

Education Reform Reconsidered

Michael P. Federici

THE CURRENT DEBATE concerning education in America has resulted in numerous publications and studies which analyze the collapse of standards in our schools. Most of these recently published essays and books include both an analysis of why students are not learning about their cultural heritage and recommendations that suggest how to improve the quality of education. Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn, Jr.'s book *What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?* statistically documents what we have known for several years—our schools are failing to transmit cultural knowledge to the rising generation. Their book presents the results of a national assessment of 17-year-old students' knowledge of history and literature. Not surprisingly, the assessment is discouraging. The nearly 8,000 17-year-old students participating in the sample failed, as a group, to score above 60 percent on both the literature and history parts of the test.¹

The reason today's students do so poorly on such tests is no mystery. We have known that our schools are failing to transmit cultural knowledge for some time. More than forty years ago Walter Lippmann explained in an article published in *The Commonwealth* that "during the past forty or fifty years those responsible for education have progressively removed from the curriculum of studies the western culture which produced the modern democratic state. . . ."² The removal of Western culture from the curriculum has been the subject of several recent publications. In addition to the Ravitch-Finn study E.D. Hirsch, Jr.'s *Cultural Literacy*, and NEH Chairman Lynne V. Cheney's *American*

Memory have contributed to the growing evidence that American schools have abandoned the traditional humanities curriculum.

Hirsch's book *Cultural Literacy* argues that the dominant theories of education in America derive their understanding of the methods and purpose of education from the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and the American pragmatist John Dewey (1859-1952). Rousseau's belief in the natural goodness of man shapes his view that education is a natural process. "He thought," writes Hirsch, "that a child's intellectual and social skills would develop naturally without regard to the specific content of education."³ Consequently, the twentieth-century disciples of

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Dewey, Hirsch argues, is responsible for bringing Rousseau's educational theory to America. He precipitated the Rousseauistic prejudice against "information." "Believing that a few direct experiences would suffice to develop the skills that children require," Hirsch charges, "Dewey assumed that early education need not be tied to specific content."⁴ But, contrary to Dewey and Rousseau's belief, content is vitally important for communication and the transmission of cultural traditions. Without a shared knowledge of the origins and meaning of culture it is unlikely that

Michael P. Federici is a doctoral candidate in political theory at The Catholic University of America and former Executive Assistant at the National Humanities Institute.

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a nation can maintain its national identity and national character.

Like Hirsch's study, NEH Chairman Lynne V. Cheney's report on the humanities in the public schools argues that our schools have lost sight of their purpose. Titled *American Memory*, Cheney's report maintains:

Long relied upon to transmit knowledge of the past to upcoming generations, our schools today appear to be about a different task. Instead of preserving the past, they more often disregard it, sometimes in the name of "progress"—the idea that today has little to learn from yesterday. But usually the culprit is "process"—the belief that we can teach our children *how* to think without troubling them to learn anything worth thinking about, the belief that we can teach them *how* to understand the world in which they live without conveying to them the events and ideas that have brought it into existence.⁵

One obvious example of how our schools have ignored the past is the transformation of the study of history. Succumbing to arguments that history must be made "relevant," many schools have developed a curriculum in which history is taught as one of many subjects under the general heading "social studies." Instead of giving a primary place to the study of the past, under the guise of a social studies program history is lumped together with subjects such as environmentalism, anthropology, and consumerism. History has lost its place in the modern curriculum.

These studies and others like them make essentially the same arguments as Lippmann did in 1941. One difference between some of the recent studies and Lippmann's indictment of the modern educational system is that the former have added statistical data to the argument for a traditional humanities curriculum. These "scientific" studies serve to buttress what Lippmann and others argued in the past. The Ravitch-Finn assessment adds credence to Lippmann's point by revealing specifically what knowledge 17-year-old students are lacking. For example, their study concludes that only 57.3 percent of those surveyed could identify the correct half century in which World War I occurred; only 40.1 percent knew that *The Federalist* papers were written to help gain ratification of the U.S. Constitution; and only 48 percent were able to identify that "death and the fate of his assassins" is the topic of Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*.⁶ The Ravitch-Finn assessment establishes beyond a doubt that American youth are not learning the cultural knowledge that was once the core of American education.

The decline in cultural literacy has not gone unnoticed by education professionals. Prompted by declining SAT scores, many educators resolved to find out why students were lacking rudimentary skills in reading, math, and science. The education-reform movement gained momentum as it became apparent that declining standards in American education would adversely affect economic com-

petitiveness and hinder the development of scientific technology. However, many of the reforms emphasized the methods of learning and not the content of the curriculum. When schools did strengthen graduation requirements or bolster the curriculum, it was mostly in science and mathematics and less frequently in the humanities. In *What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?*, Ravitch and Finn note that the declining test scores “fueled demands for basic skills, critical thinking, reading skills, vocabulary-building, and a host of other nonliterary, content-free exercises.”⁷ Consequently, history and literature were “shunted aside.” The education-reform movement failed to remedy what Lippmann called “a system of education in which we insist that while everyone must be educated, yet there is nothing in particular that an educated man must know.”⁸ When it was obvious that what our schools needed was a renewal of traditional humanities courses, why did reformers turn instead to a content-neutral skills curriculum? The answer is given by Ravitch and Finn, who explain:

Unlike skill training, teaching the humanities requires people to make choices. Deciding what content to teach risks offending some group or individual, those who prefer a different version of history or different works of literature. How much easier, then, to teach social studies as skills rather than as history, offending practically no one; how much easier to teach the skills of language arts, to fill in blanks and circle words, rather than to bear the burden of selecting particular poems, plays, short stories, and novels and to have to figure out how to make them meaningful for adolescents.⁹

This observation by Ravitch and Finn calls attention to one of the chief obstacles to genuine education reform – the lack of consensus on what should be taught in our schools. The refusal to teach content-rich humanities courses and the substitution of a “content-neutral” curriculum indicate that the current education crisis is symptomatic of a larger cultural problem. As a nation we lack conviction for our traditional heritage. Teaching the works of authors who helped shape the history of Western civilization, like Homer and Shakespeare, is offensive to individuals who lose sight of what has traditionally been meant by humanities education. But, as Peter Stanlis writes, “If as Matthew Arnold has said, the humanities are ‘the best that has been said, thought, written, and otherwise expressed about the human experience,’ the knowledge and civility which the humanities inculcate is valuable to every individual. . . .”¹⁰ Yet general agreement on the value of a good humanities program has been hampered by ideological opposition. At a time when our schools need continuity, special interest groups and ideologues have insisted that the curriculum include a wide array of peripheral subjects such as women’s studies, black studies, African studies and a host of other non-traditional topics. As Ravitch and Finn put it,

. . . since the mid-1960s, the professional consensus that supported the

established literary curriculum has dissolved as a result of criticism from many quarters – from blacks, because black writers were ignored; from feminists, because women writers were neglected; from those who believed that students would prefer literature that was contemporary and relevant to their own lives; and from those who on principle opposed the very idea of a canon, regardless of its contents or its capaciousness.¹¹

The fragmentation of the curriculum by ideologues and special interest groups means that students graduate from American schools without a common body of knowledge or an understanding of the traditional foundations of their culture. Missing from the curriculum are those classical works that until recently formed a common frame of reference for discussion and debate. Without recourse to the experience articulated in classical texts students are prone to adopt one of the many modern ideologies such as Marxism, feminism, humanitarianism, socialism, or positivism. These intellectual and political movements view education as a means to carry out their social agenda and assault on traditional American institutions. On the contrary, a good humanities-centered curriculum aims to educate students in wisdom and virtue by teaching them the great works of literature and history; it communicates the experiences of the past with the purpose of providing examples of what Arnold called the best of human experience. This vast body of historical evidence represents the substance of civilization; it provides a common culture and most importantly it pulls individuals toward community.

Specific recommendations for reform are more likely to gain support if they are accompanied by an articulate explanation of the purpose of education. E.D. Hirsch points out in *Cultural Literacy* that the “function of national literacy is to foster effective nationwide communications.”¹² We need a common body of knowledge to function in everyday life: to carry out mundane tasks like getting from one place to the next or reading the daily newspaper. Without cultural knowledge we lose the ability to communicate effectively; consequently, the operation of our economic and political institutions becomes more cumbersome. Because the consequences of failing to transmit cultural information to the younger generation are so striking – political and economic chaos – suggestions to correct the problem of cultural ignorance are likely to gain attention. No one wants an inefficient economy or a society that cannot communicate ideas.

But economic efficiency and effective mass communication are not the only reasons cultural knowledge is important. Besides these utilitarian objectives, education has a moral purpose. It aims not only to make students more efficient but also to improve their character. Character education has been gaining attention in recent years, but the idea that learning has an ethical component dates back

to the time of Plato. The Greek word for education, *paideia*, articulates the idea that the whole person—intellect, will and imagination—should be transformed by learning. The idea that education has an ethical purpose has been passed from the Greeks to the Romans and down through the ages to twentieth-century Western civilization. But, as has been pointed out above, the rise of modern ideologies and special-interest groups has led to the removal of character-forming subjects from the curriculum and their replacement by content-neutral skills training and a host of peripheral subjects.

The renewal of character education takes place against the backdrop of ideological predominance in many schools. Consequently, without the aid of philosophical clarity it is unlikely that the concrete recommendations prescribed by Ravitch, Finn and others will be able to survive the inevitable attack by ideologues who espouse the need for a content-neutral or “pluralistic” curriculum. Efficacious education reform depends on the development of a philosophy of education which provides a framework for the renewal of the humanities. By identifying the ethical purpose of education and understanding how knowledge is learned, it becomes apparent why the humanities should be at the center of the curriculum. The task of incorporating specific reforms with a philosophy of education was the purpose of a conference organized by the National Humanities Institute under a grant from the U.S. Department of

Education in January 1987.

Entitled “Content and Character in Our Schools: The Renewal of American Education,” the conference was held at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Participants included secondary school educators from around the country ranging from superintendents and principals to curriculum directors and teachers. In preparation for the conference participants were asked to read *Literature and the American College* by Irving Babbitt and *Will, Imagination and Reason* by Claes G. Ryn. The latter served as a systematic analysis of Babbitt’s work, clarifying his views and providing a more technical presentation of his ideas. The three-day conference began with five lectures on various topics pertaining to the humanities and character education. Lectures were given by Russell Kirk, on “The Ethical Purpose of Literary Studies”; Solveig Eggerz, on “Permanence and the History Curriculum”; Paul Gottfried, on “Education and the American Political Tradition”; Claes G. Ryn, on “The Humanities and Moral Reality”; and Peter J. Stanlis, on “The Humanities in Secondary Education.” NHI has published these lectures in edited form in a book entitled *Educating for Virtue*.*

The lectures delivered at the conference addressed many of the same concerns as the Hirsch, Ravitch-Finn, and Cheney studies. They emphasized the importance of improving the specific content of the curriculum and criticized its fragmentation. They also recognized that, before genuine reform is possible, the ethical purpose of education must be clearly delineated. Without a sense of the character-forming purpose of education, reforming the curriculum becomes what David Walsh calls “superficial revisionism,” i.e., a change in the form of education but not the substance.¹³ Genuine reform must penetrate to the core of the current crisis—the failure to teach wisdom and virtue—by incorporating into the curriculum works of literature and history that inspire the moral imagination. There must be a unifying element to learning if education is not to become the collection of trivial information.

In his essay on “The Ethical Purpose Of Literary Studies,” Russell Kirk describes the purpose of studying great works of literature. “The end of great books,” Kirk explains, “is ethical: that is to teach what it means to be fully human.” Literature exists to form the “normative consciousness,” by which he means “to teach human beings their rightful place in the scheme of things.”¹⁴ Until recently it was generally accepted that literature existed to teach the enduring and permanent experience of life. But the rise of ideology and utilitarianism in our schools and universities

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NATIONAL HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

214 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E.

Suite 470

Washington, D.C. 20002

(202) 544-3158

H. Lee Cheek, Jr., *Editor*

Joseph Baldacchino, *Publisher*

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has resulted in the confusion and transformation of the ends of literary studies. Already in 1908 Irving Babbitt, the Harvard professor of comparative literature and staunch critic of sentimental humanitarianism, felt compelled to write a book, *Literature and the American College*, defending the humanities from the ideologically motivated education reformers of his day. Kirk explains that Babbitt “saw about him a civilization intellectually devoting itself to the study of subhuman relationships, which it mistook for the whole of life; that civilization was sinking into a meaningless aestheticism, an arid specialization, and a mean vocationalism.”¹⁵

Like literary studies, history has suffered from a confusion of purpose. Solveig Eggerz notes in her essay on “Permanence and the History Curriculum” that, “About twenty-five years ago high-school students still studied one year of world history and one year of American history.” Many high schools, however, have reduced the history requirement to one year of American history. The resulting gap in the curriculum has been filled by “contemporary

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issues and self-awareness exercises, taught under the label of social studies.” “Where a sense of purpose once reigned, confusion is now in the saddle.” The fragmented curriculum treats history as one of many subjects including environmentalism, sexism, consumerism, social psychology, legal education, anthropology, and economics. “In the name of relevance,” Eggerz points out, “students immerse themselves not in the causes of the fall of the Roman Empire, or the ideas that inspired the Renaissance, or in the build up to and consequences of the French Revolution, but in energy education, gun-control education, urban studies.” The point is not that gun control or urban studies have no place in the curriculum but that these subjects have been added to the curriculum at the expense of traditional history courses. The fragmented curriculum fails to reflect the fact that some subjects are more important than others. There is a hierarchy of subjects. As Eggerz states, “Comparison shopping and anti-pollution campaigns may have some relevance, but I suggest they are less relevant to a student’s education than knowing the causes of the American Revolution or that the United States fought in World War II.”

History has not only been replaced by extraneous topics

but what little history remains in the curriculum has been transformed. In order to make history current, the events and ideas of a particular period are often torn from their context. “The ‘concepts-and-inquiry’ approach to social studies,” Eggerz maintains, “is a prime example of how social science can distort reality to suit its purposes.” In accordance with this approach “the American Revolution might be taught under a study of the concept of *loyalty*, which leads to a de-emphasis on a primary cause of the Revolution—taxation without representation.” Eggerz adds that “the concept of revolution itself may be illuminated under this approach, with students leaping from the American Revolution, to the French, to the Russian, with a stopover to consider the revolution of the wheel.”¹⁶ Divorced from the concrete circumstances in which it was engendered, history becomes abstract and uninteresting. In other instances the pluralistic curriculum has forced teachers to ignore important historical events because they must cover masses of material in short periods of time. The fragmented curriculum does not lend itself to differentiating between subjects that are central to transmitting our cultural heritage and those that are peripheral.

In failing to draw distinctions between subjects of greater and lesser importance the fragmented curriculum leaves students confused about their political heritage. Without knowledge of the political and social institutions of their country, students are likely to be uninterested and apathetic about public concerns. As citizens of a constitutional democracy they are expected to participate in the governing of their country through their membership in intermediate groups and associations. As Paul Gottfried writes in his essay “Education and the American Political Tradition,” “America was intended to be a country of families, communities, and vigorous local authorities, with a government that protected social institutions without trying to manipulate or replace them.”¹⁷ But if educational institutions do not teach America’s future leaders the nature and origins of federalism or the elaborate system of checks and balances in the Constitution how can they be expected to preserve and protect these traditions?

Much has been said about what’s wrong with the curriculum in particular and education in general, but what can be done to remedy the current crisis in education? If we agree with Russell Kirk that the purpose of literary studies and education is ethical—to teach students the meaning of human existence—then it is important to know what subjects, methods, and works of literature and history serve this purpose. Peter Stanlis addresses these questions in his essay “The Humanities in Secondary Education.” He enumerates the many subjects included in a humanities curriculum: “history, literature, ancient and modern foreign languages, philosophy and religion, mathematics, and the physical

sciences, politics and economics, music and the fine arts, and physical education." He adds that "Since the humanities include the whole range of man's creative achievements within recorded history, everything cultural within the long historical experience that formed the character of Western civilization is a legitimate part of a good humanities program." Not only is it important to include these subjects in the curriculum, but they should be taught in a manner that will convey historical meaning. Stanlis recommends that "the historical study of Western civilization should begin with the ancient civilizations of the Near East, Greece and Rome, and continue through the Middle Ages, with the Judæo-Christian civilization of Europe, through the Renaissance and the development of modern science, the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment and nineteenth century, down to the present." He warns that the study of "strange cultures," i.e., non-Western, should not be included in the curriculum before students learn about their own cultural heritage. Especially at a time when much of the Western culture has been removed from the curriculum, it is counterproductive to teach students about Oriental or African cultures before they are comfortable with their own heritage.

High school students can be introduced to the humanities by a survey of Western civilization including "its history, literature, institutional structures, and value system. Such a course should be followed by one in European history. Ideally, these courses in history should be taught along with separate courses in literature: English history with English literature, and American history with American literature, so that the maximum cross-fertilization could occur. These essential courses should never be amalgamated into a so-called 'interdisciplinary' hybrid entitled 'Humanities,' as such attempts to integrate these subjects invariably result in a superficial program. Each of these subjects should be taught separately, in the traditional manner, with no gimmicks, fads, novelties, or concessions to ephemeral interests—only solid, substantial reading matter combined with demanding requirements in writing."

Stanlis lists four important preconditions to a successful humanities program: (1) The philosophy of education which prevails is based upon faith in the traditional moral, intellectual, social, and æsthetic normative principles of the liberal arts. (2) Teachers must be well-educated in the humanities, supported by the administration, and function in an atmosphere of collegiality, like a family feeling, with high personal and corporate morale. (3) The core curriculum of basic subjects would need to be backed by meaningful academic standards, centered in tests, grading, discipline, and other forms of accountability. (4) Our high schools would have to recognize that intellectual virtues cannot be measured by standardized quantitative test

scores; much less can character.

He also recognizes that the reestablishment of the humanities will encounter opposition. He lists five forces likely to oppose a traditional humanities curriculum:

- (1) the contradiction and folly which compels students by law to attend school until age sixteen, on the grounds that American democracy requires informed and literate citizens, and then creates a permissive system which allows uneducated students to elect programs that produce graduates who can neither read nor write and who have practically no knowledge of Western civilization or American democracy and few intellectual or cultural interests;
- (2) the system of teacher certification which is more concerned with methodology than with mastery of the subject to be taught, and which fails to insist upon a high level of general literacy and knowledge in favor of technical specialization;
- (3) an administrative structure which is more often an end in itself than an instrumental means of education, and which is infatuated with surveys, statistics, descriptive sociological studies of various kinds, and public relations, rather than with the quality of education received by students;
- (4) the utilitarian-materialist philosophy of life and education, which makes a narrow vocational training the central concern of high schools;
- (5) ideological theories that our schools are the instruments for solving America's social problems, by creating equality of condition among all students, in order to establish an egalitarian democratic society. These theories, backed by government bureaucratic authority, have reduced many inner city high schools to morally decadent centers of organized anti-intellectual chaos, the triumph of nihilism over meaningful corporate authority or education of almost any kind.¹⁸

As is apparent from the above analysis, the current discussion concerning education reform presents a significant challenge to the prevailing theories of education. If adopted, the recommendations enumerated in recent studies and essays would bring sweeping change to many intellectually dilapidated schools. Yet the prospects for effective reform remain doubtful unless the arguments for change address the primary need to formulate a philosophy of knowledge. While many philosophical issues have been raised by the authors cited above, a more systematic formulation of a philosophy of knowledge is the purpose of Claes G. Ryn's book *Will, Imagination and Reason* and his essay "The Humanities and Moral Reality." Ryn puts the current discussion about education reform in an epistemological and philosophical context. He notes that "tenable proposals" for education reform "presuppose a philosophy of knowledge and education."¹⁹ According to Ryn the problem of knowledge centers on the relationships among will, imagination and reason. These three human faculties symbolically represent the ability of man to understand knowledge. Moreover, their interaction confirms the classical belief that education is not merely an intellectual exercise but that it also has an ethical purpose.

It has been argued by Russell Kirk and Peter Stanlis that good literature stimulates the moral imagination by creatively articulating human experience in such a way that the reader better understands the meaning of life. This point is

clarified by Ryn's explanation that imagination "gives man a sense of the very essence of life. . ." It penetrates to the core of meaning by revealing the universal and permanent message of a great work of literature. "Whether it be in the dramas of Aeschylus or Sophocles, the myths of Plato or the poetry of Dante," Ryn explains, "the moral imagination lets us see deeply into that fundamental structure of life which is ourselves and all humanity. Absorbing a truly great work of art, men say to themselves, 'This is truly what life is like!'"²⁰ Individuals are therefore more likely to be convinced by an imaginative vision, reinforced over time, of what life has to offer, then a cold logical appeal to "facts." Good literature is literature which conveys life's meaning through an appeal to concrete experiential reality. It stirs in the reader the emotions and thoughts of characters who confront life's challenges with varying qualitative responses. "A drama by Sophocles," writes Ryn,

shows us individual persons and events, but by means of these imaginary characters we intuit the universal nature of human existence. In them we meet ourselves and all other human beings. We are Oedipus when we are ignorant and blind like him; we are Antigone in moments of courage to do what must be done; we are Ismene when courage fails. In sullen moods in which meaninglessness and injustice seem the truth about life, we are Iokaste; we are Creon when power and self-importance go to our head. The drama concretizes for us, presents in aesthetically intensified form, potentialities of all human existence. Intuiting the role and meaning of hubris and nemesis, we simultaneously intuit the proper attitude of man, *sophrosyne*. The total effect of the drama is to give us an elevated sense of order, proportion and reality.²¹

In this way the imagination allows us to participate in a broad spectrum of human experience. Consequently, when confronted with real life situations, the circumstances may be different, but our intuitive sense of what must be done is already shaped by the experiences of the imagination. Secretary Bennett recognizes the relationship between imagination and character education when he reminds us of the story "Horatius At The Bridge."²² The story is meant to inspire courage and present to the reader an almost super-human quality of character. The effect on young individuals is that they have an example of courage to emulate. In this respect education is more than piling up information; it has a moral quality beyond mere utility.

Understanding the imagination and how it contributes to knowledge helps to clarify questions concerning what types of literature are most useful for the transmission of wisdom and truth. Without this understanding the argument for a traditional humanities curriculum is less compelling. Kirk and Stanlis make specific references in their essays to works which inspire the moral imagination. These include Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, Dickens' *Great Expectations*, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Haw-

thorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Camus' *The Stranger*, Faulkner's "The Barn Burning," and a long list of works by Shakespeare, Homer, Virgil, Cicero, Frost, Twain and others.

The current education crisis, however, cannot be solved by merely introducing the "right" books into the classroom. The problem is complex because it involves the existential roots of knowledge. Great works of poetry, literature and art appeal to the moral imagination, but the imagination is itself shaped by a corresponding quality of will. The ability of an individual to perceive the substance of great literature depends on his willingness to accept truth. Important literature invites students to emulate the virtues and to recognize in their own behavior the selfish characteristics portrayed in the poem, novel, play, or story. But, for the student to be transformed by the experience of learning, he must be "open" to the truth it represents. Reading imaginative literature requires introspection that often reveals the shortcomings of our character. Openness suggests that the reader is searching for ways to improve his or her character. But frequently we lack the courage to face up to the fact that much needs to be done to correct our moral faults. The influence of ideology in our schools has closed many students to the truth of great literature. Take, for example, the ideology of values clarification. Students who have been

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told for years that all values are merely subjective prejudice are not likely to recognize distinctions between higher and lower human behavior. They may have trouble identifying the message of a story or novel because what in reality is an example of outstanding courage, love, or honor is to them merely subjective prejudice.

Hence the renewal of American education requires more than adding traditional subjects to the curriculum and teaching classical works of literature and history. Genuine reform must penetrate to the ethical roots of knowledge. Classical literature provides information about Western culture, but it also conveys the wisdom of our ancestors. If schools are to renew their commitment to transmit this wisdom, they must resist the temptation to surrender to ideological arguments for values clarification and a content-neutral curriculum.

If education reform is to make a lasting improvement in our schools, it must change the perception that content is

neutral and that learning serves only a utilitarian function. Education has an ethical purpose beyond the concerns of imparting skills to the younger generation. In addition to expanding students' factual knowledge, educators must devote attention to the character-forming part of education. Understandably, many educators have been reluctant to address the moral component of education, fearing alienation from an ideologically motivated majority. But the argument for character education has been persuasively made by William Bennett and others: a development that should help restore common sense to our schools. In addition, the argument for a traditional humanities curriculum has been bolstered by the formulation of a philosophy of knowledge and the clarification of the purpose of education. Consequently, it may now be possible to restore the humanities to their central place in the curriculum. Doing so would help prepare the rising generation for the challenges of life not only by expanding their factual knowledge but also by equipping them with an intuitive sense of life's moral potentiality. This higher aim of education is vital to the survival of our republic in part because our institutions presuppose a politically mature citizenry who respect the constitution and the laws it has engendered. Respect for the written law depends on obedience to the moral law. George Washington expressed the need for moral supports in America when he delivered his "Farewell Address" in 1796.

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. . . . Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice?²³

Notes

1. See Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn, Jr., *What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

2. Walter Lippmann, "Education Without Culture," *The Commonwealth*, XXXIII (January 17, 1941), 1.
3. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *Cultural Literacy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), xv.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Lynne V. Cheney, *A Report on the Humanities in the Nation's Public Schools* (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment For The Humanities, [1987]), 5.
6. Ravitch-Finn, *Op. Cit.*, chapter 2 *passim*.
7. *Ibid.*, 7.
8. Lippmann, *Op. Cit.*, 2.
9. Ravitch-Finn, *Op. Cit.*, 8.
10. Peter Stanlis, "The Humanities In Secondary Education," in *Educating for Virtue*, ed. Joseph Baldacchino (Washington, D.C.: National Humanities Institute, 1988), 63.
11. Ravitch-Finn, *Op. Cit.*, 10.
12. Hirsch, *Op. Cit.*, 2.
13. David Walsh, "Restoring the Lost Center of Education," *Thought*, LVIII (1983), 364.
14. Russell Kirk, "The Ethical Purpose of Literary Studies," in *Educating for Virtue*, 35.
15. Russell Kirk, Introduction to *Literature and the American College*, by Irving Babbitt (Washington, D.C.: National Humanities Institute, 1986), 7.
16. Solveig Eggerz, "Permanence and the History Curriculum," in *Educating for Virtue*, 95-100 *passim*.
17. Paul Gottfried, "Education and the American Political Tradition," in *Educating for Virtue*, 52.
18. Stanlis, *Op. Cit.*, 61-64 *passim*.
19. Claes G. Ryn, "The Humanities and Moral Reality," in *Educating for Virtue*, 13.
20. Claes G. Ryn, *Will, Imagination and Reason* (Chicago: Regnery Books, 1986), 152-53.
21. *Ibid.*, 153.
22. See William J. Bennett, "Horatius at the Bridge: American Schools and Character Education," *The Journal of Family and Culture* 2 (Spring 1986).
23. George Washington, "Farewell Address," September 17, 1796.

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