

EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

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MORAL EDUCATION

GUIDELINES FOR SECONDARY 6TH AND 7TH YEAR COURSES

(approved by the Board of Governors on 25 and 26 May 1982)

INTRODUCTION

During the first three years ("cycle d'observation"), the pupil has been helped by the moral education course to take stock of the world around him and to adapt himself to it.

The course in the 4th and 5th years is designed to bring the adolescent to know himself, to assert his personality and to accept responsibility.

In the 6th and 7th years, the pupil should be encouraged by the course to think about the world and gain a sense of commitment that will in turn offer a direction to his own life.

The aim of the moral education course in the 6th and 7th years is to :

- motivate the student to think critically about the world and reality;
- get him to examine the problem of values;
- help him to commit himself.

The moral education course has a natural bias towards the conceptualisation and abstraction of problems and care must be taken to ensure that it does not become a mere adjunct to the law, economics, epistemology, psychology or other such courses. The rôle of these disciplines in moral education is simply to illustrate and inform. This caveat must be a basic guideline to the course.

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MAN AND THE CHALLENGE OF HIS NATURE AND CULTURE : CONFLICT AND COMMITMENT

I. MAN AND THE CHALLENGE OF HIS NATURE

- Animal and human nature : from nature to culture

Man is the product of a long evolutionary process. While he has yet fully to break the thread of his animal origins, he has become above all, as Sartre observed, "the being through which value enters the world".

It is not incumbent upon the individual, without denying the reality of his situation, to endeavour to move beyond it, bringing to bear his own commitment and awareness of values ?

- Heredity : from determinism to responsibility

The biological phenomena of heredity make the human being the potential subject of a determinist approach; does this reduce the individual to a mere "programmed memory" ?

Is the human being also a conscience, a scheme ? When, how, why and to what end does his conscience make him a responsible being, existentially different from all other living organisms ?

- The racial problem : from difference to tolerance

The concept of race leads to all manner of controversy. Differences between men constitute a given situation on to which has been grafted a whole scale of values originating in cultural and technical diversity.

Racism is an attitude towards others engendered by ignorance, fear or self-interest. A long and difficult apprenticeship in tolerance, understanding, and respect for one's fellow man is the sole guarantee of harmonious co-existence.

II. MAN AND HIS CULTURE

- Social structure and the individual : from self to group

The term "society", as its etymology suggests, carries with it the idea of association - association that is not ready and waiting but has to be attained.

Is any society both structured and inhibited by its institutions ?

Self-support becomes group interaction when the will to achieve common responsibility becomes a natural desire.

Here, consideration of various examples will inform the difficult, perpetual process of creating political awareness, e.g. the usages, customs and temporal aspects of religion, social conventions, legal codes, political organs, such as parties and the various forms of government.

- The economy and the individual : from profit to mutual aid

Can human problems treated solely in terms of profit and loss, performance and competition, be resolved to the satisfaction of all ?

Can a society economically structured to achieve true mutual aid actually exist ?

- Technology and the individual : from efficiency to utility

In the quest for efficiency, does not technology in the final analysis become an end in itself, subjugating human activity to its own workings and emerging as a caste tool ?

Can technology be controlled, can it be called in question ?

Technology must be a useful instrument in the service of the individual and his self-fulfilment in society.

- Science and the individual : from scientific explanation to comprehension

No less serious than the tug of irrationalism in our world is the lure of scientism, and there is a very real danger of the scientific method ousting all other approaches to man. Adolescents must therefore be helped to appreciate that any attempt to reduce man to the aggregate findings of scientific study is doomed to frustration.

- Art and the individual : from conformism to creativity

Is art an essentially individual phenomenon ? Could certain aspects of art pose a threat to society ? Should it not, on the other hand, enjoy the greatest possible freedom in every sphere, on every occasion ?

Is art a way of evading certain constraints, certain régimes ? Can it serve ideological ends ?

- Ideology and the individual : from indoctrination to free commitment

Any cultural system is an ideology to the extent that it gives expression to an intellectual structure, one of the functions of which is to maintain or transform a social structure in a conscious or unconscious way. In this connection, does it not behove the individual to demystify his cultural language, moving towards free and conscious self-commitment, rather than remain the creature of a form of indoctrination that can condemn him to anonymity and deprive him of his liberty ?

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