

PLENARY 2
**Restor(y)ing the Imagination:
The Art of Education**

I. Picturing Embodied Education: Re-stor(y)ing the Body in *The King's Speech*

II. “We Tell Ourselves Stories in Order to Live”: Christian Ed as Re-narration

A. From Conviction to Conscription: Capturing the Imagination

B. Restor(y)ing the Imagination: The Narrative Shape of our Loves

C. [MP]: The Embodied Shape of our Habits

[1] “It is the body which ‘understands’ in the acquisition of habit. This way of putting it will appear absurd, if understanding is subsuming a sense-datum under an idea [the traditional “intellectualist” account of understanding]. *But the phenomenon of habit is just what prompts us to revise our notion of “understand” and our notion of the body.* To understand is to experience the harmony between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the performance—and the body is our anchorage in the world (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception.*, 167).

[2] “Successfully returning a hard-served tennis ball requires what’s sometimes called ‘the kinaesthetic sense,’ meaning the ability to control the body and its artificial extensions through complex and very quick systems of tasks. English has a whole cloud of terms for various parts of this ability: feel, touch, form, proprioception, coordination, hand-eye coordination, kinesthesia, grace, control, reflexes, and so on. For promising junior players, refining the kinesthetic sense is the main goal of the extreme daily practice regimens we often hear about. The training here is both muscular and neurological. Hitting thousands of strokes, day after day, develops the ability to do by ‘feel’ what cannot be done by regular conscious thought” (David Foster Wallace, “Federer Both Flesh and Not,” in *Both Flesh and Not*, pp. 23-24).

Implication: What if Christian faith was a kind of “kinaesthetic sense?”

Case study: Keeping time with the biblical story: on the liturgical year

I. Little Things Matter: Do Sweat the Small Stuff

[3] “One could endlessly enumerate the values given body, *made* body, by the hidden persuasion of *an implicit pedagogy which can instill a whole cosmology*, through injunctions as insignificant as ‘sit up straight’ or ‘don’t hold your knife in your left hand,’

and inscribe the most fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of a culture in seemingly innocuous details of bearing or physical and verbal manners, so putting them beyond the reach of consciousness and explicit statement” (Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 69).

[4] “The cunning of pedagogic reason lies precisely in the fact that *it manages to extort what is essential while seeming to demand the insignificant*, such as the respect for forms and forms of respect which are the most visible and most ‘natural’ manifestation of respect for the established order, or the concessions of politeness, which always contain political concessions” (*ibid.*).

[5] “Gentlemen,” he said, “son you will begin to wear the class shirt. You’ll wear it every day of the academic year and, per uniform regulation, you will secure your collar stays that have been issued to you.”

“It may seem insignificant to you now,” he continued, “but you’re here learning attention to detail.” For the next few minutes the combat-seasoned colonel compared neglecting to wear collar stays with forgetting ammunition for our soldiers in combat. Focusing on even the small things, he reasoned, develops a leader who never neglects the critical ones. (General Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*)

II. The iPhone-ization of our World(view)

A. Micro-practices with macro-implications

B. Challenges *and* opportunities

Conclusion: A Temperamental Education: Worship, Worldview, Wallpaper

(5) Temperament is the primary requisite for the critic—a temperament exquisitely susceptible to beauty. [...] To be purified and made perfect, this sense requires some form of exquisite *environment*. Without this it starves, or is dulled. You remember that lovely passage in which Plato describes how a young Greek should be educated, and with what insistence he dwells upon the importance of surroundings, telling us how the lad is to be brought up in the midst of fair sights and sounds, so that they beauty of material things may prepare his soul for the reception of the beauty that is spiritual. Insensibly, *and without knowing the reason why*, he is to develop that real love of beauty which, as Plato is never weary of reminding us, is the true aim of education. (Oscar Wilde, “The Critic as Artist”)

(6) “For the cultivation of temperament, we must turn to the decorative arts: to the arts that touch us, not to the arts that teach us. [...] The art that is frankly decorative is the art to live with. It is, of all our visible arts, the one art that creates in us both mood and temperament. Mere colour, unspoiled by meaning, and unallied with definite form, can speak to the soul in a thousand different ways. The harmony that resides in the delicate proportions of lines and masses becomes mirrored in the mind. The repetitions of pattern give us rest. The marvels of design stir the imagination. In the mere loveliness of the materials employed there are latent elements of culture. (*Ibid.*)