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## Why and How Philosophy Should Be Taught in Secondary Education

This will be in general a very practical philosophical paper. Although there can be much worthwhile theorizing about why philosophy should be included in secondary education, this approach will mainly focus on concrete proposals for philosophy curricula and teaching in secondary education. This focus, moreover, will emerge from what is happening in United States' (US) education: the curricular challenges in US high schools may not be extant in Poland or other nations.

In many ways US high schools are “under siege” by Progressive ideology and its derivations such as Political Correctness, Cancel Culture, Critical Race Theory and the WOKE mentality. Enlivened by social media like Meta, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat etc., Progressive ideology influences high school students and teachers to align with “social justice” norms regarding history, race, gender, sexuality, politics, economics, and climate change. The power of what is “trending” surpasses almost all else, and the vigorous passions aroused drive an absolutistic affirmation of the righteousness of the latest social justice meme. Progressives have

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firmly adopted a fundamental axiom of David Hume, namely, “Reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions and can never pretend to any other office but to serve and obey them.”<sup>1</sup>

It is indeed the power of passionate righteousness translated into high school curricular designs that is shaping so much of high school education. Serious questions are being pretty much ignored or intentionally suppressed. These are questions like: What important skills are being learned? How is a student’s cognitive development being nurtured? Are students receiving a foundation to become lifelong learners? Are they are being educated to become good citizens and contributors to the well-being of society? Advancing the Progressive social justice agenda is the outcome which supersedes all others, and it is the principal metric that determines whether the curricula are accomplishing what they are supposed to be accomplishing.

Except for some private schools, including philosophy in most high school curricula is unlikely in the USA given the current politics of education. Still, if it were to be included, I believe there are at least three philosophy areas that would be worthwhile for students to learn. They are: Elementary Logic, Basic Rhetoric, and Virtue Ethics. A learning and maturity appropriate sequence could be the Elementary Logic for Sophomore students, the Basic Rhetoric for Juniors, and Virtue Ethics for Seniors.

Elementary Logic effectively nurtures students’ cognitive development. It imparts skills, which if students become practiced with them, can become competencies; cognitive competencies that over time and with proper educational reinforcement can mature into cognitive habits. Such habits are lifelong-learning traits that can improve a person’s mind and even their character enabling them to become more aware and rationally discerning citizens. Basic Rhetoric integrates the skills of Logic and critical reasoning

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<sup>1</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, Part III, Section 3, paragraph 5. Available online at: [https://sites.pitt.edu/~mthomps/readings/hume.influencing.pdf](https://sites.pitt.edu/~mthomps/ readings/hume.influencing.pdf)

into the student's development of effective communication competencies. It familiarizes students with the ways in which oral and written communications should be best designed in order to maximize their effectiveness in transmitting their content and influencing others to accept their claims. Studying Basic Rhetoric also reinforces students' appreciation of the truth-seeking purposes of critical reasoning and how and why those purposes are grounded in the ethics of the communicator. Finally, Virtue Ethics amplifies students' understanding of and encourages the development of their sense of what is virtuous and morally right and how that relates to their character formation and happiness as maturing persons.

### **Elementary Logic**

In almost every year since 1976, I have taught some type of university-level Logic, e.g., formal and informal logic, Aristotelian categorical logic, Boolean logic and truth tables, propositional and predicate symbolic logic, and modal logic. I cannot be more rationally confident in claiming that learning some logic, even elementary logic, can make a substantial positive difference in the cognitive skills acquisition and development of young students, especially in our Progressive times. Let me relate this anecdotal illustration.

For many years I taught immediate inferences on the traditional Aristotelian square of opposition. In the 2000s I began to perceive a trend for students to make the same mistake for the same reason. I believe this trend is attributable to the Progressive social justice ideology into which they had been indoctrinated. These erring students would insist that with "controversial" topics, like morality, a TRUE I proposition (Some Subject is [the] Predicate) must immediately and automatically entail a TRUE O (Some S is not P) proposition, and vice versa. When questioned I got the sense from many of the students that their claim was

based on the Progressive social justice, morally egalitarian norm of “absolute tolerance.” Their addled thinking was: If someone asserts that “Some S is P” is TRUE and someone else claims the contrary that in their opinion it is actually that “Some S is not P” is TRUE, both opinions must be accepted as TRUE because moral tolerance requires that all opinions, even contrary ones, must be tolerated as equally TRUE. Now, with the square of opposition, if an I proposition is TRUE, then one cannot immediately infer that the contrary O proposition is also TRUE. By simply knowing that the I is TRUE, one can only infer that the O is UNDETERMINED because it is possible that the A proposition (All S is P) could be TRUE which would make the O FALSE. For instance, Some Squares are Rectangles is TRUE, but Some Squares are not Rectangles is FALSE because it is also TRUE that All Squares are Rectangles.

The students will accept that with a statement from math or geometry, for example, the square of opposition does work. But with a more “controversial” issue such as with the morality of abortion, immediate inferences with the square do not work for them. For instance, they believe that if “Some abortions kill a potential human person” is asserted as TRUE, it is an opinion that requires that “Some abortions do not kill a potential human being” must also be immediately affirmed as TRUE. The students do not at all consider that “All abortions kill a potential human person” is also TRUE. For them, such an A proposition about the morality of abortion is intolerant of any contrary opinion and as such it must be rejected, cancelled. No amount of rational logical argumentation, even evidence from what embryological science affirms as the potential growth of a human person, can demonstrate that a universal claim about the morality of abortion is TRUE. All such claims, in their minds are just merely intolerant FALSE opinions.

In my more irritable states, I have responded to their egalitarian tolerance nonsense by stating that “Yes, all opinions are

equal. Why? Because all opinions equally suck!” Then I will proceed to explain that in logic we want arguments, not opinions; in arguments, the premises provide evidence to support a conclusion and arguments can be assessed as good or bad as to whether their conclusions are successfully supported. Opinions cannot be assessed logically since they are nothing but extended conclusions with no premises supplying evidence. Again, I cannot help but believe that my students with this situation are victims of the Progressive egalitarian moral ideology of “absolute tolerance” which has driven their education.

Now, before proceeding any further it is important to emphasize that as a formal academic discipline, **logic is the study of reasoning**; it aims to identify and employ the criteria for achieving well-reasoned knowledge. Logic is a **tool** for use in studying reason and for using reason well. There are at least four significant practical benefits from studying logic.

1. The conscientious study of reasoning necessarily improves one’s reasoning. Indeed, what better way is there to improve one’s reasoning than through a study of reasoning itself.

2. Studying logic strengthens one’s mental discipline. It intensifies, augments, and expands one’s power of concentration.

3. The study of logic cultivates one’s ability to reason abstractly. Learning the principles of good reasoning develops skills in conceptual development and analysis, namely the ordering, defining, associating, forming and dissection of concepts.

4. Studying logic facilitates the penetration of language. It enables one to cut through verbiage in order that the meanings being expressed can be distinctly comprehended and carefully analyzed. Studying logic, therefore, cultivates improved mastery of language.

Students’ acquisition of these benefits, of these beneficial skills, requires much practice. This is why for the following recommended curricular items, extensive practice with targeted exer-

cises is necessary. The very process of completing and assessing the exercises is the means by which the logic skills are originally developed. Exercises for the following items can usually be found in most introductory logic texts.

The curriculum of Elementary Logic should include at least these areas: sufficient and necessary conditions, deduction vs. induction, and formal and informal fallacies. These areas will be explained, but it is vital to preface those explanations with an analysis of critical thinking vs. critical reasoning. A proper differentiation between the two terms should be the item with which an Elementary Logic curriculum should begin.

“Critical thinking” is a current ‘buzz term’ in education today. It unfortunately has been appropriated by Progressive education to mean a sort of skepticism regarding truth claims. Progressive education inculcates students with epistemological and moral relativism or subjectivism. Progressivism aims to deconstruct whatever truths that are inimical to the Progressive agenda that students believe they know or hold morally. Once students can “think critically” as the Progressives would have it, their fractured minds are naively vulnerable to becoming indoctrinated with the Progressive agenda. The ‘critical’ modifier in their ‘critical thinking,’ does not mean truth-seeking but a passionate truth-denying, and therefore, it is very important to supplant critical thinking with critical reasoning. Still, differentiating the two does include some complicated analysis, which, perhaps, can rely on the following explanation.

All thinking is a mental act, but not all mental acts are acts of reasoning. For example, daydreaming is a mental act, but not an act of reasoning. All reasoning is thinking, but not all thinking is reasoning. Now, think of the best birthday present you have ever received; picture it in your mind. This mental act involves imagination, and reasoning is beyond imagination. Imagination deals with images, representations. The faculty of reasoning itself

is an imageless type of thinking. When we think only with images, this is not reasoning. Reasoning can analyze or manipulate images, but the reasoning itself is not image dependent. It can go beyond images to concepts, generalized or universal ideas or concepts. For instance, we can with reason understand conceptually and with imagination image a three-sided polygon, and a four-sided polygon. But although we cannot image a million-sided polygon, with reason we can understand conceptually what such a polygon would be. All images are particular, specific, not universal and thereby not conceptual. Reason can operate on, act on, and apply itself to particulars, but the faculty of reasoning and its very structure itself are not particularized but universal. Only reasoning can operate on the purely conceptual level. The structure of reasoning is the same for all rational creatures, and only rational creatures can conceptualize and know conceptually. This is why the rules (laws or principles) of reasoning apply universally, regardless of time or place.

The Progressive-captured term “critical thinking” is fraught with the Progressive agenda. Thinking can involve the imagination, but if “critical” should mean truth-seeking and not truth-denying, how can the imagination, just imaging alone be truth-seeking? Imagination alone confines us to particular representations; it does not deal with general or universal principles, axioms or concepts. The media can implant images in us and influence our truth-seeking. Maybe this is what many so-called social media influencers are really all about. Progressives would have us believe, to paraphrase an old advertising campaign, “Reason is nothing; image is everything.” But reasoning is actually our best faculty for genuine truth-seeking inquiry and for positing truth-claims. The more we improve our reasoning in our critical reasoning, the better we are able to get to truth.

Learning sufficient and necessary conditions develops a potent logic tool that is most useful in conceptual analysis and penetrating language.

1.A is a sufficient condition for B. If A occurs, then B must occur. The occurrence of A guarantees the occurrence of B. E.g., Vigorous exercise is a sufficient condition for increased heart rate. But, B can occur without A. E.g., Intense fear increases heart rate.

2.C is a necessary condition for D. D cannot occur without C. E.g., Oxygen is a necessary condition for human life. But, the occurrence of C does not mean that D necessarily occurs. E.g., Detecting oxygen on the planet Venus does not mean necessarily that there is human life on Venus.

A good example of the ways in which becoming skillful with these conditions develops abilities in conceptual analysis and the penetration of language is from the US Constitution. The actual meaning of the Second Amendment of the Constitution has been the source of much controversy. The Amendment reads: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." Given the style and syntax of late 18c writing, it can be difficult to determine whether the Amendment is saying that the right to bear arms applies only to those who belong to a well regulated militia, like a non-governmental citizen-formed military or police force. If this is the interpretation, then non-militia civilians would have no right to bear arms. But, if the Amendment is analyzed with the conditions, then it becomes clear that citizens' right to bear arms is actually a necessary condition for forming a well regulated militia to protect the security of a free state. Without the right to bear arms for all citizens, there can be no formation of a militia to protect the free state. The right to bear arms, then, is logically a necessary condition for even the possibility of forming a militia, if one is ever needed. The debate about the Amendment's meaning is settled. Applying practical skills



with sufficient and necessary conditions does indeed enable penetration of language and conceptual analysis.

The real difference between induction and deduction is the next item that Elementary Logic should treat. This is an important item because it is related to a proper understanding of scientific claims by experts. Progressives extoll the veracity of science; their popular slogan, “Science is Real,” is meant to imply that when expert scientists speak, we must listen, and only fools and ignorant upstarts would challenge or contradict the experts. Progressivism favors the science which advances, and the authoritarian experts who advance the Progressive agenda in such areas as a pandemic, climate change, the dangers of fossil fuels, gender and sexual biology, and even economics. But, being educated in the real distinction between induction and deduction can help students become more rationally prudent as to accepting scientific claims as indubitably certain, especially when there is the distinct possibility that the science is politicized.

Current social and behavioral sciences like psychology, economics, and education studies maintain that induction is reasoning from the particular to the general and deduction is reasoning from the general to the particular. In other words, inductive conclusions are generalizations drawn from premises which express information about a particular “something,” while deductive conclusions are particular claims drawn from general premises. For logic, however, this distinction is simply wrong. The actual difference is **probability vs. necessity**: In deductive arguments the conclusion is claimed to follow **necessarily** from the premises, and in inductive arguments, the conclusion is claimed to follow **probably** from the premises. Consider these examples:

1. **Three is a prime number. Five is a prime number. Seven is a prime number. Therefore, all odd numbers between 2 and 8 are prime numbers.** The flow of reasoning, the inferential process, in this argument moves from particular evidence to

a general conclusion. But, this is **not** an inductive argument because the conclusion claims necessity and it is deductive.

2. **Gabriel is a wolf. Gabriel has a tail. Therefore, Gabriel's tail is the tail of a wolf.** In this argument the inferential process moves from particular premises to a particular conclusion, and because necessity is asserted, it is a deductive argument.

3. **All emeralds previously found have been green. Therefore, the next emerald to be found will be green.** The inferential process here is from general to particular, but it is an inductive argument because it asserts only probability.

Inductive probability is precisely what most scientific conclusions can achieve. Of course, there are greater and lesser degrees of probability, but whenever science is used in politics, be very rationally cautious since it is likely a lesser degree of probability that pertains to the scientific truth of the conclusion. In sum, properly understanding the real difference between induction and deduction can educate students to be much more wary of conclusions issued by politicized science, and never attribute necessity to them unless they are very scrupulously assessed. This logical awareness should be what genuine critical reasoning is all about.

Covering the formal and informal fallacies can actually make-up the majority of a course in Elementary Logic. It would depend on the number of fallacies to be included and on the types and number of exercises to be completed. But learning these fallacies and requiring, among other exercises, a project where students must find at least one example for each of the fallacies is a worthwhile, practical skill-building exercise. Students' examples could come from any social media, advertising, other non-logic textbooks, magazines, newspapers etc. Before discussing the informal fallacies, however, it is wise to treat the formal fallacies because the important ones are fewer, and they are subject to less "interpretation" than the informal fallacies.

A formal fallacy is a defect in the structure of an argument. All formal fallacies occur with deductive arguments, whereas an informal fallacy is a defect in some aspect of the content of an argument, which is why detecting informal fallacies can be more interpretive at times. Also, informal fallacies are almost all inductive arguments, so again, evaluating an argument's content can be more interpretive.

### Two Important Formal Fallacies

1. Two common formal fallacies (invalid forms):

#### **Affirming the consequent**

$A \longrightarrow B$

$B \therefore A$

#### **Denying the antecedent**

$A \longrightarrow B$

$\sim A \therefore \sim B$

2. Valid forms:

#### **Modus Ponens (MP)**

$A \longrightarrow B$

$A \therefore B$

#### **Modus Tollens (MT)**

$A \longrightarrow B$

$\sim B \therefore \sim A$

The **Modus Ponens** argument is a basic valid, non-fallacious deductive form of argumentation. It is: If my car ignition-starts, then my battery is good. My car does ignition-start. Therefore, my battery is good. **Affirming the Consequent** is a fallacious form: If my car ignition-starts, then my battery is good. My battery is good. Therefore, my car will ignition-start. But it could be a bad starter, or some other reason why the car does not ignition-start. This defective deductive structure of will never yield a valid argument no matter what content is plugged in for the variables.

The **Modus Tollens** argument's deductive structure is always valid: If my car ignition-starts, then my battery is good. My battery is not good. Therefore, my car will not ignition-start. **The Denying the Antecedent** fallacious form will never yield a valid argument: If my car ignition-starts, then my battery is good. My car does not ignition-start. Therefore, my battery is not good. Again, the battery could be good, but the car does not start for some other reason like a bad starter.

The formal fallacy of **Affirming the Consequent** is basic, but critical reasoning can realize that in natural, social or behavioral scientific investigation, especially with science in the service of a Progressive agenda, this fallacy is sometimes ignored. Consider this version of the fundamental scientific method of investigation. First it is proposed that: If hypothesis A is TRUE, then our experiments/research will yield result B. Our experiments/research do yield result B. Therefore, A is TRUE.

At the very heart of this employment of the scientific method, is a defective, fallacious argument structure. Sometimes scientists will admit the formal invalidity of their method, but at the same time insist that their conclusion can be affirmed as TRUE because they perform many experiments and research projects. But what critical reasoning must understand in order to

not be duped by such science is that because a formal fallacy is committed in arriving at the conclusion, the conclusion can never be affirmed as TRUE with deductive necessity but only greater or lesser degrees of probability. Sciences will usually favor necessity with their claims, particularly if they are claims that advance a Progressive agenda. Critical reasoning can recognize that necessity is a gross overreach beyond what science can actually provide, and final or necessary TRUTHS are often mere propaganda, or what the Germans have called, *Machtsprüche*, “power statements”.

Consider this illustration of a Progressive “scientific” argument that is indeed taught in schools:

If there was a Big Bang, then the universe is expanding.  
The universe is in fact expanding.  
Therefore, there was a Big Bang.

If there was a Big Bang, then the universe is not God-created.  
There was a Big Bang.  
Therefore, the universe is not God-created.

The first argument is fallacious. It commits the **Affirming the Consequent Fallacy**. As fallacious, it does not prove with necessity the TRUTH of its conclusion. But, to advance the Progressive agenda, which cannot abide a Divine Creator, the conclusion of the first argument is accepted as necessary, and then used as a TRUE, factual premise in the second argument which is a valid **Modus Ponens** structure. Still, because both of the second argument’s premises are not necessarily TRUE, this argument may be valid, but it is not sound. In deductive logic, a sound argument is one which is valid **and** has TRUE premises. A sound deductive argument is flawless; it proves that its conclusion is necessarily TRUE. The second argument is valid and unsound, and it does not prove its claim with any necessity. With such illog-

ical argumentation, however, Progressive anti-Divine creationism is institutionalized in science education. Finally, it is interesting to note that this appears to be the reasoning of such former popular scientists as Stephen Hawking and Carl Sagan. More *Macht-sprüche*, but students who are educated properly in critical reasoning can expose the misology of a sophistic Progressive indoctrination technique.

### Informal Fallacies

There are very many informal fallacies. Introductory logic texts are typically loaded with types of informal fallacies, their definitions and use in exercises evaluating passages to determine what, if any, informal fallacy is committed. As indicated above, informal fallacies are defects in an argument's content; they are problems with what an argument is saying. Accordingly, whether an informal fallacy is committed is sometimes subject to interpretation, interpreting what the argument is actually saying. But this matter of interpretation is still positive for the students' development of critical reasoning since they can be encouraged to argue rationally for the interpretation, they reason is most accurate.

Some of the most common informal fallacies include: the Appeals to Pity and to the People, Ad Hominem, Accident, Straw Man, False Dichotomy, Composition and Division. Having students complete the sort of assignment mentioned earlier, that is finding examples of the informal fallacies in various literature, advertisements, social media, newspapers and television, especially news broadcasts is a very concrete learning experience and definitely builds critical reasoning skills.

### **Basic Rhetoric**

Aristotle defines rhetoric (*Rhetoric* Bk. I) as the "faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion." He further explains that the argumentative modes of persuasion

are the essence of the art of rhetoric. It is important here to emphasize that rhetoric is based on argumentation which involves persuasion with reasoning. Rhetoric is not mere emotional venting. Emojis punctuating an opinionated text, Instagram, Tweet or Meta message is not rhetorical persuasion. Well-formed arguments are the staples of effective rhetorical persuasion. Persuasion based only on emotional appeals may seem to be effective, but ultimately it is fleeting and capricious: it is as volatile as the emotions themselves and cannot persuade with any enduring efficacy.

In addition, effective rhetoric has an inherent ethical trait because to persuade other persons to accept something as true is a moral act. The rhetor (one who communicates with rhetoric) has a responsibility to aim to persuade with a genuine moral purpose. This, in turn, requires that the rhetor be a person of integrity, a person with authentic moral probity, a credible virtuous person. If others realize that the rhetor is engaging in demagoguery, brainwashing and merely communicating propaganda, empty words, and selfish intentions in a power grab to influence or control their minds with fake “truths,” then the others will not be effectively persuaded. The rhetor’s lack of a truly moral purpose will expose him or her as a fraud. In sum, to be fully effective, persuasive rhetoric must come from a rhetor who is recognized and accepted as an ethical person communicating with a genuine moral purpose.

As students develop competencies with Rhetoric, they will become more and more critical of so-called “influencers” on social media. These influencers, some are actually referred to as “thought leaders,” are recognized as such by the numbers of people who follow them on the media platforms. The greater the numbers, the more “truth” impact they have. In fact, when their impact grows substantially, the influencers’ emotion-laden “teachings” become more and more accepted as unquestionable dogma. This dogma is typically rooted in the Progressive agenda, so those

who are influenced are taught whom to oppose, support or cancel and what to oppose, support or cancel in order to become genuinely WOKE.

Besides learning the basics of effective persuasion and that ethics is a fundamental aspect of the very fabric of persuasive communication, through studying Basic Rhetoric students can become practiced in composing persuasive written material and oral presentations. Though the theories of rhetoric are interesting, for secondary education cultivating student competencies with written and oral communication should be the principal focus of the course. And this can be done by rigorous exercises in applying the rhetorical disposition of argumentative persuasion within a six-part organization of the written or oral material. That six-part organization should be developed as follows.

(1) The introduction: addresses the reader/listener, the “audience,” and identifies the topic or issue.

(2) The statement or exposition of the topic/issue which expresses the importance of the topic/issue.

(3) An outline of the points or steps in the argumentation which will follow. This is a preview or overview of the most important points of the upcoming argumentation.

(4) The argumentation (proof) of the topic/issue making relevant use of *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos*, the three basic types of rhetorical argumentation.

Logos argumentation includes logical appeals which construct persuasive arguments for the rhetor’s position by using as objective evidence, for example, salient facts, pertinent data/statistics, testimonies of individuals involved in the topic/issue, financial information, historical precedents, and comparisons and/or contrasts with other situations that agree with the rhetor’s position.

Pathos argumentation involves emotional appeals which stir, rouse or excite a reader’s or listener’s feelings or passions.



These appeals are not merely emotional but integrate emotional sensitivity into an argument to enhance its persuasiveness. The emotion the rhetor aims to arouse is, in this context, evidence (albeit of a more subjective type) to accept the rhetor's position. An example would be with a charitable organization aiming to garner donations to raise money to combat world hunger in a video ad citing alarming statistics about children's deaths due to malnutrition while showing pictures of some particularly wretched and starving children narrated by a highly emotional pitch person. The pics and the narration create the pathos which heightens the persuasive impact of the statistical data.

Ethos argumentation involves ethical appeals which reveal the integrity of rhetor and persuasively oblige the reader/listener to also manifest integrity by agreeing with the morality that the rhetor expresses. This is much more than mere "virtue-signaling" which, for instance, politicians employ to win approval and votes. For effective ethos argumentation the rhetor must truly have a genuine moral stake in the topic/issue, which is communicated so that a reader/listener does not dismiss the rhetor's position as "mere" rhetoric, empty words from a moral façade. For example, in many organizations emotional appeals are made in the name of strengthening the morale of a workforce, but those appeals are most effective if the rhetor, him- or herself, is directly affected by the workforce's morale, and in some way or other uses logos argumentation to prove that the morale is weak, such as citing statistics regarding absenteeism, confrontations among co-workers and supervisors, production and performance declines, etc.

(5) The refutation of opposing arguments: It is rhetorically persuasive to refute arguments that contradict the position taken by the rhetor. These should be the main arguments which have been or potentially could be raised to oppose the rhetor's arguments.

(6) The conclusion: This should be a very concise final statement of the point(s) of the rhetor's position. No new arguments should ever be introduced in the conclusion.

Students should have plenty of practice using well developed assignment guides to compose oral presentations and written documents (such as letters, memos, proposals, and petitions/requests). What follows is a well-developed Assignment Guide for composing a written proposal for a policy change at the students' high school, which could also be used as the structure for an oral presentation of the policy change proposal. With such assignments, it must be emphasized that what is being composed is **HYPOTHETICAL**. It would not be wise for a teacher or course to have students compose proposals what they believe are for real use so that the teacher or course becomes a source of disturbance at the school.

### **Sample assignment guide: proposal for a policy change**

Following the six-part disposition of rhetorical organization, compose a proposal addressed to an appropriate school "superior" (e.g., the superintendent, principal, dean of students etc.) that aims to persuade the "superior" to accept a change to an existing policy.

Your overall aim is to "sell" your policy change proposal.

Try to follow the six parts for rhetorical organization (disposition). Also, try as much as possible to use in relevant ways the rhetorical techniques of **LOGOS**, **ETHOS** and **PATHOS** to develop your persuasive argumentation.

Also, remember that this Proposal is merely hypothetical. As such, it can employ, for instance, realistic but hypothetical "objective" evidence for argumentation such as data from a survey that was not really conducted, or financial information that again is realistic but not real. Keep in mind that the purpose of this Assignment is as an exercise in rhetorical persuasion. It is not a project involving actual research and making an actual proposal.

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Finally, be very careful with your writing mechanics. Your writing must be refined composition.

Format:

As much as possible, follow this strategy for your proposal:

1. The opening paragraph should address the “superior” and briefly identify the policy change being proposed. (Maybe just three sentences.)

2. The next paragraph should explain why the proposed policy change is important. This paragraph should also communicate a preview of the argumentation which will be offered. This paragraph covers items #2 and #3 in the rhetorical disposition’s organization. (Perhaps four sentences.)

3. The next couple of paragraphs should offer your best arguments demonstrating specifically what you propose is needed and will best serve the interests of the students and the school in general. Use LOGOS by citing facts and data in your reasoning. Keep in mind that arguing with PATHOS could include any reference to improving student and overall school morale, and ETHOS could be how and why your proposal serves the mission and common good of the students, the whole school, and those who are served by the school like the students’ families and the school’s general community.

4. The next paragraph(s) should explicitly refute what you believe would be your “superior’s” two or three arguments to reject your proposal. Briefly articulate each “con-argument” and then explain why it is fallacious.

5. The concluding paragraph should be merely two or three sentences which state concisely the point of your proposal and reemphasize your proposal’s importance. No new information or arguments should be introduced in the conclusion.

NOTE: This entire proposal could be just 7-8 paragraphs. Keep it within the 2-page Assignment parameter.

The course in Basic Rhetoric should have around five or six assignments such as this. The topics/issues for the assignments can change according to the teacher's choice but some other topics could be: "What Really Constitutes Bullying?" (Addressed to the student body at large); Social Media: A Menace or an Asset? (Again, addressed to the student body at large); Studying History: Is It Worth It? (Addressed to the teachers' curriculum committee). This type of assignment is extremely valuable not only for developing critical reasoning competencies and learning how to present argumentation for a topic/issue, but also developing students' abilities with writing composition and oral delivery. Finally, completing the course will enable students to be much more cognizant of the poorly argued dogmatism of the Progressive ideology with which social culture inundates them daily.

### **Virtue Ethics**

This course is best taught to Senior level students, typically the oldest students in secondary education. This recommendation is based on my own experience as well as the teachings of Aristotle. In Book I, Chapters 1-3 of the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle explains that inquiry into what is happiness should be focused on understanding what is the "best good." And this focus is a branch of the study of politics because politics is the overarching study which determines what people must and must not do, and judges what people must learn to do. Aristotle, moreover, cautions that the young and immature are not good students of the political art, which incorporates what we know as ethics, because of their limited life experiences and because they tend to follow their passions. They are prone to acting rather than acquiring knowledge so their judgment of what is good is often misguided. He counsels that older students with more maturity, more reasonability, are better suited to this study.

It is no guarantee that high school Seniors will have the maturity Aristotle recommends, but it would be certainly more productive than teaching young Freshmen, Sophomore, and even Junior students about the “best goods” of life and meaning of happiness. I have found that in general the younger students are unable to understand seriously real happiness and the good of ethics even when it stares them in the face. This is why Progressive emotion-based political indoctrination has been and is so effective in secondary education. Students’ critical reasoning is displaced by emotional social justice exhortations, and they are swept up in the passionate fervor to act for the sake of the Progressive causes.

Now, to the most salient question at hand: Why should Virtue Ethics be taught rather than other approaches to ethics? There are many reasons why it is Virtue Ethics which should be taught and perhaps the most fundamental is that Virtue Ethics is essentially about the formation of character and the pursuit of genuine happiness. Other ethics approaches are not so explicitly oriented.

John Garvey, the retiring President of Catholic University of America and the author of the book *The Virtues*<sup>2</sup>, makes this point distinctly in a recent interview.<sup>3</sup> He states that, “The standard way of teaching moral philosophy... since I was a boy was to focus on rules and problems: Was it right or wrong to bomb Hiroshima? Should people be allowed to have sex before they are married or is there something wrong with that? Is abortion right or wrong?”

Garvey continues by recommending an older tradition which begins the study of ethics by asking: What makes human beings happy? Of course, the happiness that is sought is not mere pleasure or being in a good mood, but to be really happy in the most meaningful way that human beings can be happy. And pur-

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<sup>2</sup> John H. Garvey, *The Virtues* (Washington DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> The following paragraphs paraphrase some sections of Peter Jesserer Smith’s interview with John Garvey in the *National Catholic Register*, July 31, 2022, p. 5. With some points, Garvey’s views are amplified to integrate with the aims of this essay.

suings that happiness requires us to inquire about what human beings are really like, what is our human nature. With Aristotle, Garvey proposes that living a virtuous life is itself the happiness we are seeking. The virtues are traits of character that people form by acting virtuously and over time acting virtuously can become habitual, become good habits rather than bad habits which are vices. Garvey emphasizes that he loves to teach about virtues as a way of appealing to students about what type of character they ought to try to form.

Garvey further recognizes the grip the Progressives have on culture and education with their social justice ethic. He warns that students today are taught to behave this way and not that way by a WOKE culture which preaches diversity, inclusion, and equity, and they should approach gender expression and identity in a particular way. They should care for the environment in this way and prioritize it over manufacturing, for instance. WOKE morality is imposed as THE good way to be, but it isn't because it is a mere ideology. Virtue Ethics, however, offers an alternative that transmits an Ancient wisdom which is rooted in our human nature and the promise that if we develop our characters virtuously, happiness can be ours.

Garvey makes a persuasive case for the merits of teaching Virtue Ethics but there are even more points that can be made in favor of Virtue Ethics. First, Virtue Ethics has a long and successful record as a way of ethical development. It has been taught and practiced for literally millennia. In Western history it dates back to Ancient Greece and continues with Christian culture. It is also prevalent in various forms in Ancient and contemporary Asian cultures with Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Virtue Ethics has, therefore, stood the test of time and the test of diverse cultural applications.

Second, Virtue Ethics explicitly advances a way to happiness. It teaches that the happy or good life is the life in which per-

sons actualize their human potentials in their own specific, individual ways. And, when we do fulfill our human potentials through virtuous actions, we live the good life and experience the genuine happiness of human flourishing. Although all of us as human beings possess the same basic human potentials, such as creativity, freedom, intellect, and interdependence with and upon others, we actualize our potentials in different ways and to different degrees according to our individual backgrounds, abilities, interests, and situations. Nevertheless, for all of us we experience the happiness of personal flourishing only when we fulfill our human potentials in virtuous ways.

Third, fulfilling our human potentials in virtuous ways engenders happiness of flourishing and cultivates our character formation. Ethics is ultimately about one's integrity, and integrity means one's wholeness of character. A person of integrity has a well-formed virtuous character; it is not a character fractured by vices, held together by ephemeral passions, or broken by moral skepticism. The wholeness of our characters is solidified as we develop the habits of fulfilling our human potentials in virtuous ways. It is not WOKE conduct, not WOKE ideological compliance but the content of our character which is the primary source of our moral integrity.

Fourth, Virtue Ethics is not an esoteric, obscurely abstract ethic but is very down-to-earth and understandable. Once it is presented its meaning can be grasped by common sense, and that common sense can easily comprehend and affirm its truth. This probably a major reason why Virtue Ethics is so widespread culturally and has been around for so long. Because it is so down-to-earth, moreover, it can be effectively applied. Understanding what the virtues are and how they can be followed in a given situation are usable standards for making right moral judgements and doing the right things.

The reasons for teaching Virtue Ethics in secondary education are very strong and the ways it can be taught are variegated. Students should be made very familiar with what the virtues are. The classical virtues, prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, provide a foundation for learning about more contemporary versions, such as humility, compassion, charity, and hope. It would be worthwhile for students to write a reflection from personal experience about a situation when they or someone else acted with the virtue. They could also discuss virtuous actions from figures in history, as well as historical vicious actions as a contrast. Mostly, however, encourage the students to explore in the examples they use why and the person who is acting virtuously has developed their character to some degree and has experienced happiness.

### **Final Remarks**

Progressive education has afflicted students with a passionate uncertainty, except in regard to what the Progressive agenda proclaims. Students feel uncertain about what constitutes Truth in their lives and the world, beyond the trending memes and ideology Progressive teachers and curricula transmit. They are not encouraged to love the truth and pursue wisdom, but are influenced, conditioned, and indoctrinated to affirm what the powerful hive-mind of WOKE social media approves. Introducing philosophy curricula into secondary education might not be the final answer; it might not be able to deflect fully the Progressive onslaught. Still, the capacity of authentic critical reasoning in pursuit of Truth is indeed potent. The Truth is not power, but Truth is powerful. One of its greatest results is to create a multiplier effect such that critical reasoning and virtuous character spreads from one to another almost on its own. A power of Truth is that it can propagate itself. Courses in Elementary Logic, Basic Rhetoric, and



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Virtue Ethics in secondary education could be a way in which that power is animated.

### **Why and How Philosophy Should Be Taught in Secondary Education**

#### Summary

This article is about why philosophy should be included in secondary education, this approach will mainly focus on concrete proposals for philosophy curricula and teaching in secondary education. A look is presented from the perspective of education in the United States, which does not necessarily have to fit in other countries. The author presents his arguments in favor of teaching philosophy in schools on the basis of the foundations of philosophy, the study of which gives a completely different understanding and perspective to the topics discussed in schools.

**Keywords:** education, rhetoric, logic, virtues, ethics

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