cor 13:11-12]), but its child-diet, when furnished, will allow for the proper maturation of the child whose flowering is adulthood.

The sign that the child is receiving proper nourishment is easy to spot "in the field," as it were, and Mason beautifully describes the "bright eyes" and "body full of spring even in repose" which are among the attributes "we delight to see in a child."

this is what bringing-up may, with some limitations, effect: —The child is born with certain natural tendencies...each such tendency may run into a blemish of person or character, or into a cognate grace...the bright eyes, the open regard, the springing step; the tones, clear as a bell; the agile, graceful movements that characterize the well-brought-up child, are the result, not of bodily well being only, but of ‘mind and soul according well,’ of a quick, trained intelligence, and of a moral nature habituated to the ‘joy of self control.’[13]

This vision, which should inspire all parents when they consider what they hope for in “a well-brought-up child,” is at the root of what Mason means when she says, “Education is the Science of Relations.” As such, she writes in the preface:

we must train [the child] upon physical exercises, nature, handicrafts, science and art, and upon many living books; for we know that our business is, not to teach him all about anything, but to help him make valid, as many as may be of

‘Those first born affinities,

‘That fit our new existence to existing things.’

These lines, which Mason quotes from Wordsworth’s Prelude, make for a fitting conclusion because they are evocative of the quiet growing time in which the child gains the knowledge that which is the necessary precursor to the knowledge how. Science, Mason says, “is the preoccupation of our age,” but our manner of studying it requires that it be “divested to the bone”:

history expires in the process, poetry cannot come to birth, religion faints; we sit down to the dry bones of science and say, Here is knowledge, all the knowledge there is to know. “I think that is very wonderful,” a little girl wrote in an examination paper after trying to explain why a leaf is green. That little girl had found the principle—admiration, wonder—which makes science vital, and without wonder her highest value is, not spiritual, but utilitarian.[14]

Following Matthew Arnold, Mason grouped all knowledge according to three categories: Knowledge of God, Knowledge of Man, and Knowledge of the Universe. In the final chapter of Home Education Mason evokes Augustine’s axiom: “the soul has one appetite, for the things of God...has one desire, for the knowledge of God; one only

joy, in the face of God.”[15] Mason bemoaned the utilitarian specialization of academic discipline in her time, which left knowledge “a thing of shreds and patches...with yawning gaps between.”[16] A true humanist, she argued for the integrated but hierarchical conception of knowledge possessed by the medieval mind and typified in the 14th-century fresco called the “Triumph of St. Thomas and the Allegory of the Sciences.” Mason believed, with the medieval Florentines, in “the teaching power of the Spirit of God”: not only did the seven Liberal Arts come from a direct outpouring of the Holy Ghost, but “every fruitful idea, every original conception, be it in geometry, or grammar, or music, was directly derived from a Divine source.”[17] This great recognition should, she said, inspire in us nothing less than the *sursum corda*. [18] And here we return to Wordsworth, who captures this lifting up of our hearts in joy to God with the words:

even then,
A Child, I held unconscious intercourse
With the eternal Beauty,
...

for in all things I saw one life and felt that it was joy.

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Keep reading! Next we feature Elisabeth Sullivan's article on "[reclaiming a more human pedagogy](#)."

[1] Charlotte Mason, *Formation of Character*, vol. 5 of *The Original Home Schooling Series* (Tyndale House, 1989 [1st ed.: London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co, Ltd.,1935]), 190.

[2] From the Preface to *The Original Home Schooling Series*.

[3] Charlotte Mason, *Home Education*, vol. 1 of *The Original Home Schooling Series*, 42.

[4] *Ibid.*, 56.

[5] *Ibid.*, 32.

[6] *Ibid.*, 61.

- [7] School Education, vol. 3 of The Original Home Schooling Series, 171.
- [8] Home Education, 62-64.
- [9] Home Education, 264-65.
- [10] Ibid., 45.
- [11] A Philosophy of Education, vol. 6 of The Original Home Schooling Series, 223.
- [12] Ibid.
- [13] Home Education, 94-95.
- [14] A Philosophy of Education, 318.
- [15] Home Education., 342.
- [16] A Philosophy of Education, 322.
- [17] Ibid., 324.
- [18] Ibid., 231.

To Lead a Child: On Reclaiming a Human Pedagogy

ELISABETH SULLIVAN

The capacity to wonder, St. Thomas Aquinas noted, is among man's greatest gifts. Aquinas held that man's first experience of wonder sets his feet on the ladder that leads up to the beatific vision.^[1] Even long before the coming of Christ, ancient pagans such as Socrates and his student Plato recognized that wisdom begins in wonder. But today's dominant educational system, ordered toward the merely pragmatic and utilitarian ends of "college and career readiness," has no use for wonder or wisdom. We see its consequences in the weary apathy of students who repeatedly ask, "Is this going to be on the test?" When only that which can be quantified or graded is valued, all else falls away. The factory model of teaching and learning is manufacturing the malaise, anxiety, and even despair that burden so many of the young by depriving them of the two elements their innate sense of wonder seeks to find: the meaning and purpose of things.

For roughly three decades, however, a quiet rebellion has gathered force against this machine. It was born from the love of parents who, as the primary educators of their children, were willing to go to great lengths to restore the human dimension to learning, first in homeschools and then in independent Christian and Catholic schools. Within the last decade, this renewal has been embraced by a rapidly growing number of diocesan and parish schools that are changing the longstanding narrative of their decline. The turnaround can be seen in rising enrollment, supportive parents, dynamic academic engagement, and deeper religious formation. The most striking change in the school culture, seen by administrators, teachers, and parents alike, is the students' newfound joy in learning.

The source of this joy can be traced to the recovery of a Christian anthropology that treats children not as future producers and consumers but as creatures made in the image and likeness of God and destined to be with Him forever. The mark of this joy is the confidence and delight that comes from the freedom to see the truth of things, and to order our lives and our loves to that truth. Secular progressive education, by its

very design and practice, undermines this freedom. When its methods are uncritically adopted in Catholic schools, it subverts the Church's intent. As Catholic educators turn instead to the Church's tradition of liberal learning, they are discovering the rewards of what it means to put Jesus Christ, the Logos, at the center of what they teach, and—importantly—how they teach. The recovery of authentic Catholic education reaches far beyond the mere acquisition of skills and fragmented information by helping students develop eyes to see and ears to hear the connectedness and the unity of all knowledge. But richer content alone, without pedagogy that sparks wonder and cultivates contemplation, cannot lead students to fully rejoice in the truth.

Pedagogy comes from the ancient Greek *paidagogos*, a compound comprised of “*paidos*” (child) and “*agogos*” (leader). In order to lead a child to his proper end, a teacher must begin with a clear understanding of what a child is and an equally clear understanding of his rightful destination. “The goal of education is the student himself, to form his mind and his character in such a way that he can live his whole life, so far as possible, in a way that is consistent with the truth about himself as a human being created in the image and likeness of God.”^[2] Further, in the words of **Pope Benedict XVI**, “the dignity of education lies in fostering the true perfection and happiness of those to be educated.”

The focus, then, is not solely on the facts, skills, or even truths to be imparted. Equally, if not more, important is the development of the child's God-given capacity to observe, to wonder, to discover, to attend, to listen, to remember, to speculate, to calculate, to communicate, to reason, to contemplate, etc., and especially to love. These are the habits of lifelong learning and growth. Properly understood, teaching is not the act of pouring facts into empty vessels. As most students of the past 50 years can attest, this practice results in fleeting knowledge held in short-term memory. It dulls the intellect and dampens the soul. A true Christian anthropology demands more than the dominant industrial model permits.

Over the past century, as the pragmatism of the early 20th-century philosopher John Dewey has come to govern schools, consideration of the nature and purpose of both teacher and student has been suppressed. Consequently, the most fundamental aspects of human learning and human longing have been largely rejected. The crisis of industrialized education—and its dangers for Catholic schools—has been captured succinctly by **Dr. Michael Hanby**, one author of the St. Jerome Educational Plan: “The deeper problem is not how little the average (college) freshman knows, but how listless he is about his ignorance.”

Listlessness. Apathy. Indifference. These are tragic traits, and yet they are the inevitable result of content and pedagogy that ignore the nature of reality, of the human person, and of God. “Man by nature desires to know,” Aristotle observed millennia ago. That fact is confirmed daily in the chirping of any four-year-old’s endless questions. St. Augustine would later share the true end of our natural hunger for truth: “Our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee.” The intellect, the memory, the will, and the spiritual life are entwined. Therefore, education that contributes to indifference impedes the soul’s upward ascent to God.

The Holy See’s Teaching on Catholic Schools, a small booklet by the former Secretary for the Congregation for Catholic Education, Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, distills key elements of the Church’s teaching on education since Vatican II. It notes that all instruction “must be authentically Catholic in content and methodology [pedagogy] across the entire program of studies.”^[3] The document does not, however, elucidate what this means in practice. What, in fact, is “Catholic math,” and how is it taught in second grade? What insight does faith have into history? How are teachers to instill “a passion for truth” that Pope Benedict XVI tells us defeats moral and cultural relativism?

For content to be authentically Catholic, it must be presented in a coherent, ordered way that invites a child to see that nothing in this world exists in meaningless isolation. Children are not bored by facts. They are bored by random, detached facts. A teacher’s task is to guide a child to grasp many small truths, from the simple to the complex, and to help weave them into the child’s growing understanding of reality and of its Divine mysteries. “For education to be complete, our knowledge of things must lead to the meaning behind those things and ultimately to their Creator. The goal of true education, then, is to be drawn into relationship with God who created the world and gave it meaning.”^[4]

For pedagogy to be authentically Catholic, it must actively engage the child, stirring a lifelong quest for Truth, which is a Person. Teaching is not simply telling. A Christian anthropology recognizes that an educator has a sacred trust to nurture the human desire to know, and to cultivate the human faculties that help the child perceive—and love—truth, goodness, beauty, and the One. Among those faculties are the following:

Imitation

Modern education scorns imitation—copy work, dictation, recitation, retelling, rendering, and re-enacting—and prizes originality instead. But this is a rejection of

human nature itself. Ancient and medieval thinkers recognized that imitation is the first step in all learning. Think of a baby learning to walk or speak. Think of the great masters of the Renaissance who learned first in the ateliers of other masters.

Fundamentally, this is a theological concept: we are by nature imitators because we are made “in the Image.” It follows that we need excellent models to imitate in the spiritual, moral, intellectual, and physical life—saints, heroes, poets, mathematicians, great sportsmen, and the like.

A teacher leads a child to active discovery by embodying truths or ideas through concrete examples, such as the concept of heroic virtue in the lives of the martyrs or the distributive property of multiplication in a variety of problems. A student makes the connections and imitates that idea, grasping it in his own mind. Thus, the very form of teaching is theological: the embodiment or incarnation of each small truth or logos, all of which ultimately connect and point to the one Logos.

The very act of learning is the imitation or re-presentation of the fact, skill, or idea to be known. This means that a teacher must create that gap, that wonder, that desire to know, so that a student’s mind will actively grasp what is to be known.

Language and Number

Language is a gift given to human creatures alone. It is the primary means of thought and communication. Number is another kind of language that reveals concrete truths, such as the constancy of a simple sum like $2+2=4$, but also points to mystery, such as the concept of infinity. Number, in proportion and pattern, are elements of beauty itself.

The human mind masters language and number through the seven liberal arts, which were the time-tested ladder of learning for millennia, and part of the Catholic intellectual tradition. Over the past 50 years, however, this proven framework has been replaced by a government-led system of state standards that has resulted in fragmentation and disorder because it attempts to break learning down to an absurd degree of processes and skills that can be precisely measured. In its attempt to mechanize what naturally flows along the human path to wisdom, it turns teaching and learning into a bureaucratic chore rather than an inviting adventure. An art is a skill or craft that produces something else. St. Thomas said that the liberal arts produce the works of reason. They are the tools of thinking that liberate the mind to discover the truth of things, and they prepare us to contemplate the higher things—philosophy and theology. We do not simply study the liberal arts, we practice them in

order to develop the ability to think well. They are the arts of language, or the Trivium (grammar, logic/dialectic, and rhetoric) and the arts of number, or the Quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy/physics).

Memory

Another misconception in modern education is in the role of memory. “Rote memorization” is routinely dismissed as ignoring comprehension. But a firm recall of basic building blocks, such as multiplication tables and parts of speech, are essential for the mastery of mathematics and communication. A wise teacher discerns the difference between the memorization of key fundamentals and the memorization of random facts that have not been woven in with other knowledge. The latter are parked only in short-term memory, to be forgotten after the test.

Furthermore, memory has a deep significance for human identity. Without memory, we do not know who we are. Any anthropologist knows that a culture does not survive without passing on its story. Education is enculturation; it includes “learning by heart” the collective stories, poetry, and music that are handed down through tradition. But tradition stretches back to origins, and even the youngest students can begin to know the chronological tale of Salvation history and to see themselves within that dramatic story. True Catholic education includes an understanding of history that had a beginning, that had a pivotal point in the Incarnation, and will have an end. It includes the story of the Body of Christ on earth, the Pilgrim Church, with all of its achievements in natural science, art, architecture, music, philosophy, and theology, as well as its missteps.

Most important, without memory, we cannot worship; the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is an act of remembrance.

Imagination

The human capacity of imagination, too, is misunderstood in our time. It is prized as originality or creativity that springs from a blank slate. This, too, is mistaken. Real imagination is about how we “image” reality, how we envision the world. Is a loving God at the center of reality, calling us to our vocation? Or, is life a trail of pleasure and pain with no significant consequences? The imagination is naturally formed in childhood. Authentic Catholic education shapes the moral imagination through the study of rich literature, poetry, history, the lives of the Saints, and Scripture. It shapes a sacramental imagination through the power of the sacraments themselves, but also

by cultivating a sensibility to the Divine order and presence in the world: “In him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). In addition, music, poetry, drama, dance, and storytelling connect truth with beauty and therefore feed the soul. As Stratford Caldecott noted about J.R.R. Tolkien: “Through story—the right kind of story—including traditional legends and fairy tales—[the]ability to see all things with a pure heart and in the light of heaven could be evoked.”[5]

Secular progressive education, by contrast, currently emphasizes the reading of informational texts. This emphasis is misguided, even for the limited goal of improved reading comprehension. Any student who is taught to master language and number can easily digest them in any form. A technocratic approach is dry dust for the soul.

Inquiry

If wisdom begins in wonder, then the art of teaching must prioritize this first step. Today’s norm is quite the opposite: teachers are often required to state the lesson’s objective on the board at the start. This is the equivalent of telling the punch line before the joke. Even those who escape such a directive succumb to the great temptation for a hurried teacher: to tell rather than to show. The cycle of lecture, notes, and testing squashes the spirit of inquiry. “All telling, explaining, or other acts of so-called teaching are useless except as they serve to excite and direct the pupil’s voluntary mental powers,” wrote 19th-century educator John Milton Gregory. “Use the pupil’s own mind, exciting his self-activities. Keep his thoughts as much as possible ahead of your expression, making him a discoverer of the truth.”[6]

How? The best teachers ask the best questions. In doing so, they arouse the student’s mind to contemplation in order to grasp the truth. They also offer a model to imitate of what it means to think, using patterns of questions drawn from philosophy and classical rhetoric. By contrast, a steady diet of pre-packaged answers stunts a child’s ability to develop the patience required to wrestle with serious inquiry.

The damage done extends beyond the life of the mind to the life of the soul. “The key to a Christian conception of studies is the realization that prayer consists of attention,” according to French philosopher and Christian mystic Simone Weil. Therefore, she posits, “the development of the faculty of attention forms the real object and almost the sole interest of studies.”[7] Attention is desire, she says. “The intelligence can only be led by desire. For there to be desire, there must be pleasure and joy in the work. The intelligence only grows and bears fruit in joy. The joy of learning is as indispensable in study as breathing is in running. Where it is lacking there are no real students, but

only poor caricatures of apprentices who, at the end of their apprenticeship, will not even have a trade.”[8]

Integration

The underlying principle of Catholic liberal learning is the essential unity in all knowledge. The mind and soul seek the harmony that is found in truth, goodness, and beauty, which are all aspects of the One. A pedagogy that explores the wondrous connections between, for example, math and music, responds to the human longing for that harmony. Students delight in finding meaningful connections.

But unity is a spiritual concept; it cannot be derived in an arbitrary fashion. It can spring only from a human mind informed by those spiritual truths that are bound neither by space nor time. Unity can come only from religion; for it is the nature of religion to synthesize, to bring all human knowledge into an all-embracing unity—that intended and planned by Him Who came as Light and Life to make all things new in a fallen but redeemed world.

If [E]ducation is to be effective in helping to restore ordered human life according to God’s plan, there must be acknowledged unity in aim and activity. Divine truth must be, as it were, the central core providing inspiration, directing and controlling all intellectual endeavor. Thus, pupils will become not merely passive recipients of information, but active participants in a spiritual regeneration, seeing the world in God, and God in the world.[9]

Conclusion

The transformative power of authentically Catholic education depends not on curriculum, not on technology, not even upon richer content. It depends on the transformation of teachers, who are called to love and lead the young from wonder to wisdom—to the Truth that sets them free. In recent decades, however, all teacher training has been fundamentally secular. It has failed to inspire teachers with an integrated vision of reality and to equip them with the tools to lead children to their destination according to their nature and purpose.

As these educators are renewed in their vocations, they discover that “wonder signifies that the world is profounder, more all-embracing and mysterious than the logic of everyday reason had taught us to believe. The innermost meaning of wonder is fulfilled in a deepened sense of mystery. [10]

Out of wonder, comes joy, according to both Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. Thomist philosopher Josef Pieper builds on that insight, adding that wonder and hope have the same structure, the same quality of “not yet knowing.” The renewal of authentic Catholic education can offer this gift of hope, leading children out of the parched landscape of apathy and indifference that arises from the factory model of education.

Elisabeth Sullivan serves as the Executive Director of [The Institute for Catholic Liberal Education](#) (ICLE), which is the only organization currently working to renew K-12 Catholic schools by reclaiming the Church's distinct, proven tradition in the unity of faith and reason. Through the Institute's many programs, services, conferences, retreats, and publications, it immerses educators in the philosophy, the content, and the tools of teaching and learning that transform their communities by leading them to a deeper encounter with Truth.

Keep reading! Next comes [John Beegle's "Committing the Bard to Memory,"](#) with strategies on how to teach Shakespeare to the youngest children.

[1] Josef Pieper, “The Philosophical Act” in *Leisure the Basis of Culture* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 113–14.

[2] St. Jerome Curriculum Group, *The Educational Plan of St. Jerome Classical School* (Hyattsville, 2010), 9.

[3] Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools* (Atlanta: Solidarity Association, 2006), 44.

[4] Rev. Robert Bolding, “President-Rector letter,” St. Mary's Catholic High School, Phoenix, accessed June 10, 2019, www.smknights.org.

[5] Stratford Caldecott, *Beauty in the Word: Rethinking the Foundations of Education* (Tacoma: Angelico Press, 2012), 56.

[6] John Milton Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2014, reprinted from first edition text, 1886), 17.

[7] Simone Weil, *Simone Weil Reader*, ed. George A. Panichas (London: Moyer Bell, 1977), 45.

[8] *Ibid.*, 48.

[9] M.T. Marnane, *A Guide for Catholic Teachers* (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son Ltd., 1959), 168.

[10] Pieper, 115.

Committing the Bard to Memory

JOHN BEEGLE

Ludwig, Ken, *How to Teach Your Children Shakespeare* (Random House, 2013).

There was a time not long ago when memorization was considered to be one of the basic tools of an academic education. ... This tradition has faded from our lives, and something powerful has been lost. (8)

In *How to Teach Your Children Shakespeare*, director and educator Ken Ludwig argues eloquently for the benefits of memorization from the perspective of a profession—stage acting—that still requires it. His book is simultaneously very practical and deeply idealistic, dedicated to the idea that, “the arts make a difference in how we see the world and how we conduct our lives” (11). The combination of carefully chosen passages and memorization techniques make *How to Teach Your Children Shakespeare* an extremely useful education resource for teaching children from elementary school through high school. He is also writing from personal experience after teaching his own children Shakespeare, beginning when they were six years old.

The book is structured around twenty passages from Shakespeare which have been carefully sequenced to start with those most accessible to young children: beginning with *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, reaching the rousing St. Crispin’s Day Speech from *Henry V* two thirds of the way through the book, and concluding with *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*. It is an arc that carries a child from comedies through histories to tragedies, and beyond to Shakespeare’s romances in which elements of comedy and tragedy combine. Shakespeare’s plays touch upon all of the central themes of the human condition and, consequently, the chosen passages explore the nature of love, friendship, grief, courage, and forgiveness.

In each chapter, Ludwig provides context for each passage, discussing the imagery and

symbolism used by Shakespeare. The passages are also intended to be “landmarks” within each play for children to recognize when they eventually attend a theater performance of the play or read it in its entirety. And they are very well chosen landmarks, for example the five passages from Hamlet include: the What a Piece of Work Is a Man soliloquy, the very first lines of Hamlet, Act I, Scene 1, Line 1 beginning Who’s there?, the Advice of Polonius, O, What a Rogue and Peasant Slave Am I, and To be, or not to be.

In addition to the 20 passages the book is built around, Ludwig includes recommendations for five additional longer passages and then a further 55 additional passages in two appendices. Considering that the curriculum is meant to encompass all years between kindergarten and the senior year in high school, this broad selection allows a parent to customize how much memorization to tackle based on the individual child’s level of enthusiasm or non-Shakespeare academic workload. Two passages per year will mean completing the main passages in the tenth grade, and a gradual increase in the number of passages each year will mean covering more of the additional passages.

Remember, always, always make the memorization a game for your children ... My view was always a ruthless one: Anything I could do to help them memorize the passages was fair game. (72)

Children memorize lines or even whole passages from Star Wars, The Princess Bride, or Harry Potter without needing any encouragement. With a little encouragement, they can memorize much richer literature. Enthusiasm is contagious. Whether you love Shakespeare or the Mets, it is possible to inspire a similar love in your children. A father who plays catch often with his child in the back yard, takes him to ballgames, talks about baseball during dinner table conversations, listens to games on the radio, and watches games with him on TV will raise baseball fans. There are many suggestions within How to Teach Your Children Shakespeare on how to make memorization fun, and much more of a game than work. Shakespeare can become part of your family culture if you choose. If mom and dad go to see Shakespeare on date night, if they talk about Shakespeare at family meals, and most of all if they spend enjoyable hours memorizing passages of Shakespeare with their children, then their children will grow up inspired rather than intimidated by the Bard of Avon.

Your view of Shakespeare will determine your perception of Ludwig’s book. As recently as the early 20th century, Oxford dons might seriously have argued that there was no

need to include any English author after Chaucer in the Canon.[1] Ludwig's view is the opposite; for him Shakespeare is at the center of the Canon, and he approvingly cites Harold Bloom's view that Shakespeare invented modernity.[2] If you love Shakespeare and hope someday to take your children to watch and enjoy his plays, then I think Ludwig's book is an essential resource. Encountering Shakespeare enriches your children's education by introducing them to characters who are startlingly "real" and in whom they will see elements of themselves and anyone they ever meet in person or in literature.

John Beegle is an IT consultant who works in Northern Virginia. He's a fan of Shakespeare and enjoys the Washington Nationals with his wife and son.

Keep reading! Next comes Carla Galdo's review of [David Hicks' educational classic Norms and Nobility](#).

[1] Humphrey Carpenter, *Tolkien: A Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1977), 63.

[2] Ludwig, 331 cites Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998). Bloom discusses the same thesis more briefly in his earlier book on the Western canon, see Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1994), 24, 38-9, 46.

The Christian Difference in Classical Education

CARLA GALDO

Hicks, David V., *Norms and Nobility: A Treatise on Education* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1999).

To many of those within the classical education movement in America, David Hicks' *Norms and Nobility*, first published in 1981, is considered a foundational document, on par with significant texts such as C.S. Lewis' *The Abolition of Man*, Dorothy Sayers' frequently-referenced essay "The Lost Tools of Learning," and Mortimer Adler's *The Paideia Proposal*. In the prologue to his book, Hicks asserts that it is his intention "to ponder the difference between the man who was educated to believe himself to be a little lower than the angels and the man whose education permits him to ignore both angels and God, to avoid knowledge not of the five senses, and to presume mastery over nature but not over himself" (11). He couples an incisive critique of modern education with his description of how Christian classical education, properly pursued, is the fulfillment of pagan antiquity's attempts to seek, find, and live the truth. His book remains relevant to anyone seriously pondering education today, whether it be those charged with education of the young or the adult wondering how best to remediate their own formational lacunae.

Beginning in the early years of the 20th century, reforms of the American education system rode the wave of the rationalistic, materialistic trends that were sown in the Enlightenment and came to fruition in the Industrial Revolution. Utilitarian teaching became the rule, focused on maximizing productivity, profit, and pleasure for both the student and society as a whole. While this education reform had the beneficial effect of universalizing and democratizing education to a much greater extent, in its wake came a loss of any vision of man's purposes beyond that which was useful, and a discarding of all discussions of transcendence or meaning. While modern schools often claim to be unbiased with regard to any particular truth claim, Hicks notes that any

attempt to teach is in fact an exercise in selection. What one selects to teach suggests what one considers to be important, even if one explicitly claims to be “empty” of any predilection towards one particular set of values. This stands in stark contrast to Hicks’ ideal for classical education, which he suggests must offer not only knowledge, but also a “normative” vision of what one must do or become in order to become “noble.”

Hicks strongly criticizes the deterministic thrust of scientific materialism, focused so heavily on the manipulation of externals that man’s growth becomes not a question of conversion, or formation of virtue, but of changing man’s material conditions. He notes that classrooms which restrict knowledge to only that which is quantitatively verifiable exclude a vast array of human experience, reasonable experience that, while not expressed in weights or measures, still furthers man’s understanding of the world. Yet a lingering question remains as to how classical education can properly acknowledge the precision introduced by careful application of the scientific method within the appropriate realms. This method at least has the potential to lead to a deeper (perhaps even wonder-filled) appreciation of the created world, as well as to an increase in health and human flourishing (although to what extent would need to be carefully qualified). Hicks himself admits, ten years after the book’s initial publication, that there remain “difficult and urgent” (vii) questions such as “How can science and mathematics remain at the core of the modern curriculum and contribute to man’s search for objective truth and self-understanding without imposing a narrow empiricist agenda on the rest of the school?” Another question is: “How can we teach science in a way that serves the technological needs of our society and the spiritual needs of our students?” There are dual issues at stake here, both regarding the methodology of teaching as well as the necessity to formulate adequate norms which guide the power wielded by modern technology. Neither of them are fully answered by Hicks in *Norms and Nobility*.

As a foil for the disarray in modern education, Hicks turns to the aims and educational methods of Grecian antiquity. To Hicks, classical education is not any particular set of books or languages to be acquired; rather, it is an emulation of the ancients’ spirit of inquiry and curiosity, and the fruitful interplay between the proposal of hypotheses and the testing of these via reason, logic, observation, and literature. Two tendencies flowed through classical education: that of the philosophers, who saw man’s perfection as being sought via logic and reason; and that of the rhetoricians, who believed that presenting students with a variety of “Ideal Types”—heroic individuals portrayed via myth—would eventually bring their students’ action into conformity

with their virtuous behavior. Pagan education had its own sand-traps, however. The ancients tended to see man as the supreme value, the measure of all things, and the pinnacle of history; this tended to emphasize rather than downplay man's tendency towards problematic, elitist egocentricity. Despite the attempts of reason and myth to aim classical man towards self-sacrifice and self-transcendence, pagan humanists recognized a tragic tendency for man to fail in his attempts to act virtuously, in accordance with his knowledge of the true and the good

Now we come to classical education as practiced in the wake of Christianity. The creative tension between pagan humanism and Christianity results in a more hopeful resolution of the egocentric tendencies of man. Knowledge of, and faith in, Christ, who is both the embodiment of logic (as the Logos) as well as the Ideal Type par excellence, allows man to know both himself and God more deeply. The new Christian element of faith, Hicks says, is both the predecessor of and the fruit of right action: the saints embody in their holiness the perfect unity of knowledge and action. A further fruit of Christianity is the dignity of the individual, which provides, against elitist tendencies, the impetus for classical education to be made available to all people. In this sense, a widely-available classical education, enabling persons to attain the knowledge and virtue necessary to live a life adequate to their humanity, redeemed in Christ, becomes a truly democratic education in its best form.

In the second half of the book, Hicks makes a practical proposal for both a curriculum and a structure for a classically-oriented school. He admits that his suggestions are a "personal" answer to what a modern classical school might look like, and invites his readers to engage with their own "dialectical" response to his program, should they find it lacking. His proposal expands beyond a book list for grades 7-12. He includes practical and theoretical questions teachers and administrators might ask themselves and one another, from the general ("What are your school's priorities?") to the more personal ("How often do you ask your students questions to which you do not presume to have ready answers?" "Do your students have time to pursue ideas in informal conversation with you?"). In this book, Hicks' vision of a classical education is confined to traditional brick-and-mortar schools; however it need not be. When *Norms and Nobility* was first published in 1981, the upswing in the homeschooling movement—including some of its more recent manifestations in hybrid, co-op, or university-model schools—was only just beginning. While Hicks does not address any of these as specific alternatives to secular, utilitarian education, his vision of classical education is broad enough to be relevant in all these arenas.

In the Preface to the 1990 edition of his book, Hicks notes that over the years what he

most came to appreciate in the effort to implement classical education was that “the teacher, not the curriculum, needs to be the focus of [educational] reform” (viii). Personal change can tend to be more challenging, at its root, than structural, administrative, or curricular changes. If Christian evangelization at its most basic level could be considered a call to educate others, Hicks’ statement is a widely applicable exhortation. Thus education—from the Latin verb *ducere*, to lead, and the prefix, *ex*, meaning out—becomes a duty for all. In all times and places, sharing the Gospel is a way of extending a hand to help lead others out of the morass of sin and self-absorption and to point them on a path towards bounty. This is often most effective if the Gospel words are not only spoken but incarnated in a life “risked” (41) for the sake of their truth. If all are evangelizers, then all are educators. *Norms and Nobility*, then, is not simply a book to be relegated to the shelves of teachers seeking professional development, or schools seeking institutional improvement. The compelling evangelical/educational method of Christ and the saints consists in lives that “illuminate [their] teaching” (41). It is certainly the case that a Christian soul exposed to the meager soil of a utilitarian education may still grow towards a life of virtue by God’s grace, nourished by Scripture and the Sacraments. However, it may also be the case that there is something to be found within classical education, in its literary, historical, philosophical, mathematical, scientific, musical and theological wholeness, which provides an enriched, nutrient-dense soil for many Christian souls. These souls, grounding themselves thoroughly in the life of the Church, are enabled by their contemplation of the world and its multifaceted wonders, to grow more deeply in love with their Creator.

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Keep reading! Next comes [Matthew Kuhner's "The Ressourcement of Catholic Education in an Age of Iconoclasm."](#)

The Ressourcement of Catholic Education in an Age of Iconoclasm

MATTHEW KUHNER

Topping, Ryan N.S. (ed.), *Renewing the Mind: A Reader in the Philosophy of Catholic Education* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015).

I recently visited a college that had, at some point in its recent past, become reluctant about its Catholic identity. As I walked amidst a cluster of lovely neo-Gothic buildings, a particular doorway caught my attention. Located just beneath the bell tower, this eastward facing portal exhibited a typical Gothic-style pointed arch, which lifted one's eyes and spirit to the heavens. Above the doors was the tympanum, the space within the arch that draws your attention as your gaze drifts upward. The tympanum was strikingly empty—save for the remarkable, weatherworn outline of what could only have been a longstanding statue of Our Lady, now removed. The articulate outline of darkened, moldy stone set in stark relief the bright white stone within, in the unmistakable, elegant shape of Mary's mantle. In one respect, this iconoclastic attempt at revisionist architecture disrupted the whole aesthetic: the rising lines and the ornate stonework led your eyes directly to this tympanum, now empty, as their final resting place before leaping upward from the arch's point. But in another respect, the iconoclastic attempt failed: though the face of Mary and the folds of her mantle may no longer be seen, her humble presence in the tympanum as unweathered, radiant, immaculate stone was unmistakable.

In his remarkably wide-ranging compilation of texts—*Renewing the Mind: A Reader in the Philosophy of Catholic Education*—Ryan N. S. Topping provides much-needed assistance in understanding a wholly distinct iconoclastic attempt at revisionism: this time not with regard to stone, but with regard to education. Just as the architecture of

that eastward portal depended aesthetically upon the content of the tympanum—which was removed—so too many of our educational structures, habits, institutions, and curricula depend upon a distinctly Christian theology and anthropology, which have likewise been largely removed from our educational culture. The explicit debt to Christianity may be gone, like the statue, but the aforementioned aspects of educational theory and practice in the West continue to bear witness to the silent and humble presence of Christian radiance outlined at its heart. Yet our age attests to the fact that the center cannot hold the whole together if it is removed: the educational structures, habits, institutions, and curricula all stamped by Christianity will eventually decay and decline, according to the emptiness or the idol that is newly enthroned at their center.

In order to approach the lost center once again, a return to the sources is in order. *Renewing the Mind* communicates the “first principles of education” (9) not in a stolid, abstract manner, but through the introduction of the reader into “a noble tradition of debate over the first principles of education” (1), which takes place via the writings of persons in different times and places. A compendium of thirty-eight primary source texts communicates the first principles of Catholic education in an “enfleshed” manner, so to speak. Topping is hereby gesturing, as it were, to the radiant outline of the center since removed, attempting to reeducate us in its contours, its colors, its character.

Part One—on the aims of education—begins with Plato and ends with Pope St. John Paul II. The unity of vision here is remarkable: Plato, with his allegory of the cave, would likely agree with the statement of John Paul II’s encyclical *Fides et Ratio*:

the need for a foundation for personal and communal life becomes all the more pressing at a time when we are faced with the patent inadequacy of perspectives in which the ephemeral is affirmed as a value and the possibility of discovering the real meaning of life is cast into doubt. This is why many people stumble throughout life to the very edge of the abyss without knowing where they are going. (88)

Truly, to educate (e-ducere) is to lead persons out from the darkness of ephemeral, inadequate perspectives and behaviors into the light of truth and goodness. And, as Thomas à Kempis reminds us, the aim of this leading forth is not simply knowledge, but the very wisdom of heaven and the *ordo amoris*, the order of love: “that is the highest wisdom, to cast the world behind us, and to reach forward to the heavenly

kingdom” (52).

Part Two—on the matter (and form) of learning—also begins with Plato, who reminds us that education does not simply concern abstract ideas and information, but more originally regards the harmony and order of the soul. Great medievalists are also encountered here—Hugh of St. Victor, Bonaventure, and Thomas—each with a remarkable contribution to the *ordo studiorum*, the order of studies. Perhaps the most dazzling text of this section is the address of St. Basil, one of the first systematic attempts to lay out an explicitly Christian approach to literature. The mixture of caution and enthusiasm for non-Christian writings is remarkable:

altogether after the manner of bees must we use these writings, for the bees do not visit all the flowers without discrimination, nor indeed do they seek to carry away entire those upon which they light, but rather, having taken so much as is adapted to their needs, they let the rest go.... For the journey of this life eternal I would advise you to husband resources, leaving no stone unturned, as the proverb has it, whence you might derive any aid. (110, 118)

For a third and final time Plato opens our next section, which treats pedagogy and method in education. This section features a radically diverse list of authors, from Aquinas to Erasmus, from Montaigne to Montessori, and from the Jesuits to the Dominicans. Especially notable is the thread of reflection upon method in the education of children. After all, as Montaigne avers, “The greatest and most important difficulty of human science is the education of children” (194). Our pedagogy must be adequate to the subject, especially here: “’tis not a soul, ’tis not a body that we are training up, but a man, and we ought not to divide him” (203). Maria Montessori echoes the latter sentiment by suggesting that our inattention to the development period of ages 3–7, which “is the time for the formation of the sense activities as related to the intellect” (224), has led to a situation in which “we isolate man from his environment” (228). Isolation from the environment means an isolation from the real and it is contact with the real that is the birthplace of all wonder and true thought.

Finally, Part Four “illustrate[s] the contemporary renewal of Catholic education” (10–11). There is a particular richness of content included here; the breadth of engagement with various dimensions of education is impressive and helpful. Leo XIII opens the section with his call for the restoration of Christian philosophy; Ronald Knox adjures us powerfully, “If we don’t educate our children someone else will” (269); C.S. Lewis asks why a liberal arts education makes sense, even during a war effort that

seemingly requires every ounce of England's strength, resources, and attention; John Senior discusses how we can allow the great books of our tradition to bear fruit in our educational practice; Michael O'Brien discusses the dangerous shortcomings of our cultural mythologies (Disney films!); and John Paul II and Benedict XVI articulate respectively the educational impact of the family and the real reason that Catholic education has played such a prominent role in the Church's history: "the profound responsibility to lead the young to truth is nothing less than an act of love" (382).

Overall, Topping's reader is an indispensable aid for any person who wishes to understand the philosophy of Catholic education. Teachers and educators at every level will find this text to be a constant companion and a source of continual renewal. If any teacher questions his own resolve and the importance of his mission, this sourcebook can bring great reassurance: *tolle lege*—take it up and read!

By drawing us back to the center that has been hastily removed from our contemporary educational culture, Topping has opened up a space for us, his readers, to be truly educated: to be led out of our own limited perspective into the height, breadth, and depth of an authentic Catholic vision of education. Will we take up the challenge? Will we allow these first principles (*principio=arche*) to heal the anarchy (*an-archia*) present not only in our broader educational culture, but also in our hearts? Topping's text is successful precisely because the person engaging his book has this question pressed upon his own soul. May Our Lady, the humble Seat of Wisdom, take the central place in our educational vision, and may she never be removed.

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Keep reading! Next comes Colleen Rouleau's review of [Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life](#).

Re-Educating the Elite

COLLEEN ROULEAU

Deresiewicz, William, *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life* (New York: Free Press, A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2014).

Part social commentary, part self-help guide, this book written by former Yale professor William Deresiewicz attempts to identify the essential elements missing from the elite education provided by the Ivy League schools and a handful of other top-tier American universities today. Knowing these schools from the inside, both as student and professor, Deresiewicz laments the universities' loss of a true focus on the liberal arts and learning for its own sake. Rediscovering the real purpose of a liberal arts education, he suggests, is precisely what will help the students now wandering aimlessly through the halls of these institutions. More broadly, his book is an indictment of the ever-widening gap—educational, economic, political—in American society. If the elite schools only continue to become more elite, the gap will become a gulf.

Deresiewicz traces the history of the Ivies' evolution from privileged, WASP old-boys' clubs to select training grounds of the new meritocracy. Gone are the last century's entrance requirements based upon family name, race, creed (Catholic or Jew need not apply), or prep school diploma. A new list of requirements has ensured its own modern edition of stratified sifting: $x + 1$ extracurricular activities, AP class upon AP class, near-perfect GPAs and SAT scores, foreign and exotic "service" trips, sporting accomplishments (no copy-and-paste water polo photographs though, please). At a certain point, one wonders how it is all humanly possible. College admissions scandals (the latest of which post-date the publication of his book) prove that at least a few very desperate housewives have resorted to lying and buying their child's way to elite privilege. This, however, is still not the norm.

Many of the students do have a formidable list of accomplishments under their respective belts, black or otherwise. Ushered into this marathon early by their doting

parents (who enrolled them in premier preschools), the one thing these students have not faced is the possibility of failure. Many observations are made about this new breed of super-student—bright, sufficiently curious, and doggedly determined—yet all this accompanied by record levels of student depression and crippling anxiety. Deresiewicz does not even address the newer phenomena of trigger warnings and safe spaces. Herein lies his real critique, directed at the helicopter parents who have orchestrated it all. Fragile students are the ones herded and essentially crippled by the current system of their parents' expectations. They often live as extensions of the parents themselves. He notes that having a student admitted to Harvard is equivalent to receiving an A in parenting.

Despite the students' incredible achievements, many come to college in a zombie-like state, even catatonic. College is simply the next line to add to an eventual resume. Deresiewicz wants to challenge students to begin asking non-utilitarian questions. Is studying something that can be truly loved for its own sake worthwhile? Are the liberal arts truly just a waste of time compared to medicine, law, finance and consulting—or do they offer something more?

College should be the atmosphere in which this deeper questioning can happen—but here the elite schools fail miserably. Has everything become soulless, having been subjected to the utilitarian ends of “success” and careerism? Students' entire value is derived from their grades, their achievements—what Deresiewicz terms “credentialism.” These accomplishments are the sum of the students' identity and value as human beings—hence their inability to actually face reality, which will include its share of suffering. True learning, according to Deresiewicz, involves risk—risking one's self. This is not possible if high-achievers will require safe spaces for every trigger life will throw at them. One's entire life cannot be built around the pursuit of absolute personal perfection. Yet this is the framework offered by today's most prestigious institutions.

According to Deresiewicz, today's elite education requires everything to be offered on the altar of “getting ahead,” including actually learning something about life. Graduates are successful, but are they happy? Has their education allowed them to reflect on life's larger questions or do they only resemble sheep led to the slaughter of success? Do they know what they truly desire? Are they even able to consider if it is ever noble or noteworthy to do anything that won't enable them to remain in the world (or rat race?) of the privileged—for instance becoming a nurse, a social worker, a public school teacher, or in the author's own case, a writer?

Deresiewicz's honest observations of the symptoms that ail elite students and their prestigious institutions make for illuminating social commentary, but what of his prescriptions? Here is the self-help part of the book: the true value of a liberal arts education. The liberal arts awaken the student to change—first of all himself, then society. For him, finding purpose is still “doing something, not ‘being’ something” (99). A true education will not lull you into accepting the ever-widening injustices of a stratified society.

There are of course the Great Books, he notes, but one should seek any great book. The point is not a canon but changing oneself. If a student is seeking, he will find something more. Essentially, making a difference by challenging the status quo—this is what the truly educated student can offer. Deresiewicz refers to the “meaning of life,” asks “what are people for,” encourages students to think about what they really want, not just what their parents or their elite institutions expect of them. While he bemoans the loss of the liberal arts, his own definition of the “ends” of the liberal arts are reduced to “a healthy dose of skepticism.” According to him, the liberal arts make one critical of everything, aware of bias. They give the tools required to throw off tradition and make one's own identity in the world. If done correctly, a liberal arts education is “like giving birth to yourself” (84). It is a project of “building a self” (83). It is true that the last thing a college-age student needs is a helicopter parent, but is becoming, as he proposes, the equivalent of an intellectual orphan a significantly better option? Deresiewicz does not seem to consider the enormous burden this self-building places on a student. Is not his critique of endless career options made worse by a liberal arts curriculum that frees one from absolutely everything—tradition, history, family?

Perhaps his ideal is less utilitarian than simply accumulating material success for oneself, but is it still too individualistic, becoming an adult by, “creating a rich inner life for yourself” (87)? He notes that, though not religious, he finds only religious language does justice to some of these themes. It is good that he longs for ideals and meaning and a bigger picture for life, yet if the purpose of self-knowledge is to invent your life, we are still falling woefully short of understanding the meaning of life at a metaphysical level. The furthest his version of liberal arts can take the student is this place of endless skepticism. For him, scientific knowledge is external and objective, while the knowledge we gain from the humanities is internal and subjective. Truth is reduced to each person's subjective experience of reality. For Deresiewicz, religion has been replaced by the humanities. Our academic and cultural institutions are now the legitimate places to seek meaning. Professor has replaced priest. It does not appear

that truly substantial answers are on his horizon. While he notes that many smaller institutions—those that fly far under the radar of the Ivy League—have done a much better job at preserving the true purpose of a liberal arts education, he does not seem to consider that some of these schools are ones that have remained rooted in a tradition.

Deresiewicz rightly notes that the modern university simply takes a technocratic approach to any and all problems. Hence, there is no room for ideals, as he puts it. Yet he refers to a liberal arts education itself as, “that most powerful of instructional technologies” (149). The question asked in the humanities for him is: “Is it true for me?” (160). Ironically, he notes that his religious students seem to be more sure of themselves and their purpose in life. Perhaps he should reexamine his requirement of throwing off the past in order to be truly educated. Waxing poetic about the meaning of life and an education leading one to reflect about life’s larger questions sounds appealing, but if the liberal arts can only lead a student to skepticism, it is likely that Deresiewicz’s longing for a liberal arts cure will not deliver all that he hopes for the students, or for society.

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Keep reading! Next comes Andrew Shivone's "[Beyond the Lost Tools: A Broader Vision of Education.](#)"

Beyond the Lost Tools: A Broader Vision of Education

ANDREW SHIVONE

Clark, Kevin and Ravi Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education* (Classical Academic Press, 2013).

It would be hard to overstate the impact of Dorothy Sayers' seminal 1947 essay, *The Lost Tools of Learning*, on American "classical" education. Even a brief survey of classical school websites would reveal her dominant and pervasive influence. In an era defined by anti-traditionalism, Sayers' essay has been a welcome guide and refuge for communities looking to escape the hegemony of modern educational theory. Sayers wrote the essay in response to English educational reforms which had, in her view, decimated students' ability to think. The proliferation of discrete "subjects" in schools resulted in students who could ape conclusions but were incapable of learning anything on their own. Against this reduction, Sayers proposed a return to the liberal arts of Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric (which were traditionally termed the Trivium). Contrary to the modern approach, these liberal arts were not merely subjects to master but reflected the nature and structure of thought itself. To learn the Trivium was to learn how to think. Once that was done, there was hardly any need for schooling "for the sole true end of education," she concludes, "is simply this: to teach men how to learn for themselves."

The influence of Sayers' essay in American classical schools has been something of a double-edged sword, however. On the one hand, as a philosophical reflection on the nature of the medieval Trivium and its relation to formation and thinking, Sayers' essay has proven valuable to teachers and students. Indeed, it would be hard to imagine the classical movement without her essay. On the other hand, the very power of her presentation has led some to interpret hers as the authoritative statement on education. Consequently, whole school curricular models have been constructed around her essay alone.

The essay, it must be admitted, is simply too limited for that purpose. Teachers and parents soon realize that the Trivium alone is not enough, but the resources available to schools and parents for a more complete vision of K-12 education have been unfortunately wanting. Into this gap comes *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education* by Kevin Clark and Ravi Jain, a thoughtful and valuable contribution. The authors both teach at the Geneva School in Orlando, Florida, which in the early 1990s spearheaded the classical school movement in Orthodox Presbyterian communities throughout the country. Any parent or teacher wanting to gain a deeper understanding of the Christian liberal arts tradition would do well to read this work carefully.

Jain and Clark admire the groundwork laid by Sayers but recognize the need for a more expansive vision of human formation—one not limited only to the formation of certain intellectual virtues. For Jain and Clark, the “liberal arts” were never considered sufficient unto themselves but were always situated within a “larger model” that embodied “a thoroughly Christian understanding of human nature.” That is to say, an understanding of human nature as a body-soul unity whose origin and end was God. An education which only emphasized the liberal arts of the Trivium would have been considered, in traditional Christianity, woefully insufficient. Indeed, as Jain and Clark observe, few schools actually limit themselves to the Trivium or to the idea that they should only teach their students how to learn. The problem for us now is that the “other” parts of the curriculum are often incoherently ordered. Where do music and athletics fit? How is math integrated into the Trivium? The natural sciences? What about moral virtue? Against this disintegration, Jain and Clark advocate for the recovery of six categories that should direct and order the culture and curriculum of a school. These are: Piety, Gymnastic, Music, Liberal Arts, Philosophy, and Theology. The ordering of the categories is not accidental; for Jain and Clark, each subsequent category depends on and integrates the prior. The schema provides a principle of order that the authors hope will allow for a recovery of “a truly integrated Christian classical education—where the intellectual tools of the seven liberal arts are formed within the context of a Christian life and moral imagination.”

The book is structured according to the six categories mentioned above. Each chapter gives a brief introduction to the category as well as its relation to the wider curriculum. A full treatment of each of the chapters is impossible in such a brief review so I will focus instead on some of the more salient insights.

First, Jain and Clark’s treatment of piety deserves to be considered carefully by anyone

involved in education. By piety, I should hasten to add, they do not mean obsequious religious expressions but rely on Thomas Aquinas' definition as the virtue of "paying duty and worship to God and man." Piety is a species of justice, which may be cultivated and developed as a habit. The authors concur with Richard Weaver's analysis in *Ideas Have Consequences* that the loss of piety is the "most fundamental modern malaise of our contemporary society." Against the modern embrace of individual autonomy, Clark and Jain argue that piety is the sine qua non of any true education. Without piety, the proper ordering of loves is impossible, and education becomes "adrift from its moorings." Hence, Augustine comments that piety as a virtue must come before wisdom. Before any lessons are taught, grammar learned, or poems memorized, the "school culture must incarnate piety...for the culture of a school educates as much as its curriculum." How different might a school culture look, even a classical school culture, were it infused from the beginning with the virtue of piety?

Second, their discussion of the Quadrivium (the mathematical liberal arts of arithmetic, astronomy, music, and geometry) deserves high praise for its attempt to recover these lost liberal arts. One of the more deleterious consequences of Sayers' essay has been the devaluation of the Quadrivium in the liberal arts. Math, all too frequently, is viewed somewhat suspiciously as a practical skill rather than a real contemplation of the beauty of the created order (given some algebra textbooks, it is easy to see why). In Clark and Jain's treatment, these liberal arts are restored to their rightful position in liberal education as the arts which "lead the mind to eternal and unchanging truths." Particularly helpful is the discussion of the importance of discrete and continuous quantities in the ever-vexing philosophical problem of the one and the many. Readers of *Humanum* will be happy to see [Stratford Caldecott's *Beauty for Truth's Sake*](#) quoted extensively in this section.

One of the only weak points in the text is the tendency to gloss over significant differences within Christianity and the western tradition in favor of presenting a unified and cohesive tradition. This is understandable in a work which attempts to introduce some relatively abstruse ideas to a popular audience. The authors, rightly, want this book to be read across multiple denominations and are at pains to show unity rather than division. Yet, there are differences between Protestants and Catholics on key theological questions and these differences have significantly affected their respective approaches to education. To give one example, the authors cite the medieval maxim "grace does not destroy but perfects nature" in order to justify the integration of human and divine sciences. The authors are right that the question of the relation of philosophy and theology hinges on the question of grace and nature. If

grace perfects nature, it is natural to assert that theology perfects philosophy. In the authors' presentation, however, one is led to think that this premise has been widely accepted within contemporary Christianity. While this may have been true in the Middle Ages (with a few exceptions) and continues to be the case for Catholics, the leaders of the Protestant Reformation rejected it in favor of a new notion of the relation between grace and nature. This new notion led inevitably to the removal of the Greek philosophical tradition from many Protestant schools. Indeed, Luther had no time for Aristotle ("that damned, conceited, rascally heathen") and considered the medieval synthesis of philosophy and theology the source of many of the abundant evils in the Church. The differences within Christianity regarding the relationship between philosophy and theology are quite vast and it is inaccurate to present Protestants and Catholics as exhibiting a single unity on such a vital question.

As the classical school movement in America continues to mature, it will be important to think more carefully about the proper order of education. Few authors, however, have the capacity to think with the breadth and scope necessary for such an ambitious project. Jain and Clark have attempted the arduous task and provided teachers and school leaders with a valuable tool for ordering their schools.

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Keep reading! Next comes a review of [Christopher Lasch's classic *The Culture of Narcissism*](#).

We Are a Nation of Narcissists

ERIK VAN VERSENDAAL

Lasch, Christopher, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (W.W. Norton and Co., 2018, 1st ed. 1978).

The proliferation of social media as a vehicle for extemporaneous “confession” and commentary, an unabating and tawdry cult of celebrity, the superficiality of both journalism and political discourse, the introduction of gadgetry that promotes solipsism with evermore finely calibrated sophistication, the subordination of rational inquiry to the vociferous broadcasting of identity, and the entanglement of everyday life within bureaucratic policy and predatory advertising—such things make the accusation that America is inveterately narcissistic seem obvious, even uncontroversial. Yet as Christopher Lasch demonstrated in his 1979 study *The Culture of Narcissism*, this charge need not be regarded first as a matter of widespread moral corruption, nor as a problem that appears in some isolated spheres but could be otherwise regulated or suppressed, nor as a disturbing trend that sprang up with the invention of iTunes or the first-person shooter, but, rather, as a way of being with deep roots that pervades our culture and within which we already find ourselves implicated. In other words, narcissism as a cultural disorder describes a basic feature of our national character at present, one so widespread it cannot even be examined easily, let alone excised. Though marked by methodological and ideological limitations, Lasch’s work is a stimulating guide into both the variety of ways in which this disorder manifests itself, and, perhaps more importantly, the unifying principles behind these phenomena. The fact that his forty-year-old observations remain undeniably relevant attests both to his clear-sightedness and to the scope of the problem he discerned. Those who seek to articulate a critique of our dominant culture for the sake of its healing (its salvation) will welcome Lasch’s work, even if his sociological diagnosis, informed throughout by categories drawn from Freudian psychoanalysis, begs to be deepened with a genuinely philosophical account of human personhood and community.

Lasch insists that the narcissism of which he speaks should not be confused with mere

selfishness. Early on, he distinguishes what he means by narcissism from other forms of egoistic self-absorption—for instance, the celebration of rootless individualism found in 19th-century literature of self-reliance. Rather than, say, glorying in his own personality and boldly imposing his image upon the world around him, the narcissist seeks in vain to validate himself through conforming himself to any number of images of prestige or influence that make an appeal to him. The narcissist so conceived suffers from an anxiety about himself that necessarily enfeebles and frustrates any attempt at faithful and generative self-gift toward his family, neighbors, and community. He lacks the spirit even to desire, enjoy, and mourn wholeheartedly. This powerlessness rests, strikingly, not so much on an overestimation of his own significance and a consequent indifference towards others, but on an inability to consent to his own wholeness. Understood from the standpoint of Christian anthropology, this malady consists in a person's recoiling before the affirmation of and acquiescence in his own being as good. Lasch often presents the desperate and relentless grasping after external approval that characterizes narcissism as self-hatred, the interiorization of a primordial wound of rejected love. It is the lack of security in his own being, the doubt that he is always-already beloved and worthy of love, that makes it difficult for the narcissist to identify with and commit himself to others. He cannot open himself freely to his fellow man, but is instead caught in an inescapable cycle of self-loathing and self-clinging, precisely because he does not recognize and accept that he is already whole before he has any opportunity to prove it. The world around him diminishes to an instrument by which he aims, hopelessly, to make himself loveable. This futility rests on his refusal to accept that the world's irreducible goodness is not a threat to or contradiction of his own. "Narcissus drowns in his own reflection, never understanding that it is a reflection" (286).

Late-twentieth-century American society, Lasch argues, instills in its members a disposition akin to this pathological condition. He suggests that narcissism as a cultural disorder expresses itself first in a ubiquitous lack of confidence in reality, where such wavering is itself an underlying cause of the individual's revulsion before his own personhood. A society suffering from such an affliction takes excessive refuge in consumable and attractive images of success and security as a convenient substitute for truth, which has long fallen into disrepute. As much in the commercial as in the political sphere, that is esteemed best which most convincingly gives the appearance of mere "credibility"—the spectacle. Anyone in this milieu might find himself tempted to study, curate, and market his own "story" in the tacit hope of manipulating the public and gaining himself at last through the approval of

followers. Lasch offers remarks in this context that sound eerily familiar: “Modern life is so thoroughly mediated by electronic images that we cannot help responding to others as if their actions—and our own—were being recorded and simultaneously transmitted to an unseen audience or stored up for close scrutiny at some later time” (62). Or again: “Men and women alike have to project an attractive image and to become simultaneously role players and connoisseurs of their own performance” (113). Disappointment in the elusiveness of any reality anterior to the self compels the contemporary American towards an effort of self-creation that often remains miserably cosmetic.

Significantly, Lasch notes that *The Culture of Narcissism* grew out of his earlier study of the long decline of the family in American life. The unity of the many kinds of narcissistic behavior that Lasch records comes to light when we turn to the breakdown of natural familial relationships of which they are an effect. So the book’s engaging fifth chapter deals with the functionalization and commercialization of sport as an instance of our culture’s discomfort with the gratuity of play, that essential feature of mature human life, closely related both to art and to liturgy, that is like the abiding and animating memory of childhood. Paradoxically, then, his distrust of reality likewise closes the narcissist off to the goods of representational “illusion” (from Latin *in-ludere*, “to play at”). “Play has always, by its very nature, set itself off from workaday life; yet it always retains an organic connection with the life of the community, by virtue of its capacity to dramatize reality and to offer a convincing representation of the community’s values. ... It is only when games and sport come to be valued purely as a form of escape that they lose the capacity to provide this escape” (148).

Our culture’s obfuscation of gratuity and mystery is also reflected in educational reforms (Chapter VI). In the name of making learning more pertinent and effective, these reforms have increasingly cut the student off from the living sources of his culture. This failure to transmit the treasures of Western wisdom have resulted in commodified approaches to study that attempt to negotiate, and only succeed in reinforcing, the narcissist’s sense that reality is hidden, wanting, or deceptive. The assault on childhood by the professionalization of education is part, Lasch claims, of a larger transference of parental responsibilities to experts and agencies (Chapter VII). Such violence against the home’s authority expresses itself, too, in the sexual difference, where the modern promise of intensified affective union between man and woman is doomed to failure by virtue of the separating of this intimacy from childrearing—a point from which Lasch does not shy away (Chapter VIII). “The

inability 'to take an interest in anything after one's death,' which gives such urgency to the pursuit of close personal encounters in the present, makes intimacy more elusive than ever" (224). The obsession with sentimentality reflects not only a rejection of childhood and children, but also of aging and death (Chapter IX). "When the prospect of being superseded becomes intolerable, parenthood itself, which guarantees that it will happen, appears almost as a form of self-destruction" (252). "An age of diminishing expectations," indeed!

As the tenth and final chapter of the book makes clear, one basic root of this evacuation of family life is the loss of fatherhood, the refusal of paternal authority that marks our fundamentally revolutionary (and autogenous) notion of liberty. The narcissist finds himself devoid of self because he no longer knows how to regard himself as beloved son and heir. For this same reason, we might say that our crisis is a crisis of adulthood: the fear of becoming a father or mother in keeping with our own origin. Our desolate cultural landscape gives evidence that the once-rich soil of tradition within which one could once expect to grow into his distinctive character and task on behalf of his community, has been furiously eroded. "To live for the moment is the prevailing passion—to live for yourself, not for your predecessors or posterity. We are fast losing the sense of historical continuity, the sense of belonging to a succession of generations originating in the past and stretching into the future" (13). Forgetfulness of membership among a people and of the call to receive and deliver forward a cultural deposit to which one is an heir, eradicates the possibility of wholesome self-discovery. Once the capacity to identify with one's forebears and descendants has been thwarted, one is left to seek a spurious immortality through a self-fascinated performance of personality. With the present moment emptied of both memory and promise, the actor is hindered from living meaningfully through his commitment to an inherited pattern of life and through his hopeful surrender of his own labors to be taken up by his successors. Remarkably, the narcissist cannot embrace and enjoy the time he has been given because he has forgotten that his essential task consists in passing on the good he has received, now increased through his own stewardship of this patrimony. This failure to carry on a tradition fruitfully is a societal expression of the collapse of family life, within which parents mediate reality to their children and so ultimately liberate them to their own parenthood. While Lasch is perhaps reluctant to recommend a way forward, the overwhelming lesson of his book seems to be that our wounded culture's first recourse must be to its sources: to the best testimony of our ancestors, to the primacy of natural reality, and to the God who has eternally been a trustworthy Father.

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