**Teacher Formation Readings:**

**Comprehension and Discussion Questions**

These questions were designed to assist teachers in obtaining a basic understanding of the philosophical attributes of being called “transcendentals.” These transcendentals are Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Unity/Being, and Love. The attributes particularly focused on in the curriculum are Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. Unity and Love are important for the school environment.

**“It’s about navigating life: The importance of philosophy & theology” by Dr. Peter Kreeft. (Jan. 2015).**

1. **Define Philosophy.**

“Philosophy” literally means the “love of wisdom.. “In a broad sense, philosophy is an activity people undertake when they seek to understand fundamental truths about themselves, the world in which they live, and their relationships to the world and to each other (FSU, Dept. of Philosophy).”[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Where in our schools do we see students seeking fundamental truths about humanity and the world in which they live?**

Answers might include in religion class discussions or while discussing the challenges and trials of specific characters in a literature class, in history or social studies class, psychology classes, and so forth.

1. **Describe the two branches of theology mentioned in the article.**

The first is philosophical theology or “natural theology,” which is an approach that “uses natural reason to explore the greatest of all questions, the questions about God.” Natural theology is a “program of inquiry into the existence and attributes of God without referring or appealing to any divine revelation” (IEP).[[2]](#footnote-2)

The second is religious theology or “revealed theology” which is a “rational exploration of the meaning and consequences of faith in a revealed religion – in our case, the ‘deposit of faith’ or ‘Sacred Tradition’ of the Catholic Church which comes from Christ and His apostles, and the scriptures they wrote.”

**Where do we find both of these approaches used within schools?**

The first, philosophical theology, we will rarely find in Catholic elementary or middle schools but might find in a high school moral theology class or scientific topics course.

The second, religious theology, is the theology taught in K-12 religion classes.

1. **What is the goal of education?**

According to Aristotle there are 3 purposes, ends, or reasons for education: Productive, Practical, and Theoretical.

Productive (technology) – “to produce things, to make, improve or repair material things in the world, and thus improve our world.” Contemporary examples include all types of engineering or electronics.

Practical – “to improve your own behavior in some area of your own life,” such as ethics and politics (as in living a good life within the community). Examples include economics, athletics, development, and writing.

Theoretical (speculative or contemplative) – to seek knowledge for the sake of acquiring knowledge itself. Example are theology, philosophy, and astronomy.

The end and goal of theoretical knowledge is most intimate to us because this knowledge “perfects our very selves, our souls, our mind”; it equates to the ultimate end of education, the perfection of the human person. This knowledge “makes us bigger persons.” Education’s end, in this sense, is the growth of one’s mind, body, and total being. The other approaches to education are pragmatic and peripheral, or means, to fulfill human flourishing.

**Thought Provokers**

**Why do we educate children in our schools? Is it productive, practical, or theoretical?** Answers will vary.

**What is the end or goal of Catholic education?**

The goal of Catholic education is the “critical, systematic transmission of culture in the light of faith” and the integral formation of the human person by developing each student’s physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual gifts in harmony, teaching responsibility and the right use of freedom, and preparing students to fulfill God’s calling in this world and to attain the eternal kingdom for which they were created.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Why do you think the church has a history and preference of working with inner-city youth?**

**Is the end goal any different for inner-city youth than for others in different socio-economic backgrounds?**

1. **What is the point, purpose, and end of existence?**

To know, love, and serve God.

1. **How do we know God?**

Through the study of Theology. Other answers are prayer, scripture, Sacraments.

**Thought Provoker**

**What is your personal philosophy of education?**

Examples are: Behaviorist, Pragmatist, Utilitarian, Personalist, Humanist.

See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy\_of\_education as a resource.

**Does your personal philosophy of education lead you (and your students) to God? How?** Answers will vary.

Revealed theology (Catholic doctrine and teachings, the Gospel, etc.) provides answers to many philosophical questions, yet these answers must be dissected and analyzed, clarified and integrated, into our total life and world perspective if we are to grow in the Truth. Philosophy assists us with that inquiry.

**“Appendix: Evidence of the transmateriality of human beings” in *Ten universal principles: A brief philosophy of the life issues* by Fr. Robert Spitzer SJ. Ignatius Press. (2011).**

1. **A.) What are the steps for the argument substantiating our desire for perfect and unconditional Truth?**

**1.)** We recognize a phenomenon that there always seems to be “something more to be known” at the moment something becomes known. Ex. Asking continuous questions after receiving an answer.

**2.)** Within us exists an unrestricted desire to know all there is to know.

**3.)** We have an awareness that there is more to be known in every field of knowledge.

**4.)** We have a “Pre-knowledge” that an answer is incomplete even at high limits of intelligibility.

**5.)** The tacit awareness of “what is sufficient for an explanation of everything about everything” is always beyond any restricted intelligibility. The source of this awareness must be unrestricted intelligibility which cannot be a physical reality because it [a physical reality] is restricted by space, time, and other algorithmically finite structures. Therefore, it must be a spiritual reality which has no material restrictions. This unrestricted intelligibility “would seem to be the source of [one’s] tacit awareness of ‘what is sufficient for an explanation of everything about everything.’”

**6.)** One has a notion, or presence to consciousness, of complete intelligibility which is not inside one’s consciousness but held outside of one’s inner consciousness, “on the horizon.” This notion of complete intelligibility acts like a backdrop of unrestricted understanding when compared to one’s restricted understanding of things and thus, must be held or controlled by something.

**7.)** “The presence of the divine essence [the something], therefore, must be the impetus for [one’s] awareness of incomplete intelligibility; the impetus for every question, the impetus for every act of creativity.” This complete intelligibility is present to us at all time and spurs on the questioning for more.

Without this notion of an unrestricted and complete intelligibility, one would not ask questions of why, how, or what, but be left to biological opportunities and dangers – like an animal.

**Thought Provoker**

**Where and how in our schools do we, or should we, experience this pursuit of “complete intelligibility” or truth?**

Specific answers will vary, but they should focus on all classes and courses (content), the use of instructional approaches (processes), and experiences (such as the Sacraments) that allow for students to pursue truth.

1. **A.) How is it explained that we come to possess a “sense” for perfect and unconditional love?**

Like the notional awareness of complete intelligibility that gives rise to the dissatisfaction of incomplete intelligibility, we are dissatisfied with conditioned and imperfect Love and seek unconditioned and perfect Love.

**B.) Why are we frustrated when we do not experience this perfection?**

“Because our desire for love and to love is unconditional, but our actuality is conditioned…Our dissatisfaction would seem to arise out of an ideal of unconditional Love, which has neither been experienced nor actualized.”

**C.) What happens when we fulfill our desire for perfect Love by**

**authentically loving God?**

We simultaneously fulfill our capacity for self-transcendence.

**Thought Provoker**

**Where and how in our schools is this human desire for love addressed?**

Some answers might include: the display of care and empathy for others as exhibited by teachers, administrators, and students; the development of a familial environment where everyone is accepted and celebrated as a valuable member of the community; and a classroom management plan and school discipline policies that honor the dignity of the person.

1. **A.) Define goodness.**

Goodness here is used in the moral sense of right and wrong, good and evil; for the administration of justice.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**B.) Provide an example of our desire for perfect goodness or justice.**

Children wanting things to be fair; victims desiring restoration of equity.

**C.) Explain both the positive and negative sides of the desire for goodness.**

**D.) What happens when our desire for goodness is not reached?**

“Our frustrated idealism reveals that we continually see the limits of any current manifestation of goodness and justice, which, in turn, reveals that we are already beyond those limits…it would seem that our desire is guided by a notional awareness of perfect, unconditional Goodness (Justice)” which cannot be satisfied by an imperfect world.

**Thought Provoker**

**Where and how is goodness evident within our schools?**

In the administration of materials, instruction, discipline, programs, and so forth.

1. **A.) Is man ever satisfied that he has attained ultimate beauty?**

No.

**B.) What are the positive and negative effects of striving for beauty?**

Positively, man is able to create outstanding artifacts; yet negatively, he always believes he could perfect his creation and becomes bored or frustrated when he is not satisfied or believes he has failed.

**C.) Why does he feel this failure?**

Because he has a notional awareness that there must be something more beautiful.

**Thought Provoker**

**Where and how is beauty evident within our schools?**

We incorporate discussions of beauty into all our classes; our school environment is beautiful, and things we produce are beautiful.

***Awakening wonder: A classical guide to truth, goodness, & beauty* by Stephen Turley PhD. Classical Academic Press. (2014). “Chapter 4: Truth, goodness, and beauty in the Christian world, Part II”.**

1. **According to St. Augustine (354-430 AD), how do we come to truly know God?**

We must enter into the deepest recesses of our soul, through the guidance of Christian scripture, in order to know God in his fullness.

1. **What happens when one truly knows oneself?**

One is directed toward God and sees oneself as an image and likeness of divine life.

1. **What awakened the desire of a “meaning and purpose outside himself?”**

The reading of literature, in particular Cicero’s *Hortensius.*

1. **Describe Truth for St. Augustine.**

For Augustine, truth is God Himself. He is the supreme Good.

1. **What is the difference between knowledge (scientia) and wisdom (sapientia), and why/how is Jesus important to this difference?**

Scientia (knowledge) is worldly knowledge and sapienta (wisdom) is eternal knowledge. Jesus is the bridge between the two. He is the Incarnate Word who is Truth and through grace transcends knowledge to wisdom and the transcendent.

1. **Explain the hierarchy of Goods.**

God is the supreme good. All things are inherently good. “All things are to be valued and loved in accordance with their proportionate value in the divine economy.” God is worthy of being loved for His own sake. All created things exist to cause us to love God. With Christ, we can see our rightly ordered humanity and its divine place in God’s economy of salvation.

1. **Describe how Augustine views Beauty.** For Augustine, beauty is the “cosmic order of things, an aesthetic order that serves, in Platonic fashion, as a ladder of ascent to divine life…Beauty serves the indispensable role of momentum toward God, a gravitational pull that draws the soul onward toward the True [Jesus] and the Good [God].”
2. **What qualities does St. Thomas Aquinas add to Beauty?**

Proportion, integrity, clarity, and harmony. “…Beauty does not simply endow this cosmic chain of Being with proportionality and continuity but also provides the allure, the momentum, for drawing the cosmos back up into inner Trinitarian life…Beauty for Aquinas thus involves both the complex of the cosmos and the calling to consummation, to divine communion, in which all things are eternally perfected in God.”

“By encountering Truth, the human intellect is awakened to the infinite wisdom of God revealed in Christ; by encountering Goodness, the human volition is directed to act in accordance with the divine purposefulness of creation and our own created nature renewed in Christ; and by encountering Beauty, the human soul is awakened to the inexhaustible wellspring of divine love revealed in Christ.”

**Thought Provokers**

**What is it about these transcendentals that are useful to a Catholic education? What is Catholic education like without these?**

The transcendentals can be applied to all things of being, but when applied to man they touch the heart and propel man toward the transcendent. It is there that we move into the realm of Theology and develop a relationship with God and Jesus who is the perfect man and perfect teacher. Catholic schools have functioned very effectively without the use of philosophical questioning, but with this type of questioning all involved in the quest for the meaning of life, from teacher to student, become more deeply enriched in their faith and drawn deeper into the heart of the Church.

**Beauty in the Word: Rethinking the foundations of education by Stratford Caldecott. Angelico Press. (2012). Pgs. 153 – 160.**

1. **How does Aquinas define Beauty?**

Beauty for St. Thomas is “that which, when seen, pleases.” It is the quality of “pleasingness” in things.

1. **Define Unity.**

Unity is the “being of something as it is in itself – the property of being itself and not another.” It’s identity. “The unity of a thing does not isolate it but gives it an interior relation to everything else” such as a part to a whole or that which comprises it.

1. **Define Truth.**

“It is concordance [of the mind] with reality, with what is. Perfect truth is perfect concordance, amounting to identity. In this way truth and unity converge.” Truth is a property of things.

1. **Define Goodness as used here by Caldecott.**

Goodness is the end of which a thing is fulfilled or completed; where the resolution of tension is experienced. Goodness is the fullness of something which when experienced or seen brings us to the transcendent.

1. **How does Caldecott further explain Beauty?**

Beauty is coherence, harmony, proportion, fulfillment, perfect integration. When something is beautiful, it is Good and draws us to the transcendent. “For the experience which should be produced by that which is really beautiful are wonder, and sweet amazement, and desire, and a pleasant fluttering of the wings of the soul.” This joy produces a desire to unite with that which is beautiful, with God, in the deep sense of a transcendent home. [See Spitzer’s Unconditional Being/Home.]

“Without the metaphysical sense that enables us to look beyond the surface, things would be merely themselves, individual, opaque and disconnected, related one to another in an almost mechanical fashion. With it, things are transparent to something behind them, they are related interiorly to each other and to their source.”

1. **Explain: “Beauty is that which we see in things when we see them in the light of faith...”**

When we contemplate a thing and try to understand its proportion, harmony, coherence, and perfect integration we are moved beyond our intellect to our senses and our affective appetite toward something more. As Catholics, that something more is God.

1. **What is Beauty in its fullness according to Balthasar?** God’s Glory, which is the fullness of something in God’s created order.
2. **What is Wisdom?**

Wisdom is the idea of creation, the manifestation and embodiment of the Logos, the goal to which creation tends, and God’s objective or purpose in creation.”

1. **Who possessed all Glory/Wisdom before the creation of the world?**

Jesus possessed all glory and wisdom until his assumption when he then sent the Holy Spirit to all the faithful and the Church. “Wisdom tends through its whole being, in God as in ourselves, toward that divine glory which God gives to no other, but which is nevertheless destined to clothe all things, since all things, as we have said before, derive from the Father through the Son only to return to him in the Spirit.”

“It is beauty that moves us to love the other, the true, and the good, not for her sake but for theirs. Perfect beauty is the form of love, the Trinitarian form of God – one in three, three in one – revealed to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and manifested in the creation built upon the seven pillars of Wisdom.”

**Thought Provokers**

**What is different about this definition of Goodness from goodness as we are accustomed to thinking about it?**

Goodness, as used in a philosophical sense, is more than a moral judgement – although it is that too.We can teach the goodness of things in not only the content we teach, but the dispositions we do or do not possess, as well as whether things possess integrity and completeness, such as “Were our actions, or the actions of the character, totally good?” “Are our actions moral and complete? Do they lead us to the truth?”

**What have we learned about Beauty in this reading that can help us in our lesson planning?** Beauty is more than a subjective judgement. It possesses qualities and characteristics that we can use for evaluation. Beauty is connected to Truth and Goodness and transcends us to Christ who is the Way, the Truth, the Life. It is found in all disciplines, not just art, but in literature, composition, mathematics, science, music, and so forth.

**The great ideas by Mortimer Adler. Open Court Publishing. (2000).**

**Pgs. 1 - 10 Truth.**

1. **What is the difference between true knowledge and false knowledge?**

“Knowledge” itself is true. False knowledge is untrue. To “know” something is to have the truth about it. Without the truth about something, one doesn’t “know” it, but only knows an illusion of it.

1. **Explain the first position that denies man can ever really know the truth.**

This position is called “skepticism.” It states, “There is nothing true or false…everything is equally true and false…we are unable to know what is true or what is false…we simply don’t have the knowledge or possess the truth.” There is no such thing as truth. It is “the product of our own needs or desires.”

1. **Explain relativism and it’s opposing view.**

A relativistic view is that truth is subjective. What is true for you may not be for me and vice versa. Truth can change over time. Conversely, it’s opposing view is that truth is objective, absolute, and immutable (unchanging).

1. **What is pragmatism and its opposing view?**

Pragmatism is an “attitude toward truth which says that truth consists in those ideas or those thoughts of ours which bear practical fruit in action, that truth consists in the things which work.” The opposing view states that truth doesn’t have to have practical verification to be known.

1. **What is the distinction made between “what is true” and “Truth”?**

“What is true” requires an evaluation, a judgement, whereas what is “Truth” requires a definition.

1. **List and explain the three modes of Truth.**
2. The first mode focuses on the correspondence between what a person thinks and says. Truth here is saying faithfully what one is thinking.
3. The second mode focuses on communication between people whereby what one person says and means is received similarly by another. There is correspondence of minds and no duplicity.
4. The third mode focuses on the correspondence between the mind and reality – the world in which we live; “to that which is.” “…when there is this kind of correspondence between the mind and reality, then the mind has truth in it about the world that it is trying to know and understand.”
5. **What is the problem with the third mode of knowing truth (mind in accordance with reality)?**

One cannot receive an answer from “reality” to confirm what one thinks.

1. **How, then, can one determine something is true or something is false?**

Aristotle suggests using self-evident truths and truths of perception. Self-evident truths are truths about which there is no doubt, such as “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” Truths of perception are that which we perceive as matters of fact. “This is a book.” “This is a piece of paper.”

1. **What is the test of non-contradiction?**

Valid opinions or theories have no internal contradictions. Something cannot be both one thing and something else. A piece of fruit cannot be both an apple and an orange. A person cannot be both 5’4” and 6’10” at the same time. One must be true and one must be false. To determine which is true and which is false we use principles that are self-evident to our understanding (self-evident truths) and facts we know by observation (truths of perception).

1. **Does truth change?**

Truth is immutable – unchanging. Our perception of the truth changes.

**Thought Provokers**

**When a teacher uses a constructivist[[5]](#footnote-5) approach to learning, how does he/she know that the student has arrived at the truth of the subject under consideration?**

**Pgs. 153 – 162 Beauty.**

1. **Describe the relationship of Beauty to Truth and Goodness.**

Truth and Goodness have an internal affinity and beauty is dependent upon both of them. Beauty is “a kind of synthesis, a kind of combination of aspects of the true and the good.”

1. **How does a subjective perspective of Beauty bleed over into the areas of Truth and Goodness?**

We acquiesce to the subjectivist position when discussing whether something is beautiful and use this same position for determining whether something is good or true.

1. **What are the spheres in which Truth occur?**

The spheres are knowing and thinking.

1. **What are the spheres in which Goodness occur?**

The spheres are desiring and acting.

1. **What are the spheres in which we experience Beauty?**

Both. Beauty is a special form of the good, “a very special desire, a non-acquisitive desire.” We do not consume beauty, we behold beauty. “The knowledge involved in the experience of beauty is also a special form of knowledge just as the desire that is involved in beauty is a special kind of desire.” This knowledge is an embracing, intuitive, knowledge or an experience. It is an act of contemplation.

“The beautiful is like the good in that it pleases us and that it satisfies the desire, but the beautiful is also like the true in that it is an object of knowledge and not of action.”

“Beau[ty]…is that which satisfies our desires simply by our intuitive knowledge of it.”

1. **What is Adler’s position on whether Beauty is inherent within the object itself or attributed to it by the viewer?**

Adler believes it isboth. Adler believes Beauty is inherent with the object itself and within the experience of the viewer.

1. **How does Adler “objectify” Beauty?**

He states that what we consider beautiful is that which is just within our grasp to understand – something that is not too complex nor too simple. It is just difficult enough so that when we grasp it, through effort, we experience pleasure – that pleasure of success is the experience of beauty. Objects then are more or less beautiful and the person experiencing the object can be more or less trained to recognize the beauty inherent within the object.

1. **What precisely makes objects more or less beautiful?** Unity, order, and clarity. “…when its parts are properly related and its structure is clear.”

1. The major divisions of philosophy are Metaphysics (the study of the nature of reality, what exists in the world and how it is ordered), Epistemology (the study of knowledge), Ethics (the nature of moral judgements: basis for judgements, content of judgement, and application of judgements), Logic (the nature and structure of arguments), and Aesthetics (the nature and study of beauty). <https://philosophy.fsu.edu/undergraduate-study/why-philosophy/What-is-Philosophy>

   All quotes are from the respective document under study unless otherwise specified. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved from <https://www.iep.utm.edu/theo-nat/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Overview of the Principles: Principle I - Inspired by Divine Mission.* Retrieved from <https://newmansociety.org/principles-catholic-identity-education/overview/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Caldecott and Adler readings for more on Goodness. “The good is that which is, at any given moment, appropriate, fitting, and right in relation to the objective situation” (p. 142, Caldecott). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Constructivism is both a philosophy and a learning theory. As a philosophy it focuses on knowing reality as constructed from one’s own thoughts and perceptions. As a learning theory it focuses on the bridging of prior knowledge with new knowledge to arrive at new ideas. <https://www.learning-theories.com/constructivism.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)