

# 1st Century Historian: Education is “The One and Essential Thing”

The ancient Greek thinker Plutarch (46-120 A.D.) is best known for his historical work *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans* and his collection of essays entitled *Moralia*.

This latter collection begins with a wonderful essay (or, at least, it's attributed to him) on “The Education of Children.”

I'll discuss the rest of the essay in a separate blog post, but the following passage stands on its own:

*“The one and essential thing, the first, middle, and last, is a sound upbringing and right education. It is this, I say, which leads to virtue and happiness.*

*Other blessings are on the human plane; they are slight and not worth serious pursuit. Good birth is a distinction, but the boon depends on one's ancestors. Wealth is a prize, but its possession depends on fortune, which often carries it off from those who have it and bestows it on those who never hoped for it... Fame, again, is imposing, but uncertain. Beauty, though greatly courted, is short-lived; health, though highly prized, is unstable; strength is a thing to be envied, but it falls an easy prey to disease and age...*

*Meanwhile culture is the only thing in us that is immortal and divine. In the nature of man there are two sovereign elements—understanding and reason. It is the place of the understanding to direct the reason and of the reason to serve the understanding. Fortune cannot overcome them, calumny cannot rob us of them, disease cannot corrupt them, old age*

*cannot impair them. The understanding is the only thing that renews its youth as it grows old, and, while time carries off everything else, it brings old age one gift—that of knowledge. When, again, war comes like a torrent, tearing and sweeping everything away, it is our mental culture alone that it cannot rob.”*

Indeed.

—

*Dear Readers,*

*Big Tech is suppressing our reach, refusing to let us advertise and squelching our ability to serve up a steady diet of truth and ideas. Help us fight back by [becoming a member](#) for just \$5 a month and then join the discussion on Parler [@CharlemagneInstitute](#)!*