



The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Classical Christian Education

The Paradigm of the Liberal Arts Tradition (I-II)

While reading, choose one quote to share with your colleagues and why you chose it.

1. How do Clark and Jain suggest their paradigm for classical Christian education (PGMAPT) differs from their predecessors? Why would their distinction matter?
2. “Grounded in piety, Christian classical education is the transmission of the culture of the Church through a faculty of friends who love the truth by cultivating virtue in the students in body, heart, and mind, and nurturing their love for wisdom and faithful service of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Does this definition of classical Christian education hit the mark? Is it congruent with Capstone’s practices?
3. How would you define piety? What practices at Capstone are aimed at the cultivation of piety?
4. In their brief summary of gymnastic and music, what to Jain and Clark suggest are the purposes of these two domains of education?
5. What are precritical and “poetic” knowledge? Clark and Jain use the terms but don’t really define them yet.
6. Ponder the sentence: “The liberal arts are only intended to be the seeds and tools of learning to be used in all other studies. As tools, they cultivate the rich soil prepare by piety, gymnastic, and music.” (7) Can you put this abstract proposition into an illustration from your lived experience as a teacher or simply as a human?
7. What are natural, moral, and divine philosophy? What modern terms are most equivalent to these ancient and medieval terms?
8. How would the classical Christian school define the telos (end or aim) of science? How is this different from most of our contemporaries?
9. How would a recovery and implementation of Aristotle’s four causes change the way most of us have thought about science or been taught science?

Part I: Piety and Poetic Knowledge (15-35)

1. After reading the opening pages of this section, how do you define piety?
2. Do you agree with Augustine that true virtue cannot exist in one who does not have true piety? Why/why not?
3. The authors say that the school culture must incarnate piety, virtue, and grace. Can you identify evidence to support the claim that Capstone believes that school culture educates as much as curriculum does?
4. Clark and Jain claim that “today school is seen either as vocational training or an opportunity for self-discovery among a buffet of potential selves, this was not the traditional approach.” In what specific manner do you see this educational philosophy played out in local schools? (This is meant

to be objective observation and not a biased critique of our neighbor schools.) Have you had any experiences with parents or colleagues at Capstone who perhaps see school this way?

5. Define “impious” in your own words. Is it a fitting descriptor of contemporary Western culture? How do you know?
6. The authors claim, “Before learning can begin there must be an education in love.” Based upon leadership’s selection of *You Are What You Love* as the first faculty reading, do you suspect that Capstone agrees with Clark and Jain? What other indicators are there that we might place rightly ordered loves and piety as the foundation for education?
7. Plato write in *The Republic* that “the united influence of music and gymnastic will bring [the reason and passions] into accord, nerving and sustaining the reason with noble words and lessons, and moderating and soothing and civilizing the wildness of passion by harmony and rhythm.” Plato had no concept of the limiting effects of original sin, but with Christ in all and through all and his grace at work in the student and teacher, how do you see PE and music preparing our youngest learners for more formal intellectual and moral reasoning? (This is a tough question!)
8. From your reading of pages 28-31, what would be three compelling reasons for Christians to place a high priority on gymnastic at Capstone? Can you explicitly tie those reasons to our mission statement, covenants, and Gryphon’s Weapons?
9. Draft your own mission statement for physical education at Capstone.
10. Do you think most parents and students choose sports for those reasons? If so, how do you know? If not, what do you believe their purpose for gymnastic is?
11. Plato writes that rhythm and harmony “find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful, or of him who is ill-educated, ungraceful” to the end of being capable of spotting omissions or faults in art and nature, “with a true taste. . .” What evidence do you have, if any, that good music (lyrics aside) tunes the soul to what is True? Or that bad music makes the soul off-key? Does music sharpen one’s eyes to rightly see the world?
12. Based upon Clark and Jain’s summary of Lewis’s *The Abolition of Man*, what aspects of human nature may be developed or enhanced by musical education?
13. Draft your own mission statement for musical education at Capstone.
14. Based upon this view of what constitutes musical education, do you agree with the authors’ postulating that we could think of grammar school subjects as musical? What distinctive purposes of these subjects in a classical school would make them more “musical?” [Think of “forming the heart, sense of wonder, and the affections.”]

Part II: The Liberal Arts as the Seeds and Tools of Learning

“The seven liberal arts are the established paths that tutor the reason and train the mind in virtue.”

The Seven Liberal Arts

- I. Review question: What three subjects are the precursors to the liberal arts (think PGMAPT)? Do you recall why the authors suggest that PGM are foundational prior to the liberal arts?

2. Distinguish the arts from the sciences. (Recall that neither word is being used the way we use it today.)
3. Our new building has stone reliefs of Aquinas and Aristotle above the doors to Founders Hall (the main entrance), which then leads to the library and the chapel stairs. Why do you think, after reading these pages, we may have selected these two men?
4. What are the three arts within the Trivium?
5. What are the four arts within the Quadrivium?
6. After reading through page 43, how would you summarize your understanding of the liberal arts?

The Trivium

1. What are the three arts of the Trivium?
2. How would you define each of these arts?
3. What is Aristotle's distinguishing feature of man? What does this feature ultimately make man capable of beyond simply refined communication?

Grammar

1. If a classical view of grammar is not primarily the rudiment of all subjects, what is it?
2. What do the authors mean regarding the notion of "authority" in grammar? What has this to do with the Latin *auctor*?
3. What do the authors believe may be the greatest singular achievement of the classical Christian renewal to date?
4. What do the authors mean by "being at home in language"?
5. What do they describe as the first goal of grammar instruction? How is imitation utilized toward this goal?
6. How does the classical study of grammar sharpen a student's linguistic intuition? What Capstone curricular and pedagogical features may shape this intuition?
7. With regard to grammar, what do you think the authors mean by the resource of students having "a profound sense of whom to trust"?
8. Looking at the last statement in the section on grammar, what does it mean for our learners to embrace grammar sympathetically?

Dialectic

1. What is a good definition of the art of dialectic?
2. How do you think students best learn which questions are worth pursuing?

3. What do you think is the value of practicing *disputatio* or the “disputed question” with our scholars and philosophers?
4. What is the key pedagogy of the art of dialectic?
5. How is dialectic different than asking leading questions of students?
6. Why would grammar and music be important precursors to the dialectic concern with *auctores*?

Rhetoric

- I. Define rhetoric.
2. What are the five canons of rhetoric? You might rehearse defining them.
3. How does Cicero define the purpose of rhetoric?
4. How does Quintilian define the ideal man? How might he have a point? Or does he?
5. What do Plato and Lewis see as the soul potential that rhetoric should seek to cultivate?
6. What are “topics” in rhetoric, and how do they help the rhetor in finding means of persuasion?
7. What are “contexts” in rhetoric, and how do they help the rhetor in finding means of persuasion?
8. How might the practice of the art of rhetoric support and nourish the growth of wisdom and virtue?
9. How do grammar teachers begin rhetoric training?
10. How do you think our late grammar teachers and dialectic teachers (grades 5-8) train future rhetors?
- II. What are the three species of persuasive speech? Can you see how these would naturally lead to future study in philosophy and theology? If so, why?

The Quadrivium

- I. What are the four subjects in the Quadrivium?
2. What was your favorite quote from the text that gave you a new perspective on the importance of arithmetic?
3. How might math be as formative as it is useful? Is this a new perspective for you?
4. Give an example of how the study of mathematics might equally be an experience in wonder, work, wisdom, and worship. Force yourself to be concrete/specific about this.
5. How does Singapore Math contribute to a classical view of learning mathematics? If you are familiar enough with the curriculum, share some specific examples of practice in your classroom that is in harmony with the classical view of mathematics.
6. Explain the concepts of unity and plurality in mathematics! This is tough for those who do not yet know that they are mathematicians!

7. What was your experience with Geometry? Does it match the authors' and the ancients' perspective on the study? Why or why not?
8. Why do the authors suggest that Geometry should be studied before Algebra? If you studied both subjects, do their reasons make sense to you?
9. What strikes you as uniquely valuable about Geometry as a celebrated study in a classical Christian school?
10. How would you differentiate between a nominalist view of astronomy (or science in general) and a realist one? Which seems more fitting for a Christian astronomer? Why?
11. Try to explain the relationship between mathematics, astronomy, and music in your own words, borrowing from one of the quoted/referenced scholars cited in the text.
12. What are the three divisions of music as a liberal art? Briefly define each.
13. If we were to reconstruct the narrative of science and math and to realign these curricula with the form and telos of the Quadrivium, what changes would you individually and we collectively need to make? Which, if any of these, do you think would be an improvement for our students?

Part III, Philosophy: The Love of Wisdom

1. What is the etymology of the word "philosophy?"
2. How did Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle differ from the Sophists on the essence of truth?
3. What is the threefold Christian middle age view of philosophy?

Natural Philosophy

4. How are the liberal arts need to discover and justify knowledge of the natural world?
5. How does natural science conceived of as natural philosophy differ from modern science?
6. How do the authors suggest natural philosophy should "look" in a grammar school?
7. Is natural philosophy concerned with the objective or subjective? Explain.
8. How did medieval Christianity pave the way for the rise of modern natural science in the west?
9. What are Aristotle's four causes, and which two seem to be largely ignored in modern science?
10. Why does this exclusion matter?
11. Is the classical approach to science education unique for its commitment to application or to justification? What is the difference?
12. What is a canonical experiment? What role could one play in our science education at Capstone?
13. Why would this be so valuable?

14. How do we limit imagination by a progressive approach to science?

15. Why does imagination matter in scientific inquiry?

Moral Philosophy, Part I (p. 131-161)

16. What modern field of study has replaced moral philosophy? Summarize how it differs from moral philosophy.

17. What do the authors mean when they state on p. 135 that social sciences wield a power disproportionate to their actual authority?

18. If social science is not concerned with a pursuit of human flourishing, what is its aim?

19. Compare and contrast Aristotle's and Plato's explanations of how one achieves virtue. Is our notion of the role of virtue in happiness more like Plato's or Aristotle's?

20. How does Rousseau define virtue?

21. What is the focus of Christian moral philosophy?

22. What do you think the prevailing telos or end/purpose of man is in today's culture?

23. What did Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas believe about the telos of man and human flourishing?

24. Why would medieval universities place the study of natural philosophy before moral philosophy?

25. In Martin Seligman's critique of clinical psychology, what does he mean that there were costs to selling out to the disease model?

26. What is Seligman's third form of happiness? What does he claim about it?