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Welcome to our thirty-second edition of "The Academic Journal," a bimonthly bulletin in which you can read about MCA's educational philosophy, instructional methodology, and the various viewpoints and positions of our faculty, staff, students, and families.

Teaching – Because The Soul Matters

Our nation cries for stronger schools and safer neighborhoods, for more law-abiding citizenry, for more integrity in our politicians, for leaders of noble character worthy to be emulated, for justice, for peace, for stability, for freedom. All the while, we are tearing out the very heart that allows any of this to become reality.

Across our country, we shuttle our young people through a modified, industrial-style education, treating them like an Intel Core i7 processor, finely tuned and filled with thousands of bits of data to be churned out later on a test or in a specific future job. Or, we allow our students to wallow in childhood, to play during the years of formal instruction, just as they did in their preschool years wandering this way and that way, wherever their immature desires would take them.

We treat them this way because we think we are only preparing an impersonal mind or we are only nurturing an innocent, tender heart. However, to think either misses the central fact that the mind and heart are inextricably bound. We miss that it is through the heart and the mind that we choose, that we love, that we become. We miss that the will is the mind and heart deciding. So, we quench the fire of the soul, which is the mind and the heart, or in the least we naively vivisection it. It is, therefore, impossible to separate the education of the intellect from the instruction of the heart, and it is unwise to pretend that we can.

When we choose curriculum and when we decide pedagogy, we are creating lessons based on our beliefs about the soul of the human race. If we believe humanity to be mere biological organisms much like animals, our lessons will be full of rewards and punishments as we manipulate the students to do what we want. If we believe humanity to be only material structures and the result of natural, amoral forces, we will excuse misbehaviors because the subjects always do they have been programmed to do. If we believe people are primarily economic units, we will choose content to meet the projected economy and design lessons based on related data. If we believe knowledge is created, we will design lessons that allow students to design their own courses of study and their own rubrics for grading. If we believe humanity to have no telos, no purpose or destination, only the here and now, we will effectively say, "Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die."

What we believe, we will teach.

If, on the other hand, we believe that a human being is a complex individual with a body and soul, that humanity should be fully free in the noblest sense, that goodness, truth and beauty are transcendent, and that knowledge is discovered or revealed rather than created, then our lessons will appeal to the imagination as well as to reason. We will cultivate virtuous character. We will engage our students' minds in the difficult questions of life, and we will hold ourselves accountable to all that is true, good, and beautiful. Education, then, not only reflects the educators' fundamental anthropology, but it also nourishes students with that same set of beliefs, perpetuating those beliefs to the next generation. Abraham Lincoln said, "The philosophy of the school room in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next." This is true on an even broader, societal scope.



Within the soul there is a struggle between the mind and the heart. Both have dominance, but in different matters. In matters of importance, the heart is dominant. If we know the truth, but have no love for it, the truth cannot affect the way we think or what we do. In matters of order, the mind is foremost. How can we love something we know nothing about? John Piper wrote, “And while it is true that the mind and the heart are mutually enlivening, it is also clear that the mind is mainly the servant of the heart. That is, the mind serves to know the truth that fuels the fires of the heart.”

C.S Lewis explains this struggle similarly. He says that without the chest, the belly (that visceral faculty where we often pursue personal comfort above all else) will always win over the mind (that cerebral faculty where we often imagine ourselves above reproach, like an angel of sorts). The chest is what mitigates the drives of the mind and the belly. If we have raw courage, for example, but no love for our neighbor or no appreciation of our courage, we would never brave a raging river to save a drowning friend. If we know the truth, but have no love for it, the truth will have no impact on what we think or what we do.



Whether we understand a person in terms of mind and heart or of head, chest, and belly, there is no tearing asunder or starving these organs without serious damage to persons and society. For a person to be whole and healthy, these faculties must be sound, vigorous and conjoined. Together these organs constitute the anatomy of the soul. It is through the five senses of our bodies that we fuel our soul, and conversely it is through the actions of our bodies that we get glimpses of the soul.

If we in education pretend that there is no relationship between the head and the heart, at the same time we are trying to help our students mature, we will be debilitating or destroying the very object of our intent. Rather than delivering a liberal education, that is, a “liberating” education, we will shackle and quench our students’ souls. Therefore, since it is neither charitable nor really possible to dis sever these faculties, it is supremely important that we conscientiously and wisely address both the mind and the heart. Fortunately throughout time there seems to be an inherent notion that the life of the soul is worth the fight, and fortunately the fight itself can even quicken the soul.

We here are about fanning the fires of the heart and mind. We are about formation– formation of the soul. Character development is intrinsic to a good education. We must address the mind through our curriculum and pedagogy and the heart through inspiration and stories. As we choose curriculum, as we decide our pedagogy, as we decorate our rooms, and as we interact with our students we are conveying values – what we believe to be true, how we believe students learn, what we consider to be beautiful and shaping, and what we believe about the nature of humanity. The formation of intelligent, virtuous citizens who lead in a constitutional republic and who pursue truth, goodness, and of beauty is our noble goal.

Kirby R. McCrary
Headmaster

