

Educational philosophy

EDUCATION FOR THE CULTURE OF LIFE:

Within the Culture of Life, it is understood that the purpose of education is the comprehensive service and formation of the interior life, that is, the spiritual, intellectual, and imaginative life, of the human person, who is a mysterious union of body and soul, and who has been created to live by the Spirit of God. In part, this formation is offered indirectly through participation in a community committed to holiness, love, and love-of-learning; in part it is offered directly by providing information about the nature and laws of the interior life, and then it is supported indirectly by providing information about the the universe and its laws, along with a perspective on the way those laws have been discovered and understood within the culture of life.

CONSIDERING THE DISCIPLINES IN ORDER:

I have listed ten disciplines. Here is a quick run-down on the way that they are approached within the culture of life.

THEOLOGY is the intellectual expression of matters of faith. Wisdom admonishes us to impart this information in such an attractive manner that students will open their hearts as well as their minds, and allow themselves to be *formed* by it and not only *informed*.

In a slightly less comprehensive sense, philosophy and psychology are also deliberately formative disciplines when they are pursued in the light of faith. PHILOSOPHY is an ordering of thought itself and of the pursuit of truth, including the fundamental consideration of how we know what we know.

CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY -- named PSYCHOLOGY in the secular world -- is the study of the nature of man, especially of his soul, his "psyche", his inwardness. In speaking of the soul, we speak of the human capacity for memory, imagination, and personal consciousness, as well as the capacity for human reason which reflects upon and orders other capacities. Finally, we speak of the freedom of the

person and the capacity for love, which can only reach its fullest expression in a personal engagement with a chosen destiny within the human community.

LITERATURE is, on one side, a tool of all disciplines and, on the other side, a form of art. True and widening ability to use language is essential to cultural progress because it maintains the availability of a broad range of human reflection.

In math, science, civics, and history, mental formation is often pursued indirectly as we obtain information concerning the world about us. It should be clearly understood, however, that all information is formative. For example, the Christian consideration of Civics has an especially close relationship to both philosophy and Christian anthropology on the one hand and to history on the other. The formation of a good civic consciousness is shaped both by reflection on revealed and philosophical principles and by the facts of history. Even in the natural sciences, which may seem wholly secular, it is important to present matters so that the student acquires an orderly understanding of the world and a strengthened sense of the value and stability of truth. A chaotic impression of historical, sociological, or cosmological reality will undermine faith just as deeply as bad theology, though indirectly and in a hidden manner.

Art and music are directly formative, since their impression upon the soul is intuitive and is often received without reflective consideration. Instead, it is directly impressed upon the soul and becomes formative unless it is consciously considered and then either accepted or rejected and effectively replaced. Information leading to a relative mastery of art and music as tools is important; beyond that the Culture of Life must encourage an understanding of the formative power and the right use of the Arts.

It belongs to the Culture of Life that when education is pursued within a community, the community is strengthened, for the members of the community share mental and spiritual goods as well as material goods. Therefore, while education is described in terms of its formative and spiritual service to the individual, it is formative of the community as well.

EDUCATION IN THE ANTI-CULTURE

In the work of education, which is exactly the work of passing culture from one generation to the next, we face the anti-culture in an especially profound manner. As I have said, I do not call it a culture of death, for culture means attention that becomes fruitful, and the “culture of death” is not oriented to fruitfulness. But it is, in various ways, a well-developed world-view with a strong effect on cultural activity, and it must be understood.

One hallmark of the anti-culture is the intent of its educational directives. It is never oriented to personal or specifically human formation, but only to the production of “human resources” like so many parts necessary to the pragmatic and economic functions of the human community. This work of anti-education is accomplished in four phases: first, by the generation and support of philosophical materialism; second, by specific political indoctrination; third, by making career guidance the focus rather than the consequence of education; and fourth, by demeaning spiritual hunger to the level of a merely emotional experience.

Let’s look at these one by one:

Philosophical materialism should be an oxymoron, but it is the very stuff of the anti-culture, which usually exhibits its profound self-contradiction by defining the material proofs of physical science as the only paradigm of thought. Students are encouraged to believe that only what can be proved by sensory experiments and their measure merits the name of truth -- even while this definition itself is clearly philosophical, not material or materially verifiable. Under these taught assumptions, however, theology and philosophy are undermined; they are simply dismissed as unverifiable and therefore not about truth.

Second, anti-cultural mental formation consistently involves bringing the students to adopt and “own” teacher-chosen thoughts about generally political matters. Such mental formation is rightly called brainwashing, for the purpose is student “ownership” of teacher-chosen thoughts, rather than student delight in the Truth, which, indeed, owns us, being the Lord Himself. For example, in-

formation is presented which generally suggests that the growth of human population is harmful, both to men and to every ecological system on which it impinges. Students feel that they have come to this conclusion on their own, and they are not aware of the missing information. A literacy sufficient to expose the child to other ideas is not pursued at any level.

Third, an economic orientation prematurely stampedes students of the anti-culture into curricula dictated by career tracks. In this way, fields of learning are kept tightly separated and education cannot produce a community of learning. Jesus teaches that if we seek first His Kingdom, then all else will be given; therefore, the Culture of Life leaves career guidance to the time of vocation, centering its work on learning and personal growth.

Fourth, because the anti-culture is not directed to God, truly spiritual formation must be suppressed. At first, it may be merely neglected, but very quickly, students are exposed to an emotional education directed towards obstructing spiritual consciousness, especially a spiritual consciousness which would harmonize with reason and which might produce true individuality. Instead of spiritual growth, emotional satisfaction is encouraged, especially through sensuously overloaded art and music, but also in bluntly material terms. Thus an anti-cultural curriculum encourages emotional expression and claims to deal with the emotions, but meanwhile it prevents the student from developing a right relationship between emotion and the life of truth and service.

In all these ways, the anti-culture has developed an educational philosophy which, both as a whole and in each and every aspect, opposes the Culture of Life.

Finally, this materialistic educational philosophy is naturally as destructive of the community as of the individual; how could it be otherwise. Materialistic, thoughtless, career-oriented, and emotionally self-absorbed, the student is in no way prepared to contribute to that community of love which is alone capable of cultural progress.