

Values Clarification

Undoubtedly, many parents reading this material about sex and values will be alarmed and will demand that schools teach morals. Well, do not be shocked—educators are already one step ahead of you. They recognize the great concern of parents and leaders over the increasingly immoral behavior of youth. When Gallup polled the American public on whether they wanted “instruction in the schools that would deal with morals and moral behavior,” 79 percent favored such studies.¹

But rather than discard their program of sex education, educators have launched a new program of moral education: “values clarification,” which Amitai Etzioni, director of the Center for Policy Research, called “the hottest new item in post-Watergate curriculums.”² *Newsweek* reports that “more than 300,000 classroom teachers have attended workshops and summer institutes to learn how to teach the courses. and at least 6,000 school systems have offered values programs.”³ Now if troubled parents are concerned about having their children trained in proper behavior, educators can proudly show that they are aware of the problem and are teaching children to develop right values. Relieved parents will now think their children are at least being taught appropriately.

By now, after exposure of the progressive educational leadership, one should become suspicious when the educational wolf wears the sheep’s clothing of morality. True to the nature of permissive educators, values clarification is another subtle program that further alienates children from their parents and destroys children’s already fragile value system.

Values clarification stresses that teachers should not moralize. “We must not try to indoctrinate youngsters with our values,” says a *Guide Book for the Teaching of Controversial Issues*, prepared by a Bronx school district, “but rather provide them with practice in critical thinking. Our students should be provided with opportunities to analyze, clarify and work out their own set of values. Thus, we shall achieve one of the major objectives of our educational system, the development of an effective citizen in a democratic society.”⁴

As with sex education, children are asked their opinions on premarital sex, lovemaking, contraception, homosexuality, trial marriages, and other sexual issues. *Values Clarification*, by Sidney B. Simon, Leland W. Howe, and Howard Kirschenbaum, acclaimed as the most widely

known and used book in the new field of values education, cites a strategy that “illustrates how difficult it is for any one teacher to say, ‘I have the right values for other people’s children.’”

The Alligator River Story

Once upon a time there was a woman named Abigail who was in love with a man named Gregory. Gregory lived on the shore of a river. Abigail lived on the opposite shore of the river. The river which separated the two lovers was teeming with man-eating alligators. Abigail wanted to cross the river to be with Gregory. Unfortunately, the bridge had been washed out. So she went to ask Sinbad, a river boat captain, to take her across. He said he would be glad to if she would consent to go to bed with him preceding the voyage. She promptly refused and went to a friend named Ivan to explain her plight. Ivan did not want to be involved at all in the situation. Abigail felt her only alternative was to accept Sinbad’s terms. Sinbad fulfilled his promise to Abigail and delivered her into the arms of Gregory.

When she told Gregory about her amorous escapade in order to cross the river, Gregory cast her aside with disdain. Heartsick and dejected, Abigail turned to Slug with her tale of woe. Slug, feeling compassion for Abigail, sought out Gregory and beat him brutally. Abigail was overjoyed at the sight of Gregory getting his due. As the sun sets on the horizon, we hear Abigail laughing at Gregory.⁵

After hearing this story, the children are to “privately rank the five characters from the most offensive character to the least objectionable.”⁶ They are divided into groups of four to discuss the pros and cons of each character. Imagine immature boys and girls debating the pros and cons of sex to gain favor in a nonjudgmental atmosphere.

In Maryland, school children in a tenth-grade home economics class were to role-play this situation: “A boy with several years of schooling ahead of him is confronted by a girl he has been dating. She tells him that he is the father of her expected child, and she demands that he marry her. If neither professes to love the other, what should they do?”⁷

Survival Games

Morals education examines and probes many other controversial

Values Clarification

values clarification issues. One such activity is “survival games.” Children are divided into groups. Suddenly World War III begins, with bombs dropping everywhere. People are running for shelters, and the class group is in charge of these shelters. A desperate call is received from a fallout shelter where ten people want to enter, but to survive the necessary three months there is enough space, air, food, and water for only six. The group has exactly one-half hour to decide which ones will enter before they themselves must seek protection. Here are the individuals:

1. Bookkeeper; 31 old years
2. His wife; six months pregnant
3. Black militant; second-year medical student
4. Famous historian-author; 42 years old
5. Hollywood starlette; singer; dancer
6. Bio-chemist
7. Rabbi; 54 old years
8. Olympic athlete; all sports
9. College co-ed
10. Policeman with gun (they cannot be separated)

The teacher distributes copies of this list to the class and then counts down: 15-, 10-, 5-, and then 1-minute warnings.⁸ Instead of seeking ways to find out how to save all ten, children are asked to decide who will die. This is an ideal strategy to teach early the doctrine of the individual’s right to die with dignity—euthanasia. Dr. Thomas Goldeke, superintendent of schools in Howard County, Maryland, has banned survival games in his district. He says they “are not educationally sound for students in our kindergarten through grade 12 programs.”⁹

Diaries

Another strategy values clarification uses is to extract information by probing student private lives by means of personal diaries. Children can choose among various diaries, including one on their religious habits. Then the diaries are shared with the class while the teacher asks a series of values-clarifying questions. Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum say, “Perhaps *the* best place to find the data for values-clarification activities is in the students’ own lives. Diaries is a strategy that enables the students to bring an enormous amount of information about themselves into class to be examined and discussed.”¹⁰

In this program children are expected to expose even their most sacred religious beliefs and to defend them before their classmates. Barbara M. Morris in *Why Are You Losing Your Children?* asks a series of questions: “Upon what foundation can immature, impressionable children make wise decisions about the religious beliefs parents have passed on to them? Who, in the secular classroom will help immature children to defend religious beliefs they hold, but may not as yet fully understand? Does not such meddling constitute a serious and indefensible violation of the principle of church and state, and an invasion of individual and family privacy?”¹¹

Parents Questioned

The *Council for Basic Education Bulletin* tells how ninth-graders were asked to fill out this questionnaire:

Do your parents seem to respect your opinion?

Do your parents tend to lecture and preach too much to you?

Do your parents have confidence in your abilities?

Do they [your parents] really try to see your side of things?

What is the most difficult subject for you to discuss?

The *Bulletin* then says: “In all fairness, most schools do not do this kind of thing. We believe that the proper answer to those who do is: ‘None of your business!’”¹²

Autonomous Children

Everything the child has been taught is taken apart and clarified: religion, sex, family, parents, feelings, attitudes, problems, etc. Nothing is personal or sacred. Values clarification often places children into dilemma situations in which they must make decisions between two wrong choices. Instead of teaching positive morality, it stresses situation ethics. Values clarification also indoctrinates children until they lose their sense of shame over evil and accept degenerate behavior as normal. The pros and cons of drugs, sexual perversions, lying, stealing, euthanasia, and suicide are likely to be discussed while nonjudgmental teachers carefully avoid imposing their values. The immature child is to be autonomous and must determine his own value system. Barbara Morris declares:

Values Clarification

The values you have passed on to your child—the values he comes to school with, must be clarified. They are not acceptable “as is” because you did the unforgivable—you decided for your child, because it is your God-given responsibility and right—what values you want him to hold. Those imposed values which he did not choose freely must be clarified. He must decide, immature and unwise though he may be, whether or not he wishes to keep, modify or discard what you have taught him.

Values clarification involves exposing personal, private values of the child to the scrutiny of his peers in the classroom. Your child’s values are forced through the “meat grinder” of public exposure and group discussion. . . .

It’s up to him to decide, with the help of the pooled ignorance of his peers and the influence, intentional or not, of the teacher, whose own value system may or may not coincide with yours. As the emerging Humanist child, he has a right to achieve maximum individual autonomy. He has a right to voice in the formation of his own values, even before he is capable of making sound judgments.

The effect of values clarification is to drive a wedge between parent and child, child and authority and between child and religious beliefs. It is a powerful vehicle for chaos and alienation. Without exaggeration, it sets up a battle between you and the school for the very soul of your child. Considering that the school claims him as a captive audience for five or more hours a day, five days a week, who do you think is winning the battle?¹³

Government’s Moral Input

Dr. Harold M. Voth, Menninger Foundation psychiatrist, chief of staff of the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Topeka, Kansas, and clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Kansas Medical School, was asked to evaluate the government’s Title X sex education curriculum materials. His conclusion: Eliminate the materials as soon as possible. Originally the program was to provide birth control and venereal disease information, he noted; however, values clarification, psychodrama, role playing, homosexuality, and other deviate lifestyles, and issues such as “social atom” and “adult astrology chart” were included.

Many of the methods proposed in these manuals, Voth notes, “are used in other settings as psychotherapeutic techniques,” and it is extremely dangerous to put them “in the hands of teachers and others, many of whom are neither personally nor professionally qualified to provide guidance for developing young people.” He says these techniques provide “militant, aggressive individuals” opportunity to promote behavior that the American majority abhors. “The so-called sexual revolution,” he declares, “is just that—it is a revolution which is being led by a small number of militant, rebellious, personally and sexually disturbed individuals who are sufficiently clever to impose their views on the unsuspecting. I believe much of the content of the manuals I reviewed derives from this revolution.”

Values clarification was cited by Voth as an example. Though it stresses neutrality, a “careful reading of the resource materials reveals subtle and at times outspoken advice to the student to challenge all the existing values of the established system. One of the exercises reviewed for this hearing advocates the adolescent establishing complete autonomy—i.e., independence—from his family.” This taxpayer-funded program, he says, is to veer students “away from those solid values which have evolved over the centuries and have stood the test of time and experience.”

Voth states that “values clarification exercises introduce a great number of possible experiences to students who otherwise might never have thought of carrying out such behavior.” Then Voth says frankly that such programs “do not make sense in terms of Title X nor do they have any place in our schools. The latter remark is based on my understanding of personality growth and functioning as a result of 30 years of psychiatric and psychoanalytical experience.”¹⁴

Richard A. Bauer, Jr., associate professor at Cornell University, says, “A substantial body of scholarly criticism of values clarification has arisen that in many ways corroborates and reinforces at least some of the objections that have been raised by parents.” Bauer goes on, “It is for this reason that I shall summarize here the major criticisms that have appeared in this scholarly literature and on the basis of them argue that values clarification should not be used in the public schools or by such quasi-public agencies as Scouts, Planned Parenthood, and 4-H.”

Following are excerpts of his reasons why values clarification should not be used:

Values Clarification

But what the proponents of the method have quite overlooked is that at the deeper methodological level of what philosophers call “meta-ethics” (that is, critical analysis and theory about the nature of ethics or values as such), their claim to neutrality is entirely misleading, for at this more basic level, the authors simply *assume* that their own theory of values is correct. That is, they assume that all values are personal, subjective, and relative and cannot be known to be true or false, good or bad, right or wrong, except by and for the individual directly involved.

Putting all of this together, it is fair to conclude that the proponents of values clarification are *indoctrinating* students in their position of ethical subjectivism and relativism.

Many philosophers, theologians, and ethicists, for instance, hold, contrary to values clarification, that values can be known to be true or false, right or wrong, not just for the individual making the value claim but in a more general sense.

All of this points up a disturbing implication: underneath the apparent freedom and tolerance of values clarification lies a dimension, almost certainly unintended by the authors, of potential intolerance and tyranny. When all is said and done, freedom, tolerance, justice, and human dignity are not values that we can know to be right and true or for which we can present valid arguments or good reasons. They are simply choices some people make, and values clarification theory in principle indicates no way for us to be clear about whether they are better choices than such opposite values as tyranny and intolerance.

Biblical religion regards the love of God and the service of one’s fellow human beings as the highest goals of man. But values clarification’s emphasis on self-fulfillment and action on the basis of one’s own desires and preferences stands in direct conflict with this religious value. In reference to human behavior, it presents its own “religious” view of life, a view that centers in the individual and his or her own self-fulfillment. Philosophically, the author’s view is a form of hedonism.¹⁵

In his conclusion, Bauer says that values clarification “threatens the right to privacy of students and their families”; uses state power to coerce students to participate in psychotherapy; is biased “against authority,

traditional morality, and a sense of duty and self-sacrifice”; and is a “religious” position.

Promoting Positive Life Values

We cannot stand idly by and watch the systematic destruction of American youth to become totally demoralized to the point of accepting perverted sex and degenerate behavior that current nonjudgmental sex education and values clarification programs are propagating. What promised to be a gentle breeze in the subtle promotion of family living just a decade ago has now become a destructive tornado with outspoken homosexuals teaching children. We need to examine the source of the school’s moral deterioration and study America’s moral foundation to restructure our educational system in order to promote positive life values.