창의융합연구
Journal of Creativity and Convergence
2024, Vol. 4, Special Issues, pp. 33-42
http://dx.doi.org/10.23021/JCC.2024.4.S.33

Creating Free Adults out of Children

An Examination of the Wholistic Education

EMILY LANGSTON Tutor, St. John's College[1)]

Abstract

This paper contains a description and exploration of a radical, ongoing, educational experiment. The New Program of St. John's College was established in Annapolis, Maryland, in 1937. Almost 90 years later, it continues much as it was developed in the early 20th century and has expanded to a second campus in Santa Fe, New Mexico. It is an undergraduate program without departments or academic disciplines, conducted entirely through the discussion of classic texts. All students take the same classes. All students and all faculty members are required to study every subject area, from philosophy and literature to mathematics and the natural sciences. The paper makes the case that this approach is not "interdisciplinary" so much as "pre-disciplinary" – based on an earlier and more wholistic view of knowledge. It combines elements of the older tradition of the liberal arts with the secular orientation and emphasis on the unfettered pursuit of knowledge characteristic of the modern research university. The paper explains how this unique institution fits into the landscape of American higher education, comparing it to other institutions called "liberal arts colleges," to the well-known core programs at universities like Columbia and the University of Chicago, and to American colleges of the late 19th century. Paradoxically, this approach has rendered the college not anachronistic but (as one commentator described it), "future proof," as it frees students from preconceptions about the fragmentation of knowledge and encourages collaborative inquiry bringing together technical and humanistic thinking around the most pressing human problems.

Keyword

St. John's, New Program, Pre-disciplinary, Liberal Arts, Core-Programs

Manuscript received April 7, 2024 / Revision received May 16, 2024 / Accepted May 23, 2024

1) emily.langston@sjc.edu

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1. Introduction

2024 is the 87th year of what we at St. John's College still refer to as "The New Program." St. John's College is (despite its name) a secular institution. Founded in Annapolis, Maryland, in 1696, it is the third oldest college in the United States. This paper is not about the college as a historical entity, however, but about the living intellectual community that thrives there. The New Program of St. John's combines traditional and progressive elements in a way unique in American higher education. Since its inception, it has produced thoughtful and successful graduates and has been an inspiration to educational institutions at every level.

The story of the New Program begins in the mid- 1930's. At the time, St. John's College in Annapolis was a small, all male, military college that was failing financially and about to close. It was saved when the governing board decided to take a chance on turning the entire institution over to visionaries Scott Buchanan and Stringfellow Barr to conduct a radical educational experiment. Barr and Buchanan completely remade the curriculum of the college and although, inevitably, the last 86 year have brought some changes, the Program that they brought to St. John's remains substantially what it was when the adventurous first students enrolled in 1937.

2. Aspects of the New Program

So, what were the elements of this experiment? The most distinctive aspects of the New Program are the following. First, at St. John's College there are no majors or departments, indeed no areas of specialization at all. All faculty are expected to teach in all parts of the curriculum. All students follow exactly the same course of study and receive the same degree: a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts. It is a rigorous program. Each student graduates having completed four years of mathematics, three years of laboratory science, two years of ancient Greek, two years of French, a year of music theory and practice, and four years of a humanities seminar. There is also a culminating senior thesis. Material covered in class is proscribed by the curriculum, and all the material in a given year is carefully chosen so that the classes of, for example, the junior year, form a more or less coherent whole.

Second, students at St. John's don't read textbooks, or even many books by contemporary authors. Instead, they study what we call "Great Books" of the Western Tradition. We realize that the books we read on the program are not the only great books of the west; and we certainly don't mean to imply that only the west produces great books! We do want to say, though, that the books we read are important in a way that has withstood the test of time, and that they raise absolutely fundamental questions – questions about what it is to be human, how to live a good life, the nature of beauty, but also questions about the structure of the material world, and mathematical truth – in ways that provoke profound thought and wonder. In reading them directly you encounter not only the subject matter, but a great mind at work.

Finally, the third distinctive aspect of the St. John's program is our pedagogy. At St. John's, all classes are small and all (even mathematics and science classes) proceed entirely through student discussion of these great primary texts. The role of the faculty member in class is not to impart background information, to give an authoritative interpretation of the text at hand, or even to answer the students' questions; it is to help the students learn by engaging as fully and productively as possible with the text and with one another as fellow-learners. As part of this process, students and faculty will ask questions, engage in both debate and collaborative inquiry, work problems in mathematics, conduct scientific experiments, translate poems and philosophical dialogues, and even sing together. The faculty keep the conversation on track, help the students refine their questions, and make other suggestions about

how the inquiry should proceed, but in the end the work of learning is radically egalitarian; the opinion of the faculty member, like the opinion of any other member of the class, must be supported by reference to the text at hand and an appeal to reason.

We can, and often do, make a case for the relevance and practicality of this program in a contemporary context. St. John's has been called both the "most contrarian college in America" (Bruni, 2018) and the most "forward-thinking, future-proof college in America," (Marber, 2017); although the sentiments seem to be in tension with one another, in fact the aspects of the program that lead to our being called "future-proof" arise directly out of what is most "contrarian." In order to make this case, we will need to examine the philosophy underlying this unique educational institution and the historical context from which it emerged; doing so will clarify the distinct place the New Program occupies in American higher education, and distinguish it from three educational models with which it is often compared (and confused): the standard US model of the "liberal arts college;" the "core program" model of undergraduate programs at Columbia University and the University of Chicago; and the unified, standard curriculum offered at many US colleges until around the turn of the 20th century.

As I have said, there are three main distinctive, "contrarian" features of the St. John's New Program that make it unique. My main area of focus in this paper will be the lack of specialization in the curriculum, and the corresponding lack of majors and academic departments in the institution. Why do we not cultivate, or even allow, specialization? Why would we insist that every member of our academic community, student and faculty alike, study math, and philosophy, and science, and literature, and language, and music?

The lack of specialization in the St. John's New Program would not always have seemed so remarkable. It strikes us as so now in part because of widely shared contemporary assumptions about the structure of knowledge and the aims of education. We inhabit a world in which the "given" structure of knowledge, mirrored in the institutional structure of universities, is disciplinary. Knowledge comes pre-packaged into disciplines. Disciplines take institutional form as departments; departments are grouped into larger fields such as the sciences, the social sciences, the humanities; and all of this is concretized in streams of funding, institutional hierarchies, and even the physical layout of our campuses. We as academics each find our place within one discipline or another, and there conduct the great majority of our professional work.

Departures from this model, including the St. John's Program, are typically seen simply as modifications of the basic structure; hence, when people with different fields of study work together, the primary thing is the "disciplines" they represent and so the work they are doing together is "interdisciplinary." I would argue however that the New Program at St. John's cannot properly be understood as "interdisciplinary" – not because we keep the disciplines apart, but because being "interdisciplinary" presupposes the idea of disciplines whereas the New Program was never organized around disciplines in the first place. It might better be called "pre-disciplinary." After all, the present arrangement of knowledge into disciplines, which it is tempting to take for granted as simply the necessary precondition to our work as academics and educators, is not inevitable. It is the product of a particular time and place. The disciplinary structure that characterizes almost all most colleges and universities in the 21st century came to us a part of the model of the Research University, which emerged at the beginning of the 19th century in Germany and was quickly adopted with some variations throughout the Europeanized west.

3. Wholistic Education Program at St. John's College

Painting quickly and with a very broad brush to describe some aspects of this model, the research university is tied most closely to the work of Wilhelm von Humbolt and the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810. The

earliest and most famous universities in Europe (Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, Bologna, Salamanca) were founded during the Middle Ages. All were related to the church and worked within that framework of truth, and were primarily concerned with producing competent clergy, canon lawyers, and theologians, as well as civil servants and doctors. The University of Berlin broke new ground. It was secular from its inception, and concerned not so much with training students to take up necessary roles in the church and society as with what is called in German "wissenshaft" – a word famously difficult to translate, meaning something like the unfettered pursuit of systematic knowledge. In describing the spirit that would animate this new type of educational institution, Humbolt stressed several essentials, including: the freedom of academics to pursue their studies without any external interference by either the church or the state; the necessary integration of teaching and research; and the overarching good of pursuing cutting-edge knowledge in all fields (von Humbolt, 2017). This is a noble vision, and I think most of us would agree that it captures much of what is important about our current academic institutions. At St. John's, we embrace important aspects of Humbolt's model; we are secular, and strongly committed to academic freedom and the concomitant values of freedom of inquiry and speech. On the other hand, our teaching does not grow out of research. And, while we are passionate about the pursuit of truth, the overall goal of our institution is not to push forward the frontiers of knowledge in particular areas of specialization, the areas that become formalized as "disciplines." The New Program at St. John's grew out of an attempt to take a step back and evaluate this organization of academic life, to imagine alternatives.

In order to clarify the nature of the alternative the New Program represents it will be helpful to provide a little more information about the historical context out of which it emerged and the concerns to which it responded. Until around the turn of the 20th century, college curricula in the United States were most often based upon a common, proscribed set of classes and texts. Students studied classical languages, mathematics, and classic works of philosophy and literature, usually in an institution associated with one of the Christian denominations of the United States. The introduction of the model of the Research University led to rapid change. Even most church-affiliated colleges and universities began to understand their mission more explicitly in terms of an attempt to drive forward the frontiers of knowledge without reference to a religious worldview. Students, rather than applying themselves to a unified and required curriculum, began to be required to choose an area of specialty in which they could work alongside scholars and be introduced to the work of research. Yet even as these exciting developments were taking place, leaders in higher education gave voice to various concerns. The emphasis on research and scholarship demanded by the research university, it was observed, might be injurious to undergraduate education. Students pushed too early into disciplinary tracks might emerge as narrowly educated specialists, experts in their own disciplines but unaccustomed to thinking outside of them and with little grounding to meet the challenges that would face them as citizens and leaders in a rapidly changing democracy. To counter this tendency, many universities in the United States added "electives" (classes outside of the area of specialization) and "distribution requirements" (requirements that elective classes come from a wide variety of disciplines) to their programs for undergraduates. Additionally, universities began to draw a brighter line between graduate and undergraduate programs, with the latter placing relatively less emphasis on research or the development of professional skills and more on teaching. These adjustments, undertaken still within the broad framework of von Humbolt's vision, characterize the educational model that remains dominant in the US today; whether they are in the undergraduate program at a major university or are attending one of the smaller, more undergraduate-focused institutions commonly called "liberal arts colleges," undergraduate students are required to choose a "major" and also to take a number of different classes of their choice outside of that area of specialization.

But the addition of electives and distribution requirements in turn raised its own set of questions. Is it adequate to address the concern that we may be forming adults who are too narrowly focused, knowing little outside of a given area of expertise, by insisting that students add to their studies a number of disconnected entry-level classes chosen

more or less at random? By adding a collection of unrelated electives to the fragmentation already implied by specialization, is the possibility of any semblance of coherence in undergraduate education lost? In the United States the contours of the debate I have just outlined, moving between concern about overly-narrow specialization and concern about incoherent and superficial breadth, still defines much of the discussion around undergraduate education today. In the late 1930's, in an effort to steer between this Scylla and Charybdis, innovative educators like John Erskine at Columbia University in New York City and Robert Maynard Hutchins at the University of Chicago (both of whom had close connections to Barr, Buchanan, and other founders of the New Program such as Mortimer Adler) introduced undergraduate "core programs," - requiring all undergraduates regardless of major to study a broad common set of texts early in their college careers. These core programs are perhaps the closest cousins to the New Program at St. John's, and it is interesting to note that the New Program welcomed its first class in 1937, the same year that the Columbia University Core was born (Menand et al., 2007)[2].

While the St. John's New Program and these famous core programs emerged from a common set of concerns, the core curriculum model, like the model of the standard US liberal arts college, remains firmly within the disciplinary structure associated with major research universities. Liberal arts colleges place a greater emphasis on teaching relative to research, and the Core Programs at Columbia University, The University of Chicago, and other universities, impose a set of required readings and classes on all students, but in both cases students continue to select majors, choose elective classes outside of that major, and participate in an intellectual life grounded in a department devoted to a specific discipline of study. In founding the St. John's New Program, Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan took a more radical approach to the set of concerns outlined above, one that, especially with respect to the question of the necessity of specialization, stepped outside the assumptions of the new paradigm.

But what does it mean to study without the structure supplied by disciplines and departments? The question is best answered by spending time on one of the St. John's campuses. Because all students take the same classes, and all the material studied in a given year is interconnected, a question or problem that comes up in one class will often influence discussion in another – and conversations that begin in any class can overflow the classroom into the cafeteria or onto the sports field, where others will immediately join in. Students studying the same topics but in different class sections will translate Greek or French together in the coffee shop and demonstrate geometric propositions in chalk on the sidewalks. They spontaneously form reading groups to study books not on the Program. I once arrived slightly late to a mathematics class to find all my students singing Mozart's "Ave Verum Corpus" (a piece studied in the music curriculum) in four-part harmony. All of this joyful, eclectic intellectual activity does not reflect simply the absence of something, the lack of disciplinary boundaries. In the interconnectedness of the various topics and in the way in which the study of one influences the approach to another, we catch a glimpse of a quite different model of education.

We can't take an excursion together to see the living New Program in action, but we can examine it in a different (and admittedly less engaging) way, as a schematic diagram: the seal of the college. Naturally it adorns our business cards, letterhead, and sweatshirts, but it is more than simply a branding device. The design of the seal attests that in constructing the St. John's Program, Scott Buchanan and Stringfellow Barr were inspired by an earlier understanding of the organization of knowledge and nature of education: the model of the liberal arts. Elements of this model developed over centuries, though the work of thinkers including Plato, Aristotle, and Pythagoras; the Roman writer Marcus Terentius Varro, in his work "De Lingua Latina" may have been the first to lay out and discuss the seven as

2) The narrative sketched above, leading to the formation of "general education" undergraduate programs like the Core programs at Columbia and Chicago and the St. John's College New Program, is available in many scholarly resources. I have followed the trajectory outlined in "General Education: Introduction" in *The Rise of the Research University: A Sourcebook*. Louis Menand, Paul Reitter, and Chad Wellmon, eds. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL. 2017.

a single system. Barr and Buchanan of course were not the only American educators to claim this mantle; undergraduate colleges in the United States have a tradition of offering what is called a "liberal arts education," truncated to fit more or less neatly into the overarching research university model. But the New Program threw aside this broader structure to adopt the full liberal arts paradigm with remarkable single-mindedness. Examining the seal, you see that within one circle – one program of study- there are 7 books, representing the 7 liberal arts: Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Music, Geometry, Arithmetic, and Astronomy. In the center is a scale. The Motto reads, in Latin: "Facio Liberos Ex Liberis Libris Libraque" or, in English: "I Make Free Adults out of Children by means of Books and a Balance."

There are many elements that distinguish an education grounded in academic disciplines from one based on the liberal arts; some of them are evident in the portrait of typical activities on the St. John's campuses. The most fundamental distinction, however, is the overall aim of the educational project. Although in the United States all liberal arts colleges, and to a lesser extent also the undergraduate programs of our major universities, consider themselves to have some role in the formation of the character of undergraduate students, their academic structure is oriented toward a different goal. The primary aim of departments of mathematics and philosophy is to further knowledge in mathematics and philosophy, and through teaching and research to create a new generation of scholars of mathematics and philosophy. At St. John's on the other hand, although we are passionately devoted to the pursuit of truth, we do not understand ourselves to be expanding the frontiers of knowledge, or training future scholars. Rather, our primary goal is what is articulated in the motto: making free adults out of children. This means that for us the liberal arts themselves are ancillary to the over-arching goal of "liberal education." They represent different topics of study, but they are not disciplines, not self-justifying areas of academic expertise. Instead, they are more like the spokes of a wheel. They are identifiable and even separable parts that fulfill their highest function when they contribute to a well-functioning whole.

I want to refer again to the seal to make one more point about the specific form the project of liberal education takes at St. John's. Although it's certainly been implied by my picture of the activities of our students and description of our common program of study, I think it bears being made explicit. On the seal we see books arranged around a scale, and a motto proclaiming that the means of education appropriate to the creation of free adults is through "Books and a Balance." Traditionally, the liberal arts have been seen as divided into two parts: the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, logic – represented by the books) and the quadrivium (music, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy – represented by the scale.) Study of both the trivium and the quadrivium were considered essential to what it meant to be fully educated. In practice, this ideal has largely been set aside in higher education. At many institutions, distribution requirements may be filled by classes specifically designed to cause as little inconvenience as possible to the uninterested student. Even the core programs offered at elite universities are almost entirely focused on what we call the "humanities," or on the "trivium" subset of the 7 liberal arts. All students, including those majoring in mathematics or computer science, may be asked to read Plato and Tolstoy; but students majoring in philosophy or literature are unlikely to be required to encounter the works of Galileo, Isaac Newton or other great scientific or mathematical minds. In keeping with the earlier model of liberal education that inspired our founders, the seal and motto of St. John's make the bold claim that both the arts of language and the arts of measurement and number are required in the education of a free adult. Fully half of the credits earned by a St. John's undergraduate will be in the classes addressing mathematics and the natural sciences. This is liberal education for the whole intellect, accomplished by means of Books AND a Balance.

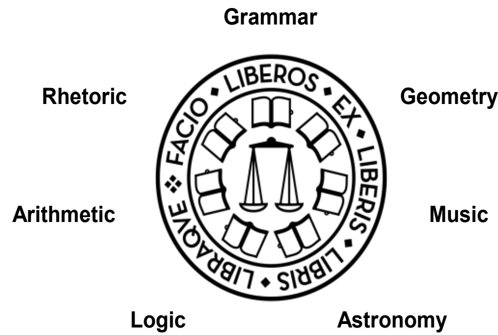

Figure 1 Seven Liberal Arts in the Seal of St. John's College

Facio liberos ex liberis libris libraque

I make free adults out of children by means of books and balance

Figure 2 The Seal of St. John's College

This discussion of the differences between an education structured around academic disciplines and what I will now call "liberal education" may have clarified important distinctions between the St. John's New Program, the Core Programs at some universities, and other undergraduate liberal arts colleges with departmental structures, however, it risks blurring any sense of the difference between the New Program and the earlier unified curricula of 19th – century American undergraduate colleges! Confusion on this point is understandable. These older colleges, like the New Program, featured an almost all-required curriculum, an education that spanned subjects in both the trivium and the quadrivium, and an overt reliance on the framework of the classical liberal arts. They, too, conceived of their mission in terms of the formation of character rather than the advancement of knowledge. Taking everything into account, you'd be justified in asking yourself whether the St John's "New Program" adds up to any more than simply a reactionary retreat to the model of undergraduate education in the United States that had recently been supplanted by the research university and an undergraduate education arranged around majors.

I would respond that, while in some ways the St. John's curriculum today looks like that of an American college of the 19th century, the spirit that animates it is dramatically different. As I mentioned earlier in this talk, while it rejected the division of knowledge into disciplines and the advancement of knowledge as the paramount goal of the university, St. John's New Program embraced other aspects of von Humbolt's vision for higher education; we are secular, and passionately committed to academic freedom, freedom of inquiry, and freedom of speech. And although

we are not usually engaged in research, the spirit of wissenshaft that inspires researchers as they break new ground lives in the New Program as well. These differences decisively inflect the education of the New Program, distinguishing it from the older model it superficially resembles. To see how this is so, it is helpful to turn from a focus on the question of specialization to the two other "contrarian" elements of the New Program with which I began this talk: our choice to read largely non-contemporary "Great Books," and especially our egalitarian pedagogy.

St. John's pedagogical practices differentiate us dramatically from both the research universities and other institutions in that mold, and from the 19th- century American college. As I have said, our faculty do not lecture, passing on information about a given topic to students who will receive and memorize it to reproduce on an exam or perhaps expand on it in an essay. Instead students are required, as they read complex primary sources on various topics, to be active participants in their own educations and the educations of their peers, to think about their own progress and the progress of the class as a whole, to be open about their questions and confusions, to both challenge and collaborate with one another. With the help of a faculty member to nudge them when things go wildly off-course, they learn to ask their own questions and determine their own lines of inquiry, and work toward a common goal. While most schools will have "seminars" or "discussion sessions" on the curriculum from time to time (and there is now significant data suggesting that additional discussion enhances learning in almost any context), clearly an education conducted exclusively in this modality would not make sense in the context of an institution devoted to disciplinary research. However, it is also true that the student-led inquiry practiced at St. John's would not fit comfortably into the sleepy conservatism of the 19th- century undergraduate college. In the spirit of the unencumbered pursuit of knowledge that is also essential to pure research, our pedagogical practice is radically open. It demands deferral neither to the state nor to the church, nor even to the faculty member. All opinions must be justified by an appeal to reason and the text. A program of rigorous but open-ended discussion dedicated to the making "free adults" cannot guarantee to produce either scholars or society gentlemen, though it may produce either. It can promise something more interesting: adults with a wide variety of interests and convictions who think broadly and courageously about what it is to be human, the forms of political organization most conducive to human flourishing, and how to live a good life – adults who are not shackled to unexamined presuppositions, and who thus in a myriad of unpredictable ways practice informed and thoughtful freedom.

I come now to the one distinctive, contrarian, aspect of the St. John's Program that I have yet to touch upon in detail – our choice to read non-contemporary "Great Books." Our canon above all is what leads some to suspect us of being nothing but some sort of remarkable living academic dinosaur; it begs explanation in a contemporary context. As is the case with our discussion-based pedagogy, the distinction between the research university and the college pursuing liberal education is an essential precondition informing the choice to rely on "Great Books." If our primary goal were to train scholars and push forward the frontiers of knowledge in various disciplines, we would move quickly beyond foundational works toward the texts and research that would enable us to understand the most current work in a field. Having determined that our goal instead is to form broadly educated free adults through an education that spans the trivium and quadrivium, however, doesn't fully explain our commitment to the reading of foundational texts. Why not, for example, read a variety of the textbooks common in other colleges which contain summaries of up-to-date knowledge in different fields? Why focus on these so-called "great books"? The choice stems from our understanding of the power of these books. While textbooks attempt to present clear answers, "great books" raise fundamental questions in a way that provokes profound thought. We do not read them to master their content (though we are serious about our attempt to understand that content) or to ground ourselves in a traditional understanding of truth. Once again, in the way we go about educating ourselves and each other through our discussion of these books, it is evident that we are the heirs not only of the ancient practitioners of the liberal arts but of the modern European lovers of wissenshaft. We question these books in the spirit of intellectual freedom and the love of learning, and we

love them in part because they are radical in the original sense of challenging easy answers and unexamined opinion by getting to the "root" of things. Through focusing on foundational texts, we encounter the foundational questions that give rise to a field of study and that at the deepest level still drive disciplinary inquiry, and we encounter these questions presented by the thinkers who saw them most clearly and articulated them in a way that both expresses and promotes genuine wonder.

4. Conclusion

This wholistic education, enacted through open collaborative exploration among peers and arising out of a wonder transgressing disciplinary boundaries, is profoundly relevant to our current predicament. At least in the United States, there is a growing feeling that society is fragmenting along fault lines that are both political/cultural and technological. Politically, it has become harder to agree upon a common good and to talk with our fellow citizens across our differences. We have a pressing need for people who are skilled in holding open-ended, collaborative conversations about the most important issues – a skill cultivated every day in every class across a student's four years at St. John's. With respect to our relationship to technology, the idea that knowledge is naturally divided into disciplines that have little to do with one another is deeply entrenched in our culture. The tendency is for technical fields to develop a discourse that is intellectually rigorous but seems disconnected from the deepest human questions, while the humanities cultivate these questions but are regarded as lacking in rigor. By the time they are in high school many students will already have identified themselves either as a "math and science person" or a "humanities and the arts person" and will profess to be uninterested in pursing studies on the other side of that divide. But, in a world that is so decisively shaped by technology, is it not more important than ever that those driving that technology forward have cultivated the ability, and even the habit, of asking questions of free is it not essential that those who will not earn their livings in a technical field have some understanding of what science and mathematics are, what methods and assumptions they employ, what sorts of questions they ask and are able to answer? The St. John's motto asserts that application in both the humanities and the sciences is necessary to the formation of truly free adults, and our pedagogical approach gives students practice in collaborating and engaging with challenging material from both the trivium and quadrivium as free adults. This is an education that does not allow us to exercise one part of our intellects while neglecting another, to be less than a whole human being. And while it is hard to know if any education is genuinely "future-proof," at almost ninety years old "the New Program" has never been more urgently needed than it is in the present moment.

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어린이들을 자유로운 성인들로 배양하기

세인트존스대학이 구현하는 진정한 전인교육이란 무엇인가?

에밀리 랭스턴 세인트존스 칼리지 튜터

초록

이 논문은 급진적이며 현재까지도 계속 진행 중인 교육 실험에 대한 설명과 탐구를 다루고 있다. 메릴랜드주 애나폴리스에 위치한 세인트존스 대학의 새로운 프로그램(New Program)은 1937 년에 설립되었으며, 거의 90 년이 지난 지금도 20 세기 초에 개발된 방식을 그대로 유지하며 뉴멕시코 주 산타페에 두 번째 캠퍼스까지 확장하였다. 이 프로그램은 학과나 학문 분야 없이 고전 텍스트의 토론을 통해 진행되는 학부 프로그램이다. 모든 학생들이 동일한 수업을 수강한다. 모든 학생들과 교수진은 철학, 문학부터 수학, 자연과학에 이르기까지 모든 학문 영역을 공부해야 한다. 이 논문은 이러한 접근법이 '학제 간'이라기보다는 '학제 전'(pre-disciplinary) 접근 방식이며 보다 지식에 관한 학제 간 접근 이전의 포괄적인 관점을 기반으로 하고 있다고 주장한다. 이것은 고전적 자유교양 교육의 요소들을 현대 연구 대학의 세속적 지향성과 지식 추구의 자유를 강조하는 점과 결합한다. 이 논문은 이 독특한 교육기관이 어떻게 미국 고등교육 현장에 부합하는 지 설명하며, 소위 '자유학예 대학', 컬럼비아와 시카고 같은 대학의 잘 알려진 중핵과정(Core Program), 그리고 19 세기 후반의 미국 대학들과 비교한다. 역설적으로, 이 접근법은 세인트존스 대학을 시대에 뒤떨어진 것이 아니라 (한 평론가가 표현한대로) '미래에 잘 대비된' 것으로 만들었으며, 지식의 파편화에 대한 선입견으로부터 학생들을 해방시키고 가장 시급한 인간 문제를 둘러싼 인문학적 사고와 기술적 사고를 결합하는 협력적 탐구를 장려한다.

키워드

세인트존스, 새로운 프로그램, 학제 전, 자유학예, 중핵과정