

Ethics, Philosophy and Education

by

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1. Younger generations are now growing up in a world whose social order, rationale and value systems are radically different to those established in the West during the post-war period.
 - At that time the rural world still survived in the background, but it has since been definitively replaced by a techno-economic world.
 - The concept of scientific, economic and social progress used to polarise social movements and collective action; today, however, progress in the form of global competitiveness has become a forcibly imposed constraint.
 - At that time values still shaped political and educational ideals, but now pragmatic adaptability and strategic astuteness govern our personal and collective patterns of behaviour.
2. The key demand in education and training is now less oriented towards giving young people the abilities and skills that they need to make their way in society than towards laying the foundations that will foster human values and enable young people to understand themselves better and make discerning choices.
 - Young generations have an amazing ability to master the technological and methodological tools that enable them to act appropriately and effectively in an essentially interactive and changing world.
 - On the other hand, they are far less able to forge a personal identity and understand in depth their personality and the aspirations determining the commitments and responsibilities that would enable them realise their full potential.
 - The responses aimed at meeting these expectations can only be relevant if they are realistic (pragmatic) and meaningful (transmitted through genuinely involved actors) and if all concerned work together towards common goals in a spirit of true dialogue (willingness to listen to others is a key factor in this process).

3. Basic training in a manual skill and philosophy as a means of understanding oneself seem to be the two keys to the education of the future.
- If students are to understand and assimilate the different “trades” taught in schools and universities, they must continuously become more aware of their relation to the material world and other human beings and develop the desire and the ability to learn, *i.e.* to listen, observe, think, imitate, understand and assimilate.
 - The relationship between one’s intelligence and the self is established through the individualised development of one’s physical faculties and the development of intellectual awareness by asking questions, analysing and understanding. Physical and mental awareness go hand in hand, for we learn how to live in harmony with our bodies – *i.e.* how to be ourselves – through manual training, and the art of learning by asking questions is mastered through Socratic maieutics.
 - Philosophy as a means of fostering awareness through the Socratic method should be practiced as early as upper secondary school and be extended to different subjects – science, literature and physical education – so that students will be able to realise their full potential when they reach an age when they must make choices as they deepen their knowledge through the pursuit of higher education.

The rediscovery of philosophy as a key civilising tool, together with an awareness of the fragility of the human person, can make an important contribution to the task of educating, teaching and training our post-rural world that is struggling emerge.