

THE TORCH BY NOVA CLASSICAL ACADEMY

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A DEEP DIVE INTO CLASSICAL EDUCATION

The Torch: The Logic Stage January 2022

In Search of Knowable Truth

Last month we explored the world of ritual and structure in the [School of Grammar](#), so it follows (logically) that we are moving into the School of Logic in classical education. The Logic stage of learning is appropriate for scholars in grades 5-8, where children begin to make connections and ask more challenging questions because of the aforementioned connections. To dig further into this, I would like to share a brief excerpt about interconnectedness from Dorothy Sayers' essay called "[The Lost Tools of Learning](#)":

Do you often come across people for whom, all their lives, a "subject" remains a "subject," divided by water-tight bulkheads from all other "subjects," so that they experience very great difficulty in making an immediate mental connection between, let us say, algebra and detective fiction, sewage disposal and the price of salmon, cellulose and the distribution of rainfall—or, more generally, between such spheres of knowledge as philosophy and economics, or chemistry and art?

Dorothy Sayers was a mystery writer who extolled the virtues of classical education, and believed that the **ultimate goal of classical education was to create moral citizens who can learn anything**. According to Sayers, students in the Logic stage are expected to:

- Learn formal logic
- Construct logical arguments
- Focus on ethics of historical decisions
- Begin to recognize the inadequacy of their own learning

She presented the "Lost Tools of Learning" in 1947, after World War II when Europe (and much of the rest of the world) was not only attempting to put itself back together but also questioning the **why** of what had just happened on a global scale. Sayers' main argument was that the modern world presented a "formidable mass of undigested problems" and the education system taught students "subjects"- as referenced above- **but not how to think**. As strange as it seems, the structure of formal logic allows students to come to a knowable (perhaps, "digested") truth.

Take for example the structure of a syllogism:

- All dogs are mammals.
- All mammals are animals.
- Therefore, all dogs are animals.

Syllogisms depend on the first two statements **structured and stated correctly in order to be true**. I could not have said "all mammals are dogs", or "all animals are mammals" since those are both incorrect statements based on their structure. This mental exercise in the Logic stage allows students to recognize statements that are correctly stated and structured- as well as easily dismantle incorrect statements through formal logic. **Just like any exercise, it takes repetition and hard work to become stronger, but strength is key to dissolution of the water-tight bulkheads of thought.**

If I cannot sell you on the excitement of exercise, I will leave you with this last idea which I have found as one of the most valuable assets of classical education in my experience thus far. **Logic allows for ideas to become more objective**, and therefore little space for one to say "but that's my truth" and get away with illogic. Mr. Foat, our 8th grade Logic teacher, leads the 8th grade class through an activity where students dissect the concept of "good" into elements of knowable truth, structured and stated correctly, in order to come to an objective understanding of what "good" means. When our middle school philosophers are able to see the world more clearly, they are closer to becoming moral citizens who are able to learn anything.

May you find delight in the mammals around you this month (would that they could all be dogs!),



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