International Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal

Volume 10 | Issue 2 Article 7

2015

Truth, Goodness and Beauty: Revisiting the Classic Common Core Standards

Gary Gramenz
Fresno Pacific University

Truth, Goodness and Beauty: Revisiting the Classic Common Core Standards

Abstract

As the educational community works to simultaneously understand and implement the Common Core standards and its emphasis on the development of various intellectual traits and capacities, it is worth pausing to consider this most recent educational reform in light of the classical understanding of the educational task. This article highlights three elements from the "classic" common core educational standards as understood by classical educational theorists: truth, goodness, and beauty and the role each plays in developing an educated person. These classic standards place the development and elevation of the human spirit as the foundation of all learning. Although truth, goodness, and beauty each have a unique contribution in the education of individuals, this article focuses on beauty and the way it stimulates a desire for both goodness and truth. Additionally, these standards require a different form of pedagogy; developing a commitment to truth and goodness and experiencing beauty do not come to a person with traditional forms of education. The ground for this investigation is found in the works of an ancient philosopher, Plato; a classical educational theorist, John Steward Mill; and a passage from the Christian scriptures, Psalms 27. The article culminates with suggestions, a primer for ways to bring beauty to students both in the physical environment of the classroom and in the person of the teacher.

Volume 10, Number 2:

The ICCTE Journal

A Journal of the International Christian Community for Teacher Education

Truth, Goodness and Beauty: Revisiting the Classic Common Core Standards

Gary Gramenz, Fresno Pacific University

Abstract

As the educational community works to simultaneously understand and implement the Common Core standards and its emphasis on the development of various intellectual traits and capacities, it is worth pausing to consider this most recent educational reform in light of the classical understanding of the educational task. This article highlights three elements from the "classic" common core educational standards as understood by classical educational theorists: truth, goodness, and beauty and the role each plays in developing an educated person. These classic standards place the development and elevation of the human spirit as the foundation of all learning. Although truth, goodness, and beauty each have a unique contribution in the education of individuals, this article focuses on beauty and the way it stimulates a desire for both goodness and truth. Additionally, these standards require a different form of pedagogy; developing a commitment to truth and goodness and experiencing beauty do not come to a person with traditional forms of education. The ground for this investigation is found in the works of an ancient philosopher, Plato; a classical educational theorist, John Steward Mill; and a passage from the Christian scriptures, Psalms 27. The article culminates with suggestions, a primer for ways to bring beauty to students both in the physical environment of the classroom and in the person of the teacher.

Introduction

A Foundations of Education course could begin with a statement something like this: "The cornerstone of a good education is the love of truth, personal affirmation of the good, and appreciation of beauty." This declaration would gain the approving nods from idealistic, first-year teacher candidates, and, in so stating, align the course with educational theorists throughout millennia. Yet, if typical, the course then would move toward preparing the candidate for the current educational environment, foregoing any significant attempt to embrace goodness, truth, and pursue beauty. Given the pressure to prepare students for a high-stakes, high-accountability educational environment, this is entirely understandable. However, this is not the history of the field; in fact, one can view present orientations in education as an anomaly, a departure from what has been viewed as historic goals of education, and an orientation that could be recaptured if we follow the voices from the edge who encourage a more holistic approach to educating children.

This approach to education would include a comprehensive integration of the themes of truth, goodness, and beauty, as many classical educational theorists assert (Winston, 2006). There would be a thorough examination of the role of each severally as well as how each interacts with the others. There would be an investigation as to how the experience of beauty motivates individuals to want to know more as well as become better persons and how a commitment to truth opens the worlds of goodness and beauty (Scarry, 1999). In fact, there would be a renewed commitment to capture the perspective of Mill (1867/2012) who noted that "Men are men before they are lawyers, or physicians, or merchants, or manufacturers; and if you make them capable and sensible men, they will make themselves capable and sensible lawyers or physicians" (p. 186). This might seem like a rather daunting reformation effort: How could there be such a radical reorganization of national standards? How would a curriculum built on the standards of truth, goodness, and beauty be constructed, and, in our age of accountability, how would it be assessed?

Recently, a local school district announced a multi-million dollar initiative to reinvigorate their arts program with the goal of a more holistic and integrated curriculum and student experience (Fuhraro, 2015). The initiative re-affirmed the importance of art and the experience of beauty in the development of an educated person. After the

announcement was made, the local artistic community enthusiastically supported the effort, as well they should; this marks an affirmation of the important role that beauty, as experienced through the arts, can play in the development of the whole person. It can, however, also be discouraging: Does it truly take a multi-million dollar commitment to develop a holistic, integrated curriculum?

This article purposes to provide a classical foundation for a more integrated and holistic understanding of education, a more vibrant rationale for its inclusion, and suggestions as to how to integrate this approach into the daily life of the educator without significant cost or delay. The focus of this investigation is to highlight the role that beauty plays in developing an educated person and its easy accessibility. It will be the assertion of this article that there is no need to wait for an arts committee or multi-million dollar initiative to begin the process of integrating arts into the curriculum or to bring beauty into the daily experience of children. In fact, for many, the ideas in this article will seem quite familiar, and this piece will do nothing more than assure them that their practices enjoy grand company. For others, this brief excursion through educational philosophy may seem new but strike a sympathetic chord somewhere deep in their teaching soul.

This author's intent is not to disparage the current educational reform efforts. The Common Core standards are a move, in my view, in the right direction and can be used as a foundation for a more holistic view of education and the educational process. I work at a university that not only embraces this reform but also has trained educators in accordance with its underlying pedagogical philosophies; we often say that we were Common Core before it had a name. What the Common Core standards do not address, and what is the focus of this article, are the values identified in the title of this article and form the foundation for those who work for a more holistic educational enterprises.

This article will use three sources as a foundation for the discussion: an ancient philosopher, Plato; a classical educational theorist, John Stewart Mill; and a passage from the Christian scriptures. Although there is much to be drawn from the writings of Plato and Mill, and great spiritual comfort and encouragement from the psalmist, the author will draw a singular strand from their writings to make the case for including truth, goodness, and especially beauty in our educational approach. These authors provide a historical context and spiritual grounding the role these virtues play in developing a truly educated person. From Plato, we will see the role that beauty plays in ennobling the soul; Mill (1867/2012) argued for the locating of beauty in the person of the educator, and the psalmist grounds the role that beauty plays at the base of our existential longings. Along the way, the author will reference some personal experiences to illustrate the point.

Plato

In his *Republic*, Plato (trans. 2012) outlined what he believes should be the proper order of things in order for a society to reach maturity, its *telos* – to become "all that it can be." In this "perfect" society, there will be producers, those who make the ordinary stuff of life: the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker, and so on. In addition, society would need those who would protect and govern the masses as they live out their daily lives. There are two groups who protect and serve: the warriors and the rulers. The warriors fearlessly and ferociously guard the citizenry, and the rulers provide wise governance.

Plato noted that each member of society needs to be educated, but not in the same way. He observed that warriors and rulers will be cut from different cloth than the rest of the population and require a different kind of education. These warriors and rulers have within them *spirit*. Spirit, for Plato, is that dynamic principle in the human being that incites them to do what is in their heart – for good or ill.

The question Plato wrestled with is this: How does society instill in the warriors and rulers the qualities necessary to do good? If these dynamic individuals are not good, they will turn on the citizenry to wreak all kinds of havoc. Plato suggested two pedagogies to help orientate these future leaders towards the good: sessions in gymnastics and lessons in music. In gymnastics, individuals learn how to control their physiological impulses by accepting the discipline of coaching and training. This training is necessary in order to control impulses that can distract the individual from pursuing the dictates of reason. Plato also suggested that these precocious little ones be exposed to music at a very early age. Music, Plato contended, touched

the deepest parts of the person's soul and pulled its most noble affections. Music would be accompanied with stories of valor, daring, heroism, and the like. Dillon (2004), commenting on Plato's suggested pedagogy, notes:

> Rhythm and harmony touch the soul directly, so if children are surrounded by tales of goodness and never exposed to bad tales, like "noble puppies" they will learn to love what they know (goodness and justice) and hate what they do not know (injustice). (para. 11, parenthesis included)

So, from an early age, children on the leadership track would be serenaded by melodies featuring noble themes and motifs. This pedagogy is effective because of the powerful capability of music to change the human heart, and this is especially true when the music is particularly beautiful: "Beauty is good, because it incites the good in us" (Pappas, 2014, para. 27). This experience of beauty begins a sequence that ends up in transforming individuals at the very core his or her being. Note Plato's (trans. 2009) progression:

> For he who would proceed aright in this matter should begin in youth to visit beautiful form; and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright, to love one such form only – out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another; and then if beauty of form in general is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognize that the beauty in every form is one and the same! And when he perceives this he will abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms; *in the next stage he will consider that the beauty of the mind is more honorable than the beauty of the outward form* (p. 75, italics added).

For Plato, the dispositional component of education must take place before formal training. Aristotle, building on Plato's moral philosophy, insists that a child's character and temperament are the proper first objects of society's educational orientation because they provide the proper foundation for all that is to come. Kraut (2014), summarizing Aristotle, stated: "Moral thinking must be integrated with our emotions and appetites, and that the preparation for such unity of character should begin with childhood education" (para. 4).

If we were to imagine a Plato-influenced common core educational standard, we might suggest that it would ennoble the soul, provide an orientation towards the good, and assist the child in controlling their passions. One strand embedded in the platonic standard would certainly be experiences and appreciation of beauty, without which the soul grows barren. How would these standards influence curriculum? Most likely, children would actively participate in physical education and music, their days filled with activity and beautiful music. Lessons would be drawn from these activities that would develop in them discipline and vitality of spirit. Only then would they be ready for more formal kinds of educational experiences.

John Stewart Mill

John Stewart Mill (1867/2012), in his *Inaugural Address at St. Andrews*, spoke to his academic community in what has come to be regarded as one of the more powerful conceptualizations of higher education. Mill began by affirming what we normally think of as typical education curriculum: the arts and sciences. Students should know how to read, write, and appreciate good literature as well as know the current scientific theories and trends. They also should know how to think both inductively and deductively.

Throughout the first two-thirds of this densely written treatise, the reader does not learn much that is new; just a more than adequate summary of traditional educational theory. It is in the last part of the address where Mill introduced a third dimension to the educational process that, to his mind, is the indispensable component of a traditional education: the experience of beauty. Beauty engages the heart with the motivation necessary to animate redemptive behavior. Without the heart engaged, all the education in the humanities and the sciences is lost. Without a noble character, these aspiring scholars will not be effective in whatever vocation they pursue. Those prepared in universities, even those with outstanding literature and science curriculum, will find their lives hollow and their effectiveness stunted without a deep and profound motivation for the good – a motivation that is generated by experiences with beauty.

Mill (1867/2012) put a fine point on what Plato declared millennia before him. Beauty motivates, beauty inspires, beauty "gets" to us in ways that nothing else can. In short, beauty can ennoble the soul and provide the impetus for greatness. Scarry (1999) expanded the point by declaring that beauty is "sacred, immortal, and saves lives because it quickens. It adrenalizes. It makes the heart beat faster. It makes life more vivid, animated, living, worth living" (p. 25). And again, "Beauty fills the mind yet invokes the search for something beyond itself, something larger or something of the same scale with which it needs to be brought into relation" (p. 29).

Where does one encounter beauty in the academy or in any educational process? Mill's (1867/2012) answer to this question is, to my mind, the point and power of the treatise: it is not only the formal expression of art that qualifies as "art." It is, as he stated, any human effort accomplished with purpose and skill. He explained:

> If I were to define Art, I should be inclined to call it the endeavor after perfection in execution. If we meet with even a piece of mechanical work which bears the marks of being done in this spirit—which is done as if the workman loved it, and tried to make it as good as possible, though something less good would have answered the purpose for which it was ostensibly made—we say that he has worked like an artist. (p. 208)

This quest for the perfect does not only express itself in the artifact, but in the artists themselves. Mill (1867/2012) continued:

> Now, this sense of perfection, which would make us demand from every creation of man the very utmost that it ought to give, and render us intolerant of the smallest fault in ourselves or in anything we do, is one of the results of Art cultivation. (p. 208, italics added)

Mill's (1867/2012) assertion that art is any human effort performed with skill, precision, and design is most easily seen in artifacts: painting, a sculpture, a piece of music, a novel, or a theater production. We see design, attention to detail, and precision in execution, and are moved by the encounter. We analyze, assess, and derive meaning from these works of art and use our understanding of the elements of design to describe our appreciation of artistic expression. For educators, there is literally no limit to the number of ways to bring this type of artistic expression into the learning environment so students can experience beauty every day: from classroom décor to incorporating literature into a lesson.

Mill (1867/2012), however, advanced our understanding of art by suggesting that it is teachers themselves who become an artistic expression, a work of art that embodies form, design, precision, and all the other elements of artistic expression. For Mill, it is this move from the consideration of "art as artifact" to "art in the artists" that is the key to affecting the university student. In many aesthetic expressions, art can be separated from the artist; we often care very little what kind of person painted the painting, sculpted the sculpture, or wrote the aria. In education, however, this is not so, for in many ways, as Palmer (2000) observed, the teacher is the artifact – the teacher is the example to the student of what the educated person is to become. When educators act as both artist and artifact, they become the conduit for the benefits of beauty in the classroom. As will be noted below, it is this opportunity to create both physical and personal expressions of beauty that can effect in students an inclination for goodness and truth.

For Mill (1867/2012), then, the core standards for educational practice would, as with Plato (trans. 2012), accentuate the development of that part of the human being that we commonly call their soul, the seat of noble affections that inclines the individual towards the good. This dimension of university education, much like it is in elementary and secondary schools, is often neglected at great cost to the students and their future. Mill's addition to our understanding of how best to embed these standards is to highlight the role of the professor-educator in the process. It is in the beauty of the professors' soul, their exquisite demeanor, and noble sensitivities that inspire the same in their students. The standard curriculum – instruction in literature and the sciences – is, ultimately, for naught, were it not for the inspiration provided by the professor to provide the most noble of affection and motivations.

The Psalmist

The fundamental rationale for embracing beauty, and the necessity of its inclusion in any educational

model, is grounded in an existential understanding of our natures. This call to embrace and experience beauty is at the core of who we are and how we are designed. The Psalmist put it this way:

> One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. (Psalm 27:4)

Psalm 27 — A Psalm of David, as noted in the title — appears to be the union of two psalms, different in orientation and effect (Coffman, 1983). The first section, verses one through six, expresses a triumphant of David, fast over his enemies; the second section deals with ongoing trials and tribulations. In the first section, David (Psalm 27:1) stated, "The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?"

The Psalmist's confidence is grounded in the deliverance the Lord provided over his "wicked enemies" (v. 2). These victories must have taken place when David was in exile and prohibited from worshipping in Jerusalem because as delightful and satisfying these victories were, they still left David with a sense that something was missing: beholding of the beauty of his Lord in the glory of the temple in Jerusalem. If only David had this, verse 4 suggests, then all is complete. No triumph in life is "enough" in and of itself, for David still longs to be satisfied by experiencing the "beauty of the Lord" (verse 4). With this, the author of the Psalms identifies humankind's telos, that Faustian endpoint where all is so fair we could not imagine anything more satiating. This is it, this is the end: experiencing beauty in the most beautiful of all forms — the presence of the Lord.

If experiencing beauty in such a superlative way is so satiating, then what of the experience of lesser beauties along the way? As Edwards (2012) wrote:

> And we might expect, given the arresting, even "saturated," character of many experiences of beauty, that such experience could point to God in some intelligible way. The beauty of the world is, after all, an aspect of God's creation—an ontology that is (at least partly) addressed to his ends, and in which he is intimately involved. (p. 57)

Garrett (2011) tied the experience of beauty to ethics and the development of ethical sensitivities. The author noted that beauty is bound up with truth and justice, so, in experiencing beauty, somehow we are incited towards truth and, surprisingly, justice: "In the end, our experience of beauty 'radically de-centers' us: it turns our attention to correcting injustices and so leads to a fair and just society" (p. 151).

The challenge, then, for the teachers is not so much how to expose the student to beauty in the form of artifacts; we know how to do that: a trip to any school supply store will have no shortage of classroom decorations that orientate the educator towards a livelier classroom décor. The challenge is to know how to bring the beauty in the form of one's own person into the classroom. This is no small task for, as Lindsay (1974) commented, "The beautiful Christian life is, in a sense, a work of art" and is work, hard work. Lindsay outlined the achievement of the beautiful in the believer's life in traditional spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, repentance, etc. The strength of Lindsay's point, however, can be lost in the familiarity of his language – prayer, repentance, confession, etc. The point is nonetheless powerful: the beautiful life requires the same skill, craftsmanship, dedication, and attention to detail as any museum quality artifact. The "tools for this trade," however, are not chisel and hammer, brush and pallet, but are the spiritual disciplines that lead to lives of compassion, care, and integrity. The work is worth the effort, for in becoming "beautiful," the educator becomes a living inspiration to achieve goodness and pursue truth.

A Summary of the Classic Common Core Standard

Many in education go into the profession with the idea of inspiring and developing young minds, preparing students for the glorious future that awaits those who will prepare themselves for it. History and philosophy of education courses either use or reference the ideas articulated above. I teach such a course, and we use a text (Cahn, 2012) that requires students to read the original words of Plato and Mill, but also Locke, Rousseau, Whitehead, Kant, Wollstonecraft, and others. These authors, often in conversation with each other over millennia, develop a strikingly similar approach to education: the primacy of the development of the person over

and against what specific skills and knowledge they may acquire. Also, there is the clear understanding that the development of the person lies separate and distinct from the acquisition of knowledge, and the pedagogies for dispositional development are equally distinct.

While classic common core standards affirm goodness, truth, and beauty, a case can be made for the centrality of beauty and its profound effect on our minds, soul, and spirit. Commentators such as Scarry (1999) eloquently argue for a recognition and affirmation of beauty's magical effect on human personality. Given beauty's powerful effect on human disposition, and its ability to inspire nobility in the hearts of its beholders, it should come as no surprise that encounters with beauty are one of the most universally sought out human experiences. The first purchase individuals often make when they start making serious money is to buy a beautiful home in a lovely neighborhood, then fill their walls with works of art. They do this because artistic expressions involuntarily lift the spirit – the more profound and beautiful the art, the more significant the lift. The same can be said for vacation destinations, automobile purchases, and even the choice of one's mate. Mill is the most explicit of the theorists mentioned above in championing the ability of beauty to inspire both a desire for knowledge (truth) and treating others well (goodness).

Winston (2006) noted that educational institutions have traditionally underestimated the significance of beauty and perceive it to have no "practical utility." Yet, as Scarry (1999) contended, beauty is a natural ally to any educational endeavor that has as its goal the development of those who value being good, seek after truth, and pursue justice. Why is it that beauty leads to goodness and leads to interest to discovering the truth? Scarry explained: "The beautiful, almost without any effort of our own, acquaints us with the mental event of convictions, and so pleasurable a mental state is this that ever afterwards one is willing to labor, struggle, wrestle with the world to locate enduring sources of conviction – to locate what is true" (p. 31).

When I was traveling through Europe a while ago, I went to Rome and visited St. Peter's Basilica. As I walked down the center aisle, I saw an alcove on the right where some tourists had gathered. As I turned the corner, I saw in front of me the Pieta – the Michelangelo sculpture of Mary holding the recently crucified body of Christ. I remember letting out a deep, totally involuntary gasp! I remember being shaken in a deep and soul-rattling way. I felt stilled, satisfied, and holy, and for a few moments, I was transfixed. I walked away from that experience with a profound desire to embrace life and all goodness found in it. That moment had a profound effect on me – one I will never forget. I had never seen anything so gorgeous in my life, and, until I accompanied my daughter down the aisle at her wedding, hadn't seen anything that beautiful since. Yet that moment of being transfixed by beauty and the effect it has had on me have occurred multiple times since.

I am a great fan of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. I have attended that festival for twenty-some-odd consecutive years. For three or four days, I attend a variety of plays in a variety of settings. The festival attracts some of the top artists from around the world. You laugh, cry, think, and talk about issues that are at the heart of the human condition. There is something about this experience that, for me, is quite profound. I drive south from Ashland, and, at least for a week or two, am deeply committed to becoming a better man.

When we go on vacation, we pick out places of great beauty because they thrill us, inspire us, ennoble our souls, inspire our spirits. Often, and usually unbeknown to us, it is a significant motivating part of why we chose a particular school or university. "This willingness continually to revise one's own location in order to place oneself in the path of beauty is the basic impulse underlying education" (Scarry, 1999, p. 7).

But these moments of aesthetic transformation need not be that intense, or infrequent, in order for beauty to enhance our lives. I have a friend who is an exquisite host. To visit her home is to be invited into taste and elegance. What caps off the visit is one of her lovely meals. The effect of the elegant meal is gentle conversation and profound appreciation for friendship and community. Beauty is everywhere and a more powerful inciter of motivation than we may possibly be aware.

Beauty in the Classroom: A Primer

With the effects of beauty expressed through the arts so widely known, it is not only a surprise, but also a sadness, that it is not more a part of our

educational processes. Our efforts, currently, are directed towards the achievement of a set of learning outcomes focused on math and the language arts. One could argue about the politics of the movement, or any one of the standards themselves; nonetheless, it is primarily an effort to increase students' ability to succeed in academic challenges.

For many of us who work in teacher preparation programs, the Common Core standards are a welcomed innovation that moves the educational process forward by recovering an approach to pedagogy more in line with our basic orientation to holistic educational practices. Others may disagree and see this movement as governmental overreach, underfunded, or philosophically flawed. Whatever one's view, I would image that our current understanding of these common core standards would not be one embraced by our classic philosophers and theorist mentioned above. These contributors focused on the development of dispositions that are at the foundation of intellectual development and personal achievement. They addressed those qualities necessary for human flourishing in all aspects of life, not merely those that led to the acquisition of knowledge. These theorists advocated for human flourishing, a more abundant life over and against whatever specifics a student learned about any given subject.

This classical common core curriculum is never more needed. Paul Tough (2012) author of *How Children Succeed: Grit, Creativity, and the Hidden Power of Character*, suggested non-cognitive traits are at least equal, if not superior, to the cognitive skills necessary to succeed. Additionally, it is often the lack of traits such as grit and determination that actually are the foundation of student failure. If students do not acquire these character traits, if they have not learned how to persevere, to love the good, to pursue success, then they truly will have little chance to succeed in life.

A classic common core curriculum would recognize this and have, at its core, experiencing beauty, guidance towards goodness, and apprehension of truth as understood as wisdom as these foundational values that would assist in students acquiring virtues necessary to do academic work and succeed in life. Would this work for every student in every situation from every background? Hardly, sown seed still needs to find receptive soil. But in every case where students acquire these values, there often is a mentor, a guide, a "beautiful person" who intersects their path along the way. Green (2001) noted how "suffering students" achieved when some significant, caring individual intersected their lives. Noddings (2003) also identified the importance of mentors, guides, and significant individuals in dispositional development.

If educators are going to inspire achievement, if they are going to help students find "grit, curiosity, and creativity," then they will need to find ways – pedagogies, if you will – to excite these inner drives to achieve. If educators are going to help students find those dispositions, they will need to look at pedagogies that excite noble affections. Additionally, they will need to enact these pedagogies alongside a competing curriculum that vies for their attention and consideration.

There is good news. As mentioned in the introduction to this piece, there is no need to wait for some grand initiative in order to bring beauty, goodness, and truth into the classroom. It can happen tomorrow in any and every classroom throughout the world – and, in fact, does happen often enough to observe its effects. There are two ways, powerful and accessible, to bring beauty into a classroom, two pedagogies, that are mediums or conduits of beauty entering a classroom. These pedagogies focus on art and the artist.

As Barnes (1909) observed over a century ago: "Decorative art as an agency for moral training is being brought more consistently into use, and good pictures on the schoolroom walls, by their vision of beauty, their appeal to ambition, and their outlook into a larger and fuller life, are having no small influence on the development of character" (p. 373). As Goodlad (1984) noted in his seminal work *A Place Called School*, environment such as physical, emotional, and aesthetic characteristics of the classroom tend to enhance students' attitude towards learning.

In a meta-analysis of the relationship between physical learning environment and student achievement, Cheryan, Ziegler, Plaut, and Meltzoff (2014) noted, first, the classroom environment profoundly influences learning. Such factors as lighting, noise, low air quality, and deficient heating in the classroom are significantly related to worse student achievement. Second, symbolic features

such as art objects and wall color in influencing student learning and achievement – for better or worse. Art objects that are inclusive, inspirational, and aesthetic provide constant visual clues about what is possible and attainable for all students.

It matters how a classroom is appointed, how student work is displayed on the wall, how bright and inviting a classroom is to students upon their arrival. I remember my own teacher preparation training and having a session with one of our methods teachers on bulletin board construction and the importance of theme, chromatic color use, and – especially — squared corners. This attention to all detail is in line with Mill's characterization of beauty as that which is done to, or approaches, perfection. I can think of dozens of classrooms I've visited over the years with interesting design, displays, and color. As illustrated above, it is not too far-fetched to make a connection between art on the wall and the very heart of God. The experience of these artistic expressions is of a piece with guiding students towards the best and their very best selves.

Classroom art is, obviously, only one element of beauty in the classroom. Aesthetic expressions include all the typical art forms: literature, poetry, music, film, sculpture, and so on. But they also extend into other, less obvious items: lesson design, activity construction, worksheet composition, PowerPoint presentation – the list is, probably, endless. Mill's point is that all human effort can be raised to the beautiful when designed with care and executed to (near) perfection, and all these artistic expressions do affect those who come in contact with them.

There is another, and ultimately more profound, expression of beauty in a classroom:

> Beauty is located in the person of the teacher. There is, however, the revelation which the child beholds in the gaze, in the gestures of the teacher, in the way in which the words of the teacher are spoken. It is the teacher himself whom the child — without uttering many words — calls truth, beauty and goodness from the revelations of his heart. (Steiner, 1924/1982, p. 87)

And what are those qualities that Steiner is affirming in this "beautiful teacher"? A classical writer might say: a commitment to *truth*, an inner *beauty*, and evidence of *goodness* expressed in acts of compassion. Someone with a biblical perspective might suggest the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. Another translator suggested this as an interpretation:

> But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. (Galatians 5:22-24, The Message)

There is significant pedagogical value in simply being a "good person" (Lewis, Schaps, & Watson, 1996), especially embracing the qualities of compassion, kindness, and care (Noddings, 2003, 2005, 2013). Individuals who in themselves bring these qualities to the teaching enterprise bring along with them the ability to model and capacity to inspire beauty around them.

In Conclusion

Dewey (1934) noted that true artistic expression is not "spontaneous," but must be developed. Simply throwing something out there without thought, intentionality, and design seldom moves us in any deep or profound way. This especially applies here where the artist is the artifact requiring in the self the usual aesthetic elements of skill, design, and intentionality. Scripture notes the same thing: that the spiritual life is a result discipline (I Corinthians 11:32), perseverance (Hebrews 12:1), and a trust and reliance on the work of the Spirit in the believer's life (John 14:26). For those of us who work to integrate faith into the teacher preparation process, it is not too difficult to imagine that along with the study of content and pedagogy, we would include efficacy of godliness, compassion, kindness in assisting students in developing their full potential.

As mentioned above, a pedagogy of the heart must be of a different sort than the pedagogies of

knowledge acquisition and skill attainment. We know how to teach knowledge: you read books, engage in learning activities, write papers, and so on. We know how to teach skills: you find a place to practice, engage a mentor, and practice until you make things perfect. The pedagogy of dispositional development is of a different sort. Reading books, writing papers, and imitating the practices of the masters in the field only have limited effect on the heart. Even the best lesson on beauty is no substitute for its experience. As Mill (1867/2012) suggested, it is experiences with beauty that have a most profound effect on our hearts and should be a part of any educational endeavor.

These ancient and classical educational standards are often neglected in our current educational environment. Yet, there is no prescription against bringing beauty into a lesson – or being "beautiful." As Paul noted (Galatians 5:23), the fruit of the Spirit can be expressed freely since "against these there is no law." A teacher could teach to the Common Core standards and embrace a classic common core standard at the same time. This commitment to the classic common core standards can become the new hidden curriculum, the unseen, often unspoken motivators that support a teacher's educational practices.

Left, for now, is a discussion about the standards and definitions of truth, goodness, and beauty. There are cultural, generational, and philosophical dimensions to this topic that are critical considerations as sympathetic practitioners work to implement a more holistic educational environment. These considerations are, however, beyond the scope of this short essay as this author's intent is to simply alert the practitioner of a perspective on education that is not often a current consideration. That said, any serious work to implement this more holistic approach would need to be aware of, and take into serious consideration, the complexities of working in a most complex world.

A final word. Most, if not all, students can recall an influential teacher, someone who changed their life. There are many ways to interpret what a student means by this phrase. Perhaps it has to do with the way the teacher opened up a particular subject to them or made them work harder than they ever thought possible. Perhaps this teacher believed in them, affirmed their goodness, and believed they could achieve great things in life. Or perhaps, these outstanding educators had a way to make learning fun, enjoyable, or relevant. There is another way to describe these transformative educational experiences: if, as Mill (1867/2012) suggested, beauty is anything expressed in perfection, then it may be said that these students had an encounter with beauty and were transformed by the experience and were never the same! As we are told to remember, a thing of beauty is a joy forever – and its effects can, and often do, last a lifetime. This is as true for a work of painter as the unique, once-in-a-lifetime teacher.

References

Barnes, C. W. (1909). Moral training through the agency of the public school. *Journal of Education*, *LXX*(20), 2.

Cahn, S. M. (Ed.). (2012). *Classic and contemporary readings in the philosophy of education* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Cheryan, S., Ziegler, S. A., Plaut, V. C., & Meltzoff, A. N. (2014). Designing classrooms to maximize student achievement. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 1*, 4-12.

Coffman, J. B. (1983). Commentary on Psalms 27. *Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament*. Retrived from: **http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=ps&ch=27**

Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. New York, NY: The Berkley Publishing Group.

Dillon, A. (2004). *Education in Plato's Republic*. Retrieved from **http://www.scu.edu/ethics/publications/submitted/dillon/education_plato_republic.html**

Edwards, C. L. (2012). Artful creation and aesthetic rationality: Toward a creational theology of revelatory beauty. *Theology Today*, *69*(1), 56-72.

Fuhraro, H. (2015, October 6, 2014). Fresno Unified gets $1.3 million arts grant. *Fresno Bee*. Retrieved from **http://www.fresnobee.com/2014/10/06/4164521_fresno-unified-gets-13-million.html?rh=1**

Garrett, S. M. (2011). Beauty as the point of connection between theology and ethics. *European Journal of Theology*, *20*(2), 149-158.

Goodlad, J. (1984). *A place called school: Prospects for the future*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Publication.

Green, G. (2001). *The Compassionate Educator: A redemptive response to the suffering student*(Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation). Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA.

Kraut, R. (2014). Aristotle's ethics. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from **http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/**

Lewis, C. C., Schaps, E., & Watson, M. S. (1996). The caring classroom's academic edge. *Educational Leadership, 54*, 16-21.

Lindsey, F. D. (1974). Essays toward a theology of beauty. *Bibliotheca Sacra, 131*, 120-136.

Mill, J. S. (1867/2012). Inaugural address at St. Andrews. In S. M. Cahn (Ed.), *Classic and contemporary readings in the philosophy of education* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Noddings, N. (2003). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Noddings, N. (2005). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to*

education. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Noddings, N. (2013). *Education and democracy in the 21st century*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Palmer, P. (2000). *Let your life speak*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pappas, N. (2014). *Plato's aesthetics*. Retrieved from The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy website: **http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/plato-aesthetics/**

Plato. (trans. 2009). Symposium. In A. Hofstadter & R. Kuhns (Eds.), *The philosophies of art and beauty: Selected readings in aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.

Plato. (trans. 2012). The Republic (J. L. Davies, D. J. Vaughan & A. Tschemplik, Trans.). In S. M. Cahn (Ed.), *Classic and contemporary readings in the philosophy of education* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. (Reprinted by permission of Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group)

Scarry, E. (1999). *On beauty and being just*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Steiner, R. ([1924] 1982). *The essentials of education*. New York, NY: Anthroposophical Publishing Company.

Tough, P. (2012). *How children succeed: Grit, creativity, and the hidden power of character*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing.

Winston, J. (2006). Beauty, goodness, and education: the Arts beyond utility. *Journal of Moral Education*, *35*(3), 285–300.