

Classical Education, Mythos, and Philosophy

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**Abstract**

Classical education offers a superior education K-12 because it is uniquely equipped to incorporate mythos and philosophy, two important parts of an education that are not included as well in other systems of education. Mythos, which has to do with narratives, story, and myth, has significant uses and benefits in many contexts, including religious, cultural, and academic. Philosophy is important in order for one to live the good life, and is lacking in today's culture of education. These two concepts are emphasized in classical education. They fit into the classical canon and are best taught in a classical context. For these reasons, classical education offers a superior education in these ways.

### **Classical Education, Mythos, and Philosophy**

Classical education offers an excellent education K-12 because it best incorporates mythos and philosophy. Mythos and philosophy are both human activities that are important in properly educating students, and their integration in the classical canon contributes to the efficacy and impact of classical education.

In this thesis I will first define the three titular concepts, then give in-depth explanations of each. These explanations will include an argument that they are beneficial to education. After the respective explanations of mythos and philosophy, I will show how they are linked to classical education. At the end of the thesis, I will show links between mythos and philosophy to show how the three titular concepts together form a holistic educational unity. By the end of this thesis, I will have shown the benefits of mythos and philosophy as well as their involvement in classical education, and therefore the inherent benefits in classical education.

### **Relevant Definitions**

#### **Classical Education Defined**

Classical education can have a variety of definitions. Two of the influential definitions in this thesis come from a book by Douglas Wilson<sup>1</sup> and one by Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain.<sup>2</sup> Wilson defines classical education as referring to “a particular pedagogical approach together with an emphasis on passing on the heritage of the West. The pedagogy refers to [the] commitment to Dorothy Sayers’s basic insight—that children grow naturally through stages that

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Wilson, *The Case for Classical Christian Education* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 84.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019).

correspond nicely with the three elements of the Trivium.”<sup>3</sup> Clark and Jain define the classical canon as including piety, gymnastics, music, the liberal arts, philosophy, and theology. The definition provided by Wilson and the structure provided by Clark and Jain give a good picture of how classical education will be understood within the parameters of this thesis. In this thesis I will discuss classical Christian education, although much of the material will relate to non-Christian classical education as well.

### **Mythos Defined**

With regard to stories, “The Greeks called them mythos or myths and in all cultures they have survived because they provide lessons, inspiration and the motivation to act.”<sup>4</sup> Mythos is a word derived from the Greek that refers to the human practice of storytelling and narrative. In this thesis I hope to specifically relate the concepts of mythos and storytelling to education, and will also show links between mythos and philosophy.

### **Philosophy Defined**

With regard to its place in the classical canon, philosophy can be defined as the love of wisdom, where wisdom is the “comprehension of reality” and philosophy is understood to include a love and “submission to that reality.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, philosophy can be understood as divided into the three categories of metaphysics, moral philosophy, and natural philosophy.<sup>6</sup> In

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<sup>3</sup> Douglas Wilson, *The Case for Classical Christian Education* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 84.

<sup>4</sup> Gerry Beamish and Jonathan Beamish, "Cave Wall to Internet, Storytelling, the Ancient Learning Art" *Industrial and Commercial Training* 47, no. 4 (2015): 191.

<sup>5</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 104.

<sup>6</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 105.

this thesis, philosophy will be examined specifically in its relation to classical education and the classical canon.

### **Education Defined**

In this thesis, education will refer specifically to kindergarten through high school, although the majority of comments on education should apply broadly for any systematic learning endeavor. The focus of this thesis will not be to establish a superior style of education, but rather to give a tenable explanation for why classical education works well.

### **Classical Education Overview**

Classical education can be defined in a variety of ways.<sup>7,8</sup> In this thesis, I will focus on explaining the structure of the classical canon, which should help to set up a discussion of how mythos and philosophy fit into that structure. Classical education incorporates mythos by using story throughout the educational process, especially in the early years of education. Classical education also incorporates philosophy as a central part of its canon.<sup>9</sup> The focus of this thesis is not to prove that classical education is a superior model of education, but rather to give an explanation of how its incorporation of mythos and philosophy contribute to its assumed superiority. In order to do this well, I will assume classical education's superiority based on other studies.<sup>10</sup> An argument for the superiority of classical education is beyond the scope of this

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<sup>7</sup> Christopher Perrin, *An Introduction to Classical Education* (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> David V. Hicks, *Norms & Nobility: a Treatise on Education* (New York: Praeger, 1981).

<sup>9</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> David Goodwin, "Good Soil: A Comparative Study of ACCS Alumni Life Outcomes," January 27, 2020, February 12, 2021, <https://www.classicaldifference.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/The-Classical-Difference-Good-Soil-7-outcomes-full-research-report-Draft-3-28-2020.pdf>.

thesis. Clark and Jain give the structure of the classical canon as including piety, gymnastics, music, the liberal arts, philosophy, and theology.<sup>11</sup> In addition to examining the structure of the classical canon, this thesis will also show some of the benefits of classical education. These discussions should ultimately set up the arguments that mythos and philosophy are integrated in the classical canon.

### **Mythos Overview**

Mythos has to do with the human activity of telling stories. It involves the ideas of narrative, story, and myth. Mythos is important in education for a variety of reasons. In this thesis, I will discuss mythos in general, how it is beneficial in education, how it fits into the classical canon, and how it relates to philosophy. The purpose of this thesis is not to give an exhaustive treatise on storytelling, but rather to argue for its positive impact on education as well as its place in the classical canon. This thesis will additionally show links between mythos and philosophy, which will contribute to the idea of a unified whole comprised of the classical canon, mythos, and philosophy.

### **Philosophy Overview**

Philosophy is a human activity that seeks to ask and answer basic questions about the universe, humanity, right, wrong, truth, and meaning. There are many benefits to an education in philosophy. An education in philosophy helps a person to live the good life. In this thesis, I will discuss the nature of philosophy, how it is relevant to education, how it fits into the classical canon, and its relation to mythos. The purpose of this thesis is to show the benefits of an education that includes philosophy as well as to prove an inherent relationship between

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<sup>11</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019).

philosophy and classical education. The discussion of the relationship between philosophy and mythos should contribute to the idea of a unified curriculum wherein philosophy and mythos interact with other concepts all in the framework of classical education.

### **Discussion of the Titular Concepts**

#### **A Deeper Look: Classical Education**

While the purpose of this thesis is not to give a comprehensive history of classical education, it is beneficial to give a very brief overview. Classical education is steeped in an interesting history, from ancient Greece through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to the modern era. In fact, classical education was a controversial issue in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary America.<sup>12</sup> Many detractors attacked it on the basis of being an impractical waste of time for youths. Thanks to influential defenders, classical education held up amidst attacks during the revolutionary period but was eventually challenged again.<sup>13</sup> More recently, classical education is experiencing a resurgence.

This resurgence of classical education is at odds with other philosophies of education. An education can be focused on the humanities or on science. There is a conflict in education between the classical model, which traditionally stresses the humanities, and the modern model, which focuses on science. This conflict leads to a trend of sending gifted young people into scientific disciplines rather than philosophical ones. The materialism and skepticism of the modern age leads to a world in which science brings order and reduces obscurity, giving science

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<sup>12</sup> Meyer Reinhold, "Opponents of Classical Learning in America during the Revolutionary Period." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 112, no. 4 (1968): 221-34.

<sup>13</sup> Meyer Reinhold, "Opponents of Classical Learning in America during the Revolutionary Period." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 112, no. 4 (1968): 221-34.



far more importance than John Locke gave it. The modern efforts of science to systematize nature and bring order are contrary to the essence of the world, which is to exist in a wild state: “The world for the most part is not like a neatly ordered garden, but is unruly like a wild-wood.”<sup>14</sup> Due to conflicting desires of agents and the diversity and multiplicity of entities, society and the world are in a state of disorder. The classically trained are better equipped to engage with a world characterized by disorderly change. Because classical education focuses on teaching students the tools of learning, students are subsequently prepared to apply these tools to the variety of problems presented by the world.<sup>15</sup> An education in science, while useful, will not prepare most people for the state of wildness that the world is in, whereas a classical education focuses on preparing the student to continue learning.<sup>16</sup> The best way to understand the nature of classical education is to understand the structure of the classical canon.

### *The Classical Canon*

As far as content, Scott and Jain outline the classical canon as following the structure of piety, gymnastics, music, the liberal arts, philosophy, and theology.<sup>17</sup> The following sections will discuss each of these elements in more depth. The canon progresses through these stages as students grow and move from elementary education through and beyond high school, but there is often an incorporation of elements previously learned in each new stage, as well as a tendency to revisit parts of the canon cyclically as the student advances.

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<sup>14</sup> Gavin Ardley, "What Kind of Education?" *Philosophy* 35, no. 133 (1960): 155.

<sup>15</sup> Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Lost Tools of Learning: Paper Read at a Vacation Course in Education, Oxford, 1947*, (London: Methuen, 1948).

<sup>16</sup> Gavin Ardley, "What Kind of Education?" *Philosophy* 35, no. 133 (1960): 153-57.

<sup>17</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019).

**Piety in the Classical Canon.** Piety has to do with a proper respect and honor for one's god, one's country, and one's fellow man. It "signifies the duty, love, and respect owed to God, parents, and communal authorities past and present."<sup>18</sup> It makes sense that young children must first learn respect and honor for authority in order to properly learn from others. A foundation in piety helps young students to properly respect their teachers and relate rightly with their peers. Piety involves passing an entire culture on to the next generation, which includes passing on the cultural metanarratives and myths.<sup>19,20</sup> The relation to the passing on of a culture is another connection to mythos which will be elaborated upon later.<sup>21</sup> Piety is where the classical canon starts in order to establish proper respect and affections.

**Gymnastics in the Classical Canon.** The involvement of gymnastics in classical education contributes towards classical education's focus on the whole person, not just the intellect. Classical education is concerned with the growth and development of the whole person, which includes the mind, body, and soul. As Clark and Jain have said, "Education is not merely an intellectual affair."<sup>22</sup> Classically conceived, gymnastics include the "entire physical conditioning of a child."<sup>23</sup> Ultimately aimed at competitive excellence, along the way it helps

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<sup>18</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 15.

<sup>19</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 22.

<sup>20</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Collier Books, 1955), 31-32.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Buxton, *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*, (Oxford University Press, 1999), 252.

<sup>22</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 29.

<sup>23</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 25.

students to have control over their body. This concrete discipline leads to an understanding of the relationship between mind and body and helps students to understand their whole self, an important step for a philosophy of education that claims to be holistic. The purpose of classical education should be to improve and “perfect inherent human abilities.”<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, gymnastics prepare students to learn and understand various moral concepts such as the value of hard work and perseverance.

**Music in the Classical Canon.** Music includes everything traditionally considered to be inspired by the muses. It involves not just the auditory arts that have to do with musical instruments, but is concerned with areas including poetry, drama, the fine arts, and literature. Classically conceived, even history, geography, and astronomy fall under the category of music. Music has to do with wonder, which in turn leads to philosophy.<sup>25</sup> Along with gymnastics, music helps to unify the person and train the passions. Thinkers including Plato, Aristotle, and Lewis have stressed the benefits of music and formation of the heart in education.<sup>26,27</sup> Gymnastics and music both have to do with the formation of the heart. It is useful to explain here Plato’s tripartite view of the soul. In Plato’s *Republic*, a discussion of justice leads to a discussion of the nature of the soul. Plato divides the soul into three parts: reason, the appetitive part, and the will, or heart.<sup>28</sup> Lewis discusses the soul in these same terms when he says that the “middle part” (heart)

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<sup>24</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 29.

<sup>25</sup> Aristotle, "Metaphysics: The complete works of Aristotle," (1984).

<sup>26</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 32-33.

<sup>27</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Collier Books, 1955), 35.

<sup>28</sup> Plato, *Plato's The Republic*, (New York: Books, Inc., 1943).

makes man who he is, since reason is pure spirit and appetite pure animal.<sup>29</sup> Lewis argues that “the Chest—Magnanimity—Sentiment—these are the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man.”<sup>30</sup> Gymnastics and music are both concerned with properly forming and training the heart, without which the proper forming and training of the whole person would be impossible. For these reasons, gymnastics and music are a necessary part of the foundation of a classical education.

**The Liberal Arts in the Classical Canon.** Classical education focuses on the liberal arts. The liberal arts have been used since ancient Greece and maintained popularity up until the 12<sup>th</sup> century. They had an important impact on culture. They are composed of the Trivium (grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric) and the Quadrivium (arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy). The Trivium provides students with the skills to critically engage with literature, while the Quadrivium relates more to the natural world. The Trivium has to do with the tools necessary to engage with language, while the Quadrivium is concerned with mathematics. Mathematics are a vital piece of the liberal arts.<sup>31</sup> After the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Quadrivium was gradually minimized, and mathematics apart from utilitarian concerns followed. The decline of math is a loss in education. There is both a beauty in mathematics that is important to appreciate, as well as a soul-forming aspect to the discipline. Math is even helpful in order to do philosophy.<sup>32</sup> Mathematics is important not just for its usefulness but for its “special role in human formation

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<sup>29</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Collier Books, 1955), 34.

<sup>30</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Collier Books, 1955), 34.

<sup>31</sup> Grant Hardy, "Mathematics and the Liberal Arts," *The College Mathematics Journal* 30, no. 2 (1999): 96-105. doi:10.2307/2687718.

<sup>32</sup> Grant Hardy, "Mathematics and the Liberal Arts—II," *The College Mathematics Journal* 30, no. 3 (05, 1999): 197-203.

and developing the virtue of the mind.”<sup>33</sup> The temptation to reduce mathematics to a science that is useful in the real world is a dangerous one, but the classical emphasis on truth, goodness, and beauty must be maintained with regard to mathematics.

Grammar is primarily concerned with learning to speak, read, and write with an understanding of language. The acquisition of grammar can be accomplished in a music-like way through use of imitation to cultivate memorization. Additionally, the goal of grammar is to add to the student’s knowledge base.<sup>34</sup>

Dialectic, “the art of following questions and finding arguments” is closely related to logic.<sup>35</sup> Logic is a discipline concerned with the validity of arguments and the relationships between premises and conclusions. Dialectic involves the process of discussing relationships between concepts, which leans strongly on the discipline of logic.

The Trivium culminates in the practice of rhetoric, which has to do with the art of using language in public speaking.<sup>36</sup> Aristotle defines rhetoric as “the power of seeing all the available means of persuasion with regard to a particular situation.”<sup>37,38</sup> As the culmination of the Trivium,

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<sup>33</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 67.

<sup>34</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 47-54.

<sup>35</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 55.

<sup>36</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 62.

<sup>37</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 63.

<sup>38</sup> Aristotle, W. Rhys Roberts, *Rhetoric*, (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2004).

the language arts, rhetoric ought to be aimed towards good composition and presentation of public speeches.<sup>39</sup>

Arithmetic forms the first part of the Quadrivium. The end of arithmetic is wonder, as well as a growth ultimately into wisdom. The relation between mathematics and wonder is seen as early as the marvelous things referenced in *Mechanical Problems*.<sup>40</sup> Geometry, the second part of the Quadrivium, was stressed by the ancients. Above the doorway to Plato's Academy was the inscription "Let none but Geometers enter here."<sup>41</sup> Geometry has contributed to the growth of culture. From Euclid to Descartes, this part of the Quadrivium has left its mark on the history of Western civilization. These forms of mathematics were naturally applied to the heavens, leading to the third part of the Quadrivium, astronomy. Music, already listed earlier in the canon, is revisited as part of the Quadrivium. It takes three forms: first, the music that is traditionally associated with instruments and singing; second and third, the proportions and harmony found in the two areas of the world and of human society.<sup>42</sup> The focus of music in this sense is the harmony and beauty found in proportions of nature.

In this way, mastery of the seven liberal arts gives students the tools to learn about a wide variety of subjects because they are able to engage in existing literature as well as the world itself. Topics ranging from classic literature to physics to musical instruments can all be learned

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<sup>39</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 65.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Nelson Winter, "The Mechanical Problems in the Corpus of Aristotle," (Faculty Publications, Classics and Religious Studies Department: 2007), 68.

<sup>41</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 74.

<sup>42</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 89.

using the tools provided by the liberal arts. Overall, the purpose of the liberal arts is to equip students with the tools to learn any other subject. In this way, classical education focuses more on preparing students to learn a trade rather than teaching them directly practical skills. This concept will be expanded on in a later section discussing the relation of epistemology to classical education. The liberal arts are important as the practical seeds of learning (Truth) as well as soul-forming disciplines (Goodness) and as studies that help students to appreciate the world (Beauty).

**Philosophy in the Classical Canon.** Classical education incorporates philosophy into its canon, encompassing many fields. For the purposes of classical education, the term “philosophy” refers to “the unity of knowledge that cover[s] all subjects.”<sup>43</sup> The medieval system separated philosophy into three categories: natural, moral, and divine philosophy. Natural philosophy encompasses the natural sciences, such as mechanics, biology, and chemistry. Moral philosophy includes the social sciences, such as ethics, politics, and economics. Divine philosophy is metaphysics, the study of being.<sup>44</sup> Thanks to the medieval conception of philosophy, classical education encompasses all of these fields, including the natural and social sciences as well as metaphysics.

**Theology in the Classical Canon.** While it is grounded in piety, classical education finds its crowning achievement in theology, the study of God. Ultimately, the stages before theology all lead up to this point. Classically called “queen of the sciences,” theology is classically defined

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<sup>43</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 8.

<sup>44</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 8.

as the science of divine revelation.<sup>45</sup> While the liberal arts and sciences along with philosophy cover all the subjects under the sun, theology is concerned with the specific revelation given from God about these subjects.<sup>46</sup> It is in this capstone of the classical canon that piety, gymnastics, and music find their culmination. Theology gives the basis for piety by putting authority in the proper scope. Gymnastics are better understood based on the dual theological truths of both the dignity and temporality of the human body. Music finds its ultimate beauty and purpose in light of God's revelations, especially His musical revelations in "stories, poems, prayers, and songs."<sup>47</sup> Philosophy finds its proper end in and is informed in areas by theology. Theology can be understood as the *telos* of a Christian classical education.<sup>48</sup>

### ***Exemplars of Classical Education***

Now that the structure of the classical canon has been discussed, the end result should be examined. There are various exemplars of classical education, including the noteworthy person of Martin Luther King Jr. Classical education had a strong contribution to King's writing and speeches.<sup>49</sup> His exposure to classical education is seen in his coursework and grades at various

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<sup>45</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 205-6.

<sup>46</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 207.

<sup>47</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 208.

<sup>48</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), 209.

<sup>49</sup> Lewis A. Sussman, "The Classical References in Martin Luther King's Last Speech and the Meaning of 'I've Been to the Mountaintop'," *Classical Bulletin* 81, no. 1 (2005): 51-68.



times in his education.<sup>50</sup> He was deeply influenced by classical civilization and thinkers. He often cited Socrates in his speeches and writings, especially when discussing civil disobedience and love.<sup>51</sup>

### **A Deeper Look: Mythos**

#### *The Nature of Mythos*

Examples of mythos are seen in many areas. Mythos includes all sorts of stories and narratives. Both history and fiction fall into the category of mythos. Mythos and culture can fundamentally influence one another. Mythos is incredibly and irreplaceably useful in education, largely because humans have a natural attraction to stories. Wherever and whenever humans have lived, they have created stories, shared them, and have been changed by them. Mythos can also play a central role in religion. Creation myths are seen among most of the major religions of the world. In the Christian religion, mythos is closely related to the person and ministry of Jesus. Jesus often used parables to teach eternal concepts. Jesus' entire ministry can be analyzed as a story. The story of Jesus has power even to this day. Part of the significance of the story of Jesus can be analyzed from an existentialist perspective,<sup>52</sup> which shows more of the relationship between mythos and philosophy, a concept which will be discussed in a later section of this thesis. Mythos is simply the human activity of telling stories, but it has connections to classical

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<sup>50</sup> Trudy Harrington Becker, "A Source for Ideology: The Classical Education of Martin Luther King, Jr.," *Classical Bulletin* 76, no. 2 (2000): 181-189.

<sup>51</sup> William C. West, "Socrates as a Model of Civil Disobedience in the Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.," *The Classical Bulletin* 76, no. 2 (Jan 01, 2000): 191-200.

<sup>52</sup> Keith Tester, "Telling Stories about Jesus: A Conversation with John Carroll," *Cultural Sociology* 4, no. 3 (2010): 379-394.

education and to philosophy that are both deep and beautiful. The connection between mythos and classical education will be demonstrated in the next section.

### *Mythos in Education*

Stories hold a special place in education. With regard to the ancient Greeks, “The educators begin with mousike, and mousike includes logoi—stories.”<sup>53</sup> This mention of music clearly parallels the earlier discussion of music’s place in the classical canon. Educational use of storytelling has an especially prominent place in the education of young children, but humans of all ages are affected by stories. In fact, “according to neurologist Uri Hasson from Princeton, a story is the only way to activate parts in the brain so that a listener turns the story into their own ideas and experience. In terms of influencing there is nothing more powerful than people thinking that the idea is their own.”<sup>54</sup> Clearly, stories not only affect students, but shape their minds in ways other methods cannot. Stories are useful constructions that humans have always used, and can have multiple purposes.<sup>55</sup> Stories help humanity to make sense of the world they find themselves in. Stories can also be used to conceptualize new material. Deeper still, storytelling and comprehension has been theorized to have deep consequences with regards to intelligence.<sup>56</sup> While intelligence has a noteworthy relationship to stories, their educational benefits can also relate to moral education. A character curriculum based off of Lewis’ Narnia

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<sup>53</sup> Richard Buxton, *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999), 251.

<sup>54</sup> Gerry Beamish and Jonathan Beamish, "Cave Wall to Internet, Storytelling, the Ancient Learning Art" *Industrial and Commercial Training* 47, no. 4 (2015): 192.

<sup>55</sup> Gerry Beamish and Jonathan Beamish, "Cave Wall to Internet, Storytelling, the Ancient Learning Art" *Industrial and Commercial Training* 47, no. 4 (2015): 191.

<sup>56</sup> Gerry Beamish and Jonathan Beamish, "Cave Wall to Internet, Storytelling, the Ancient Learning Art" *Industrial and Commercial Training* 47, no. 4 (2015): 194.

series has shown how mythos can be used to teach students about virtue, a very classical concern.<sup>57</sup> Storytelling and mythos have a deeply influential educational impact.

In relation to classical education, mythos is significantly involved in several parts of the classical canon. Piety, which is concerned with the passing on of a culture from one generation to another, largely relies on mythos.<sup>58</sup> Music as the second stage in the classical canon includes much storytelling in order to properly communicate a love and wonder for their proper objects. The Trivium includes the three of the seven liberal arts which are concerned with literature, and therefore often interact with stories. Mythos is deeply ingrained in classical education.

### **A Deeper Look: Philosophy**

#### ***The Nature of Philosophy***

Philosophy has already been broadly discussed in this thesis, from a working definition to a brief overview to a discussion of philosophy's place in the classical canon. In an effort to avoid redundancy, this section will give a brief explanation of how philosophy can be separated into various branches. This discussion will prioritize a simple structure that will enlighten future sections over a comprehensive treatise on the limits and grounds of philosophy itself.

Philosophy is often separated into three branches: metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology. Metaphysics includes a diverse list of questions concerned with the nature of reality and existence. Questions related to the existence of God, the nature of matter, humanity, and time all fall within the purvey of metaphysics.

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<sup>57</sup> Mark Perkins, "Rediscovering the Pedagogical Power of Narnia," *Christianity Today* (2020): <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/september-web-only/narnia-lewis-teaching-virtue-fiction-pedagogy.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Buxton, *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999), 252.

Epistemology has to do with the science of knowledge and answers questions related to truth, belief, faith, and knowledge. Discussions of doubt, skepticism, and certainty are epistemological discussions. As the philosophical field dealing with knowledge, epistemology forms much of the basis for science (the word, “science,” itself comes from the Latin word “*scio*” translated, “I know.”)

Axiology deals with questions of value. Ethics and aesthetics are both areas of axiology, dealing with judgments of good versus bad and beautiful versus ugly, respectively. These are the three primary branches of philosophy.

Reason (the second part of Plato’s tripartite soul)<sup>59</sup> and philosophy tend towards the analytical. Reason and philosophy both excel at defining limits, separating component parts, and dividing certain from uncertain. This point is evidenced throughout the history of philosophy, from Aristotle’s division of causality into four types, to Descartes’ systemic doubt and division of the certain from the doubtful, to Kant’s division of noumenal from phenomenal, to Heidegger’s division of the tree of philosophy.<sup>60,61,62,63</sup> Philosophy and reason are analytical by nature.

### ***Philosophy in Education***

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<sup>59</sup> Plato, *Plato's The Republic*, (New York: Books, Inc., 1943).

<sup>60</sup> Aristotle, R. P. Hardie, R. K. Gaye, *Physics*, <http://classics.mit.edu//Aristotle/physics.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Translated by Michael Moriarty. (Oxford World’s Classics. London, England: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>62</sup> Immanuel Kant and Norman Kemp Smith, *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, (Boston: Bedford, 1929).

<sup>63</sup> Martin Heidegger and Werner Brock, *Existence and Being*, (Lakewood, Colo.: Church Press, 2009).

Philosophy has a deeply impactful relationship with education in general and classical education in particular. Philosophy has to do with learning how to ask questions well about a variety of topics. As mentioned above, philosophy is a part of the classical canon, so little argument need be made with regard to its general involvement in classical education. In the following section, focus will be given to how a particular area of philosophy relates to classical education.

**Epistemology and Classical Education.** Knowledge has been separated into various categories by various thinkers. This section will show the place of epistemology in classical education by examining several categories of knowledge and discussing how classical education teaches those categories of knowledge. I will begin with the categories of propositional and non-propositional knowledge, following this discussion with Aristotle's categories of intellectual virtues. After establishing these categories, I will examine how classical education incorporates various types of knowledge.

Knowledge can be separated into propositional and non-propositional categories. Knowledge as traditionally defined as justified, true belief would fall into the propositional category, whereas knowledge in the personal sense would fall into the second category (e.g. "I know my friend." "I know God." etc.) This bifurcation of propositional and non-propositional knowledge leaves out a third category. Know-how knowledge relates to learned skills and includes, among other things, muscle memory, acquired athletic abilities, and skills at various crafts. These three categories are useful to distinguish before a discussion of another categorization of knowledge.

In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle separates intellectual virtues into five categories: scientific knowledge (*epistêmê*), practical wisdom (*phronêsis*), philosophic wisdom (*sophia*),

intuitive reason (*nous*), and art (*technê*).<sup>64</sup> The first four fall into the category of propositional knowledge, while art is included in know-how knowledge. The rest of this section will focus on how classical education incorporates these five categories, first by looking at the broad category of propositional knowledge with its subcategories, then looking at know-how knowledge.

The classical canon follows the structure of piety, gymnastics, music, the liberal arts, philosophy, and theology.<sup>65</sup> Philosophy and theology are the parts of the canon primarily concerned with answering the question “What to know?”<sup>66</sup> therefore a discussion of propositional knowledge will focus primarily on these areas. The liberal arts (which include grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music) are also relevant to a discussion of propositional knowledge, but they will be discussed more in depth in relation to know-how knowledge.

Classically defined, philosophy includes “the unity of knowledge that cover[s] all subjects,” and can be divided into the three branches of natural philosophy (which includes natural science), moral philosophy (which includes social science), and divine philosophy (metaphysics).<sup>67</sup> Theology, the science of divine revelation, gives new information otherwise inaccessible through the means of philosophy and the liberal arts, and gives an authoritative

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<sup>64</sup> Aristotle, W. D. Ross, and Lesley Brown, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 104.

<sup>65</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), p. 287.

<sup>66</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), p. 287.

<sup>67</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), p. 8.

interpretation of the information available in the natural world.<sup>68</sup> The first category of propositional knowledge falls mainly under the domain of philosophy and theology, so the subcategories provided by Aristotle (scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, philosophic wisdom, and intuitive reason) also lie within the scope of philosophy and theology. Specifically, scientific knowledge (*epistêmê*) can be discovered and justified through the liberal arts and is included in natural science, also called natural philosophy.<sup>69</sup> Practical wisdom (*phronêsis*), sometimes translated “prudence” or “mindfulness,” has to do with knowing the good thing for one to do. This intellectual virtue can be learned through moral philosophy. Intuitive reason (*nous*) is the virtue by which we grasp the first principles, those which are not demonstrated by science, but upon which science is founded.<sup>70</sup> Since this sort of knowledge cannot be demonstrated, it could be argued that intuitive reason cannot truly be taught, but rather is known immediately. This sort of knowledge is necessary in order to do science, so it falls under the category of natural philosophy. Finally, the subcategory of philosophic wisdom (*sophia*) is the union of intuitive reason and scientific knowledge.<sup>71</sup> This subcategory is unsurprisingly included in philosophy.

Now that the first four subcategories of Aristotle have all been demonstrated to have a place in the classical canon, the category of know-how knowledge, with its subcategory of art

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<sup>68</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), pp. 206-7.

<sup>69</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), p. 107.

<sup>70</sup> Aristotle, W. D. Ross, and Lesley Brown, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009), p. 107.

<sup>71</sup> Aristotle, W. D. Ross, and Lesley Brown, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009), p. 108.

(*technê*), will be examined. While propositional knowledge is likely what comes to mind when education is mentioned, arts and skills make up a substantial part of the classical canon. Plato emphasized the importance of gymnastics and music, which are intentionally included in the classical canon in order to give a holistic education, one that conditions the body, soul, and mind. Gymnastics are concerned with the entire physical conditioning of a student<sup>72,73</sup> Classically, music refers to everything inspired by the Muses, which includes music, poetry, literature, history and even astronomy.<sup>74</sup> Much of music is therefore propositional knowledge, but still includes know-how knowledge. Aristotle's final category, art (*technê*), refers to craftsmanship in general. The purpose of the classical canon, specifically the liberal arts, is to prepare students by giving them the tools they need to master all other (non-liberal) arts. The trivium of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric forms the arts of language that prepare students to engage with literature and discussion in order to learn other skills, while the quadrivium of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music are the arts of mathematics that allow students to understand the world they live in and consequently the "non-liberal" arts found there. In this way the liberal arts are intended to be the tools and seeds used to learn the common arts.<sup>75</sup> Art fits into the classical canon as something which the liberal arts allow a student to obtain.

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<sup>72</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), p. 25.

<sup>73</sup> Plato, *Plato's The Republic*, (New York: Books, Inc., 1943).

<sup>74</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), pp. 25-6.

<sup>75</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), pp. 7, 283.



The overall vision for classical education is that the whole student (body, soul, and mind) be conditioned. This vision is accomplished through the classical canon. This section has shown how the classical canon teaches various types of knowledge. Specifically, this section focused on two broad categories of knowledge: propositional and know-how. However, a third category was mentioned. Non-propositional knowledge, or personal knowledge, is also important to a child's education. Ultimately, Christian classical education is grounded in piety and governed by theology.<sup>76</sup> Propositional and know-how knowledge are both important, but personal, non-propositional knowledge of God ought also to be stressed. A proper view of classical Christian education involves discipleship<sup>77</sup> and has deepened relationships with God as a goal.

This section separated knowledge broadly into three categories: propositional, know-how, and non-propositional. It showed how propositional knowledge is included under the umbrella of philosophy and theology. The liberal arts are the tools necessary to pursue other skills and therefore encompass know-how knowledge. Finally, non-propositional, personal knowledge of God is also important to a proper Christian classical education. The more specific categories of Aristotle were also dealt with: scientific knowledge (*epistêmê*), practical wisdom (*phronêsis*), philosophic wisdom (*sophia*), intuitive reason (*nous*), and art (*technê*). It was shown that the first four of these intellectual virtues, scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, philosophic wisdom, and intuitive reason, all fit into the classical canon under propositional knowledge. The relationship between liberal and non-liberal arts was discussed, showing the

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<sup>76</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), p. 4.

<sup>77</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019), p. 214.

place that art has in the classical canon. Education is about knowledge, so the study of knowledge naturally leads to a proper view of education.

### **Additional Arguments**

#### **Mythos and Philosophy**

Even philosophy often uses story to articulate complex ideas. From Plato's allegory of the cave to Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, mythos has its place in philosophy. Mythos is fundamental to the meaning of some ancient philosophers, like Plato.<sup>78</sup> The two concepts interact with one another, and each can be interpreted through the lens of the other. Philosophy can be applied to storytelling with important results, and story is used often in explaining philosophic theories. Furthermore, many philosophers acknowledge the importance of stories and metanarratives, as mentioned earlier in the discussion of piety. The interaction between mythos and philosophy is established and significant in a proper understanding of their relationship in the context of classical education.

#### **Plato's Tripartite Soul Revisited**

Plato's division of reason, appetite, and spirit has an impactful application to the discussion at hand.<sup>79</sup> The discipline of philosophy, which first led to this separation of the parts of the soul, corresponds with the reasoning part of the soul. This is seen in Plato's relation of reason in the soul to philosopher-kings in the state. They are both the detached, rational component that must govern the other two. Mythos has much to do with the spirited part of the soul. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the place of mythos and music in education is heart-

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<sup>78</sup> Richard Buxton, *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999), 261.

<sup>79</sup> Plato, *Plato's The Republic*, (New York: Books, Inc., 1943).

forming. Plato said that the “spirited natures,” those in the warrior class, must be educated, and that their education should take the form of music and gymnastics (the second and third stages of the classical canon).<sup>80,81</sup> A Platonic definition of music includes much of what would be considered literature now, both true and false stories. Plato’s discussion of mythos shows the direct impact stories have on the second part of the soul, the spirited part. These two different parts of the soul are nourished by two different disciplines. Reason grows by philosophy; the spirited part is cultivated by mythos. Classical education incorporates both of these disciplines, therefore properly training two different parts of the soul.

### **Conclusion**

This thesis has given definitions, overviews, and in-depth explanations of the three titular concepts: classical education, mythos, and philosophy. It has examined the places of mythos and philosophy in the classical canon and has discussed their importance. Additionally, this thesis discussed the relationship between philosophy and mythos. In conclusion, because mythos and philosophy are so important to an education, and because classical education incorporates these concepts, classical education offers an excellent education.

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<sup>80</sup> Plato, *Plato's The Republic*, (New York: Books, Inc., 1943).

<sup>81</sup> Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, 2nd Revised ed. (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2019).

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