

September 23rd, 1977

PROGRAM

NON-RELIGIOUS ETHICS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The course in ethics is designed in accordance with parents' wishes. It is based on an ethical view of man free from any religious dogma or any doctrine which might inhibit the development of the personality. The training given in the course must emerge in the individual's own thought, judgment and behaviour and must rest on universal values. It is important here that the individual finds a balance between on the one hand his own needs and his own search for self fulfilment, and on the other the realization that every one of us is an active member of the community.

These considerations lead us to two important conclusions :

- a) The pupil does not come to the course by his own free choice. Another person has made the choice for him, so that everything which might tend towards indoctrination, or the presentation of particular values as absolute, must be avoided.
- b) The teacher cannot himself be committed to a religiously-inspired ethic.

Investigating moral conduct two important psychological aspects that emerge at once, which will affect the teacher's approach to the lessons :

- a) The child does not and cannot wait for the development of moral insights and patterns of behaviour before reacting to the concrete situations in which it finds itself.

The child must already act !

- b) Psychological development takes no account of the social context in which the child lives.

In practice we can say that in the development of moral and social behaviour the following stages must be passed through for every concept and every norm.

- a) In particular situations the individual becomes aware of concepts and norms, and of right action which is not at all self-explanatory. Approval or disapproval by those around him are the points of reference here.
- b) With personal experience and the acquisition of new information, insight is gained which allows the individual to restate concepts for himself.
- c) In the final stage, concepts are consciously worked out in practice, and situations assessed from the individual's own standpoint. This means that some of the child's reactions will still be spontaneous even when it can already say what the proper reaction to some other problem should be.

The teacher must never overlook the fact that even at the second and third stages attention must still be paid to the first aspect.

As regards psychological development, we know that until 7 or 8 years of age the child is fundamentally egocentric; after that it begins to be interested in other people's standpoints and in cooperation with them, but only becomes open to higher and more rational motivations from the age of 11 or 12 onwards. This knowledge must determine the choice of material covered.

It is for the school in general and the ethics teacher in particular to act in accordance with these fundamental principles.

GENERAL REMARKS ON METHOD

With this subject school activities cannot be considered in isolation from daily life. A morality consisting of a few theoretical precepts, which has not grown out of critical investigation, and where conduct has not been tested against real possibilities, will bear little fruit. What must be sought therefore is a morality for life, a morality devised from life.

A program can only sum up the possibilities that are open. It cannot lay down a comprehensive set of rules; but neither can it lay down a minimum set of rules. It is therefore of essential importance that the teacher pay attention to everything actually arising in the child's environment.

Three main aspects should be distinguished :

- the child's own world :

How is the child to sort out his own problems and desires ?

- the I-you relationship :

How does the child communicate with others, asserting his own personality while respecting theirs ?

- the child in the community :

What contribution must the child make to organized society so that society can provide a decent life for everyone ?

Although these areas would seem to run parallel with the psychological development mentioned above, the reality of daily life means that we must pay attention to them at all times. For example, one theme presented in the first years of school is "I am careful", but in the fifth year the question "What can I become ?" is also covered. In the fifth year we can speak of "how we are protected", but in the second the subject might be "doing something with friends from my class".

### THE TEACHER'S APPROACH

The point of departure is always a situation in which the child can recognize itself or in which it feels involved.

Analysis of the situation gives an insight into the difficulties which a human being - the child - must solve. A direct answer to the questions raised thereby can help to give a rough solution. By comparing similar situations, and by proceeding thence towards more general aspects, a view-point is built up which can act as a guide for subsequent use. It is important here that the child acquire confidence in its own abilities; the whole approach followed in teaching should be directed towards this end.

In treating such themes use has to be made of such teaching practices as dramatization, creative expression, play, spelling exercises, audio-visual aids, reading, and so on, which assist integration. The teacher leads the activities and acts as a catalyst, rather than simply handing down rules of ethics. Raising fresh problems, asking questions about motivation and judgment, the teacher stimulates active thought by his pupils. This is not confined to the intellectual plane : a great deal of attention is also paid to the emotional side, both positive and negative aspects being printed out.

The outcome of the discussion is a statement of how the solution was arrived at rather than a list of prescribed rules. Exercises should show which facets of the problem have arisen, what information has been acquired, what individual opinions came up in class. Drawings and illustrations in the exercises are first and foremost a record of the individual contribution, the individual vision and the individual emotional attitude.

FIRST YEARI. The child's own worldWe develop a sense of self-respect

Cleanliness : personal, clothes, possessions.

We are not touchy.

We are careful.

We are good-tempered.

We pay attention.

We learn to control ourselves.

We are not curious.

We are cheerful.

We do not flatter people.

We do not tell tales.

We know our faults.

We keep our promises.

We do not copy other people's exercises.

We do not make fun of other people.

We try hard

We work carefully and tidily

We try hard : play - good deeds - work

We are careful

At home, playing, at school, on the street.

We look ahead; we are thrifty

We know the consequences of what we do.

Look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves.

Waste not, want not.

We are thrifty, not mean.

We respect truth

We admit the truth.

We are not afraid to speak the truth.

We respect other people's possessions

When we find things we try to return them to their owners.

We do not take what is not ours.

If someone lends us something, we give it back in good conditions.

We are careful of everything around us.

II. The I-you relationship (Others and myself)We show respect to others

We do not tease.

We are tolerant.

We do not hurt people.

We are good-mannered and straightforward.

We do not dawdle.

Animals are our friends; we do not annoy them, we protect them.

We do not damage plants; we look after them.

We follow the rules of the road

What is involved here is not so much knowing the traffic signs and rules of the road themselves as obeying them without having to be told.

We behave properly in company

By setting up situations in the form of play and dramatics of one sort or another, and also from actual experience (school parties, going in and out of the classroom, seeing their friends in the playground and so on), the children learn to behave properly and treat each other with courtesy. The main thing here is to allow the children to act freely and to acquire an obliging attitude.

### III. The child in the community

#### We love our parents and our family

We are friendly and good-mannered.

We do what we are told, where this has to be.

We offer help where we can.

We look after things entrusted to us.

#### We help one another

We help others.

We do our duty.

We are tolerant.

#### We try to do good

We are charitable.

We share with our friends.

We comfort people where necessary.

## SECOND YEAR

### I. The child's own world

#### We develop a sense of self-respect

Further development of the first year's work.

Cleanliness on the street, in the classroom, in school and elsewhere.

We are patient.

We are not bad-tempered.

We are not jealous.

We do not tell lies.

#### We try hard

Further development of the first year's work.

#### We are careful

Development of the first year's work.

Practical jokes can be dangerous.

We are careful in the playground, by the water, when swimming, in the lift, with electrical machines, on the road.

We look ahead; we are thrifty

Development of the first year's work.

We respect truth

Development of the first year's work.

We respect the rules of games.

We accept decisions taken by majority.

We respect other people's possessions

Development of the first year's work.

## II. The I-you relationship (Others and myself)

We are respectful

Development of the first year's work.

We carry out our responsibilities : practical examples.

We follow the rules of the road

See remarks under first year.

We behave properly

Development of the first year's work.

Situations from the child's day-to-day life; in the company of older people and people of the same age; at parades; at a funeral, in a graveyard; with strangers.

## III. The child in the community

We love our parents and our family

We celebrate somebody's birthday.

We help one another

Development of the first year's work.

Visiting sick people; cousins, friends ...

We are on holiday and write to ...

All children are our friends; the life of children in faraway countries.

We try to do good

Development of the first year's work.

Good deeds.



### THIRD AND FOURTH YEARS

#### I. The child's own world

##### 1. We develop a sense of self-respect

- We respect and look after our own body;
  - We take part in healthy recreation, games and sports.
  - We look after personal hygiene.
  - We follow the instructions of doctors and nurses.
  - We are careful of our posture.
  - We eat healthy food.
- We learn to control ourselves and not to give way to small discomforts, thirst and so on.
- We accept the consequences of our own words and actions.
- We try to recognize our own failures and to fight against them.
- We are not vulgar.
- We look for beauty.
- We look after our clothes and our work.
- We do our best to learn to do more and to know more.
- We have confidence in our own abilities.

##### 2. We try hard

Development of the first and second years' work.

- Once we have taken a decision we stick to it.

##### 3. We are careful

- with unknown objects we find somewhere,
- with unknown animals, plants, fruits,
- in unknown water, on building sites, near machines, etc ...

- in sports and games,
- with machines, electricity, medicines.

We see what warning notices and danger signs say.

#### 4. We are thrifty

Continuation of the first and second years' work.

- Waste not, want not.

#### 5. We respect truth

- We have the courage to tell the truth even if a good friend suffers by it.
- We have the courage to speak up for our own opinions, but not so as to hurt anyone or belittle them.

#### 6. We respect other people's possessions

Continuation of the first and second years' work.

- Problems in connection with :
  - bringing back or leaving in things we find,
  - dirtying things,
  - damaging things,
  - making good damage we do,
  - keeping things that do not belong to us.

## II. The I-you relationship (others and myself)

### 1. We respect others, we respect life

- Suspicion or causing it, thoughtless judgments, slander, lies, false witness, revenge, accusations, punishments, etc ...

- Trust and promises, verbal or written; rules that we have freely accepted.
- Keeping secrets, confidential information; gossip.
- Animal protection; bird protection day.
- First insights into the mutual dependence of living things; the usefulness of seemingly dangerous or nasty animals.

## 2. We know the rules of the road and follow them

Development of the first and second years' work.

- Problems showing that traffic signs are necessary to protect us and others.
- Problems to show that rules are necessary to protect us and others.  
We must act in accordance with the rules (examination of dangerous behaviour on the road; nervousness, the wish to be in time, overtaken, recklessness, etc ... - remedies).
- We cycle in accordance with the rules.
- We help others who have difficulty with the rules (old people, handicapped people, young children).

## 3. We behave properly

Problems from which it will become clear that we have to behave according to a pattern which applies to everybody, out of respect for others and for the sake of our ordered community life :

- Conduct in different situations the child knows; on the street, in the park, in the playground, in the swimming-pool; in public transport; in a hospital, in a museum, at an exhibition; in a theatre; at a sports event, at tram or bus stops; in queues.
- Conduct of girls and boys towards one another.
- Congratulations, invitations or thanks.
- Conduct at table, at home and elsewhere.
- How we run errands on our own.

#### 4. How children and adults live in other countries

- Comparisons : what they eat, how they live, what clothes they wear, their customs.
- Appreciation of other people's customs.

### III. The child in the community

#### 1. Love, friendship, solidarity, devotion and tolerance in organized society

- Towards the family, the school, members of a club we belong to, etc ... : see first and second years.
- How we can best discharge our obligations, carrying out our tasks in school, at home, in a club, ...
- What we can do to make other people's work easier. How we can save them trouble.
- Our contacts with people at work. Knowledge of and respect for their occupations.
- The necessity of work.
- Solidarity, mutual dependence.
- Our own area; local service; local organization and where it can be seen.

2. The Red Cross and its youth branch

- Origin, work, growth, organization.

3. The example of great men

Using current events as material.

FIFTH YEAR

I. The child's own world

1. Development of a sense of self-respect

- We do good for its own sake.
- We obey the voice of conscience (cavedropping, boasting, slander, gossip; excessive modesty, flattery, revenge ...)

2. Development of self-control

- We are careful : the medicine cupboard  
cleaning products  
smoking  
alcohol
- We are cautious in our judgments : appearance and reality,  
impartiality.
- We look ahead : thrift  
meanness  
instinctive thrift among animals
- We have courage : bravery and bravado  
conceit  
real and false heroes
- We are honest : property, theft, sincerety, straightforwardness

### 3. Love of beauty

- We love nature
- We discover beauty in poetry, literature, music, painting, architecture ...

### 4. Search for knowledge

- We seek more knowledge
- We read good books
- Pioneers of science (for example Pierre and Marie Curie, Charles Darwin, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Gutenberg, Andreas Vesalius).

## II. The I-you relationship (others and myself)

### 1. Respect for our fellow-men

- Equality between boys and girls
- Respect for foreigners; racism
- Tolerance towards philosophical, religious and political opinions
- Respect for work
- Respect for the achievements and attitudes of our fellow-man

### 2. Respect for life

- Animals and plants (nature reserves, zoos, botanical gardens)
- Balance in nature (ecology)

### 3. The rules of the road

Development of the work of previous years

- The main rules of the road
- Courtesy on the road
- Children and the elderly in heavy traffic

#### 4. Politeness

- Forms of politeness (local conventions)
- Greeting (here and elsewhere)

#### 5. Friendship

- Rights and duties of friends towards one another
- Partnership and team spirit

### III. The child in the community

#### 1. Goodness

- Love of our fellow-man, as opposed to selfishness
- Helpfulness and patience towards the handicapped, the sick, the elderly

#### 2. Partnership on a national and international level

- Our own district, our county/province, our state; the European community, the world.
- Our own country
- Chauvinism
- The Red Cross
- UNESCO, UNICEF, UN

#### 3. The influence and example of national and international figures

- Helpers of suffering mankind
- Fighters for peace
- Scientific investigators, inventors, explorers
- Idealists

#### 4. Work and use of leisure time

- The joy of work, creativity
- Labour Day
- Leisure time

- Pay, taxes, insurance contributions
- Children and women at work : a look into the past
- Holidays
- Games, hobbies