

Professor: Relativism Destroying Our Esteem for Education

The education system gets a lot of flack these days: students are falling behind [internationally](#); students [don't know history](#); students don't know how to engage in [rational discourse](#), and on it goes.

But while these issues are very real and concerning, they are really only symptoms of a greater problem.

In his 1956 essay, [Education for What?](#), former University of Chicago professor Richard Weaver puts his finger on what this greater problem is, namely, a loss of absolutes:

“If educators really want to know why they have fallen so low in public esteem, they need only wake up to the fact that they have abandoned concern with the very things of which educators are traditionally the custodians and expositors. There are teachings concerning the nature of reality, the validity of knowledge, the meaning of goodness, and the origin and final end of man.”

Weaver goes on to say:

“That modern ‘progressive’ education is an apostasy, not only from all faith but from all learning, is apparent to anyone who takes the trouble to examine its premises. Man is continuous with nature, and nature is eternally changing – toward what, nobody can say, because the universe is regarded as self-existing. And since man is only an atom in this vast flux, free will is not only intellectually untenable but also practically undesirable. The upshot is a picture in which ‘there are no eternal moral values or moral standards ... so no

conduct intrinsically good or bad, no moral responsibility; there are no good men or bad men; no heroes, no honest men, no scoundrels; there are only "cases" (neurotic or badly conditioned).'"

Do you agree with Weaver? Unless we move away from exalting relativism at every turn and return to the acknowledgement and teaching of absolutes, will we continue to be stuck in the rut of a poor and ever declining education system?

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