

# How to Tell the Difference Between Real Education and Propaganda

The other day I ran across a passage from [\*That Hideous Strength\*](#) which seems oddly applicable to our time. A dystopian novel written by C. S. Lewis at the close of World War II, *That Hideous Strength* finds one of its main characters, Mark Studdock, working for N.I.C.E., an organization which pulls the strings in a controlling, totalitarian society.

Studdock is assigned to write propaganda articles for N.I.C.E., an assignment which he objects to when he receives it from his boss, Miss Hardcastle. Studdock argues that it won't work because newspapers "are read by educated people" too smart to be taken in by propaganda. The story continues:

'That shows you're still in the nursery, lovey,' said Miss Hardcastle. 'Haven't you yet realized that it's the other way round?'

'How do you mean?'

'Why you fool, it's the educated reader who *can* be gulled. All our difficulty comes with the others. When did you meet a workman who believes the papers? He takes it for granted that they're all propaganda and skips the leading articles. He buys his paper for the football results and the little paragraphs about girls falling out of windows and corpses found in Mayfair flats. He is our problem. We have to recondition him. But the educated public, the people who read the high-brow weeklies, don't need reconditioning. They're all right already. They'll believe anything.'

Reading this, I couldn't help but ponder how much of the American public thinks like Studdock. We are convinced that education is the panacea for all ills, and that if the masses could simply achieve one more grade level or degree, we wouldn't have so many problems to sort through.

But what if that education is, as Miss Hardcastle implies in the passage above, the very thing blinding the eyes of the general public? Or perhaps we should say, what we *call* education.

You see, there is a difference between what we call education and what actually comprises true education. That which we call education is most often found in institutional schooling—the great halls of learning known as public (and sometimes private) elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as many of the sacred institutions of higher education. We often send our children to these institutions, intending the best for them, hoping they will come out on the other side as wise, truth-discerning adults. Unfortunately, they all too often come out propagandized instead.

Richard Weaver described this situation well in his 1955 essay “Propaganda.” [He noted](#):

It is of primary importance to distinguish propaganda from education. These two are confused in the minds of many people because both are concerned with communication. Education imparts information and also seeks to inculcate attitudes. Propaganda frequently contains information, and it is always interested in affecting attitudes. A good part of modern propaganda, furthermore, tries to parade as education. The critical difference appears only when one considers the object of each.

How then, does one avoid this pseudo-educational propaganda? Weaver again supplies an answer:

The true educator is endeavoring to shape his audience for the audience’s own good according to the fullest enlightenment available. In doing so he erects and strives to follow a standard of objective truth. The propagandist, on the contrary, is trying to shape his audience according to the propagandist’s interest, whether that be economic, political,

social, or personal.

There's been much talk in the last year about the success of education at home. Many of the children learning at home through virtual schooling, while under a parent's supervision, are still receiving their education from the system. This system contains some good educators who genuinely want the best for their students, but it also contains many bad ones who have climbed onto the bandwagon of the education system and are completely ready to advance its "woke" agenda.

By contrast, consider true homeschools, where parents have taken all responsibility for their child's education upon themselves. Some may say this is the true source of propagandist education. But consider that thought in light of Weaver's words about the true educator trying to "shape his audience for the audience's own good." Which educator is most likely to seek a child's good? More often than not, such educators will be a child's parents.

We increasingly live in a world where Big Tech, politicians, and so-called experts tell us what we should do and why when it comes to COVID, the vaccine, elections, and many other topics. Like those at N.I.C.E., they are likely not worried about convincing the "educated" among us. Rather, they are likely more worried about the truly educated, those they frame as "workmen," those who may not have elite jobs or have gone to elite schools, but who have been trained by those who truly care about them and want them to know and follow truth.

It is this latter camp that we should strive to get our children into. It doesn't matter if they have prestigious jobs or run with the elite. What matters is whether their eyes are able to discern propaganda parading itself as education.

Teach your children to know and love truth. Your children will thank you, and so will your countrymen.

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