Teaching for Humanity

Dr Mark Stephens
About the lecturer

Dr Mark Stephens is lecturer in Biblical and Integrative Studies and Chaplain at Excelsia College. He has a PhD in Ancient History from Macquarie University, where he studied cosmic eschatology in the book of Revelation. Between 2004 and 2007, Mark was the Young Adults Director at St Paul’s Castle Hill, overseeing a ministry to 200 college students. In his spare time he enjoys Campos coffee, the humour of Monty Python, the music of Patty Griffin, and the sheer absurdity of being a Parramatta Eels supporter.

Books:


Book chapters:

Articles on ‘Heaven’ and ‘Lion will lay down with the Lamb’ in Mary A. Beavis and Michael Gilmour (eds). Dictionary of the Bible and Western Culture (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2012).

Peer-reviewed journal articles:


About the Royale Ormsby Martin Lecture

This trust was set up in June 1976 by Richard Arthur Ormsby Martin in memory of his wife Royale. The purpose of the Trust is the promotion, maintenance and advancement of Christian Education by means of the Royale Ormsby Martin Lecture.

The subject matter of this Lecture 'shall be Christian Education including its relevance to the Independent school system'. Each lecture is held within five years of the previous one.

Previous Lectures in the series include:

- William E.C. Anderson, *From Gospel into Education: Exploring a Translation*
- Bryan Cowling, *Turning the Teaching Paradigm on its Head: The Implications of an Outcomes Driven Approach to Christian Education.*
- Francis Bridger, *Opening Windows into Heaven.*
- Glenn N. Davies, *Our Children - Mission or Nurture.*
- Peter Coney, *The Challenge and Opportunities of Generation Y for Christian Education.*
It should be added I only just made it, having received my invitation letter about a week before classes began. A bright Asian-Australian student had decided to decline their acceptance, and I was the next reserve off the bench. I was always reminded of this fact because Ruse initially organised its classes alphabetically. Even though my surname was Stephens, the person I had replaced was, I believe, surnamed Cheah, and for the first three years of my schooling, my friendship groups were dominated by surnames at the top end of the alphabet. I was the S, dragging down their A-E.

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people. When I read Freud, I wanted to take a bath. But the basic point was true no matter what – how can you point people to wholeness, if you don’t discuss the target you are aiming at?  

My final experience comes as a tertiary educator. Since 2009 I have worked at Excelsia College (formerly Wesley Institute), and part of my job has been to teach performing artists how to think and live under the reign of Christ. I make a big effort to see the final year projects of our students, and these are always moments of revelation. For me, the projects are always personal. It’s Hannah’s project, Olivia’s recital, it’s Lachlan’s, Jesse’s or Kylie’s final piece. And when I push beyond all the talent and technique, the question I am left asking is – what kind of person have we unleashed on the world? A question I keep on muttering to myself is Have we been successful if we make a great artist who is a horrible human being?

And let’s be frank – a lot of great artists are horrible human beings. It is the same with scientists, economists, and dare I say it, even a few teachers are horrible human beings. One of more disturbing films I watched last year was the film Whiplash, which is all about the dehumanising power of artistic genius. In the film, the wonderful J. K. Simmons plays a music teacher who smashes his star pupil, Miles Teller, pushing him to the point of insanity and delusion. But here is the spoiler – in the end the kid produces a triumphant performance. And the very uncomfortable question the film proposes is whether this is simply the necessary price of greatness, or is it in fact the case that in losing your humanity – you lose everything.

But the same question can be asked of the business school, or any school for that matter. Any time a major financial scandal breaks, whether it be Enron, or more recently Volkswagen, without fail a series of newspaper articles will be published which circle around this question – why do business schools keep making awful people?  

2 Eventually I dropped psychology and took philosophy, because it seemed to me that I could ask those questions from the start. It wasn’t, of course, that Freud, and Rogers, and Skinner never addressed those questions. They did. The problem was that the philosophical anthropology of each theorist was not the first topic to be addressed. I am guessing that such material happened later in the course, but I can’t say I hung around long enough to find out.


4 Two hours in ethics can’t dislodge thirty hours of personal
formation in the rest of your degree. In 2004 Ian Mitroff, Professor Emeritus at the USC Marshall School of Business published an open Letter to the Deans of Business Schools in America. In that letter Mitroff argued that business schools were being ruined because they had a distorted view of human nature. In essence what he was saying was - if you get your anthropology wrong - it ruins your business school, and what you end up doing is making bad people worse.

Walker Percy once said that the problem of education is the problem of ‘the one who gets all A’s but flunks life.’ So tonight is personal. But it is personal on two levels. It’s personal because what I say is informed by my experiences. But it’s also personal because that is the point – in the final analysis, education cannot be reduced to growing skills or expanding knowledge – education is ultimately about growing people.

Schools are brilliant at imparting knowledge and developing competencies. But why build those skills?

The American thinker Steve Garber asks the question – education for what purpose? Competence for what end?

Or as T.S. Eliot put it in his essay ‘The Aims of Education’:

‘But we can have no clear or useful idea of what education is, unless we have some notion of what this training is for ... If we define education, we are led to ask “What is Man?”; and if we define the purpose of education, we are committed to the question “What is Man for?” Every definition of the purpose of education, therefore, implies some concealed, or rather implicit, philosophy or theology. In choosing one definition rather than another, we are attracted to the one because it fits better with our answer to the question “What is Man for?”

In simple terms, education should be driven by a commitment to humanism. Of course, as soon as I utter that term, a tremor likely emerges in your hearts and

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6. The same question has been raised in sociology, in which Christian Smith argues that that discipline works with a reductive view of human personhood. See Christian Smith, What is a Person?: Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).  
7. Walker Percy as cited in Garber, Fabric of Faithfulness, 89.  
8. I was first introduced to the simple line, ‘We Grow People’ by Tony George, the then principal of St Stephen’s School in Western Australia.  
10. T.S. Eliot, as cited in Garber, Fabric of Faithfulness, 95.
minds, because for many the term humanism is irredeemably secular. But all I mean by humanism is for us to ask this question: What does it mean to be truly and fully human?\(^{11}\) G.K. Chesterton once said: 'Idolatry is committed not merely by setting up false gods, but also by setting up false devils.'\(^{12}\) If we demonise the genuine concerns of humanism, we lose sight of something precious about Christ and the salvation he brings.

For the glorious news is that Jesus came, not simply to make us forgiven, but to restore our true humanity.\(^{13}\) This is why there has been a long and venerable tradition called Christian humanism.\(^{14}\) It is essential to remember that our Saviour needs to be both fully divine and fully human. But many Christians really don’t know how to conceptualise the humanity of Jesus. So we sing songs like *Away in a Manger* where ‘The cattle are lowing/the baby awakes/but little Lord Jesus/no crying he makes.’ Friends, that isn’t a baby, that’s a crash test dummy. It’s a serious issue, actually. It’s called Docetism. The song seems to think Jesus really wasn’t a baby, and it is part of a broader trend in which Christians make Jesus out to be so divine, he’s inhuman. That is nothing short of a tragedy because, far from being an otherworldly alien, Jesus is everything a human being was ever meant to be.\(^{15}\) To adopt the words of Andrew Cameron, now we find our best humanity in Christ.\(^{16}\) Therefore, Christian holiness isn’t meant to make you weird, it’s meant to make you fully alive, just like Jesus.\(^{17}\)

For any educational institution, the question of the truly human life is inevitable. If you are teaching people, you have to make assumptions about

\(^{11}\) Norman Klassen and Jens Zimmerman define it as a fundamental regard for the dignity of human beings and nature (*The Passionate Intellect: Incarnational Humanism and the Future of University Education* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, p.42]). As J. I. Packer and Thomas Howard put it: ‘...we honour the humanists’ serious purpose of finding the path to human fulfilment and clearing away all that blocks it.’ (*Christianity: The True Humanism* [Berkhamsted: Word, 1985], 17).

\(^{12}\) G.K. Chesterton, as cited in Richard Mouw, *Talking with Mormons: An Invitation to Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 18. See also the comments of Francis Schaeffer: ‘I am convinced that one of the great weaknesses in evangelical preaching in the last years is that we have lost sight of the biblical fact that man is wonderful.’ (*Death in the City* [Wayzata: Crossway, 2002 (1969)], 95).


\(^{15}\) See Hebrews 2:5-18 for a range of these themes.


\(^{17}\) ‘The Christian story is ordinarily said to be about salvation from sin. But that means nothing different from what we are saying, for it is sin that dehumanizes, and it is only in the matrix of holiness that authentic humanness takes shape.’ Packer and Howard, *Christianity: The True Humanism*, 50. See also p.39, 54
humanity, and you have to articulate a vision for humanity. It is somewhat akin to when people say to me ‘I’m not a theologian Mark,’ and then proceed to tell me all their ideas about God. Well if you have ideas about God, then you are doing theology.  

Theology is inevitable, the only question is, is your theology any good? For a school – anthropology is inevitable. If you are teaching people, your school will end up endorsing a particular way of being human. And that vision will crop up not simply in the content of your curriculum, it will be there in your awards ceremonies, your cadet camps, the way you create space for sport and art, the shape of your classrooms, the design of your timetable, your assumptions about people will affect everything.

What does a flourishing human being really look like? It seems to me that an education which never reflects upon that question will quite likely make people sub-human. Your students might well be skilful and competent, but they could also be horrible. And have we done our job if that keeps happening? For the real genius of education is about teaching students how to make a life, not merely a living.

Before I outline some specific proposals for how Christians might think about human beings, it’s useful to first sample three counter-proposals, many of which have proved attractive to Christians. What we want to do here is to gain a small sense of how different views on humanity change the way you educate people. But we want to do more than that – because if part of discipleship is about becoming truly human in Christ, we also need to see how these viewpoints change our ideas about the Christian life. In what follows I am not trying to be exhaustive about all the possible options, I’m simply trying to show you why this thinking matters.

Let’s begin with rationalism.

Rationalism is a view with a long history. Very broadly defined, rationalism says human beings are supremely defined by their rational thinking. Our

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21 Klassen and Zimmerman examine at least five different forms of humanism articulated in intellectual history (Medieval, Literary, Secular Scientific, Enlightenment, Postmodern) before articulating their own vision of ‘incarnational humanism.’ (The Passionate Intellect, 47-146). For a shorter survey of some historical options, see Packer and Howard, Christianity: The True Humanism, 41-49.
minds are what makes us truly human. Take Rene Descartes for example. In the 17th century he sits down in his armchair, trying to discern if there is any pathway to rational certainty, any piece of knowledge that you cannot doubt. So he doubts everything, the evidence of his senses, his confidence in the truths of maths, but eventually he comes to this realisation – that in order to have a doubt, you had to be having a thought, you had to be thinking. And therefore, even in the process of doubting, you could be certain that you were thinking, and therefore you existed. Hence, the famous dictum – I think, therefore I am. Cogito ergo sum. Now for our purposes all that matters here is that Descartes’ little project ended up defining humans as thinking things (res cogitans). To be human, is to be a mind.

Now if you think the essence of humanity is our minds that profoundly influences the way you educate people. Your mottos and vision statements will say things like – Crafting Great Minds. You’ll tend to favour thinking over doing, you’ll preference the mind over the body. And your definition of an ideal student will be someone who can answer the question, rather than someone who can embody a truth. I know this is true because I’m that guy. I’m good at tests, I’m good at essays. But the exam won’t tell you whether I am good at being a person. For that you need to ask my wife.

In a rationalist anthropology, maths and science are superior to dance. I used to sneer at dance because it is wasn’t cognitive enough and it was inherently sensual. Worst of all dance was often ambiguous or allusive – how could that ever be good? Well that all depends on what you think human beings are, and what we have been made for.

Perhaps more significantly, if you believe rationalism, it transforms the way you see the Christian life. Think of the way we tend to coordinate Christian maturity with the possession of knowledge. I cannot tell you the amount of times that people have assumed that I am doing well as a Christian simply because I’m the smartest guy in the room. I’m forever trying to convince people that just because I can spell perichoresis, it doesn’t mean I have a good prayer life. Too often, discipleship boils down to orthodoxy, and our feelings, our dispositions, and most importantly our actions are just a bonus. In his book Incarnate, Michael Frost laments the fact that:

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‘We are creating new generations of believers who know more than they choose, who understand things they never act upon, who discern ideas they never use.’

Rationalism is wrong. It reduces humanity to think of us only in terms of mind.

In contrast to rationalism, one could embrace an alternative vision – say, that of Romanticism. Here I am broadly referencing the ideas and attitudes of the Romantic movement that flowered in the late 18th and into the 19th century. Romanticism was in many ways a reaction against the hard logic and conformity of rationalism, where there is only one right answer. For the Romantic, what it means to be human is your feelings and your passion, it is about your heart over your mind, the wildness of nature over against the logic of the city.

Now if you think the essence of being human is to find your passions, to get wild in your uniqueness, then you are going to frame education as being about creative expression, or creating spaces for experimentation. A Romantic might well valorise art over science, and what will matter most for students is that we respect their feelings rather than their conformity to any code.

And Romanticism like Rationalism, can influence our vision of the Christian life. For a romantic the greatest sin is to deny yourself your desires. Let your feelings be your guide. How many worship meetings have I been to where the worship leader or the preacher has told me – God wants to bypass your head and go straight to your heart! This is what the Californian pastor John Ortberg calls Scarecrow worship; it would be better if it only had a brain. Romantics are people who want to feel God, perhaps even more than they want to worship him.

But Romanticism perhaps leads us to consider one final option, which, for want of a better word, I will term here individualism. This doesn’t so much name a movement, as much as a core sentiment of our times – the sentiment of the

25 Alan G. Padgett and Steve Wilkens, Christianity and Western Thought, vol. 2, Faith and Reason in the Nineteenth Century (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 23-26; Mark Sayers, The Road Trip that Changed the World: The Unlikely Theory that will Change how you view Culture, the Church, and most importantly, Yourself (Chicago: Moody, 2012), 121.
26 Sayers, The Road Trip, 125
28 Sayers, The Road Trip, 33.
29 Wolterstorff, Educating for Life, 260-261.
sovereign self. This says that being truly human is about freely pursuing my interests in service of my own definition of fulfilment. The most important thing is I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.\textsuperscript{30} To be truly human reduces to this – I get to choose – I get to choose my location, my identity, my beliefs, my sexuality, my ethics, my everything. Everything is negotiable, the only fixed point is my freedom. This is, of course, not a new idea. When there were student riots in the 1960s in Paris, one of the slogans of the Paris student movement was this – it is forbidden to forbid.\textsuperscript{31}

If that is the way you see human beings, then you must educate people for freedom – that kind of freedom. You will want teach them how to think – but never, ever, what to think. Indeed the great enemy would always be that your classroom might bring oppression. And individualism works its ways into our constructions of the Christian faith. Today’s young adults easily identify as spiritual but not religious.\textsuperscript{32} The beliefs of the church are not so much a creed, they are a menu.\textsuperscript{33} I well remember sitting down once with an Anglican minister and telling him my frustration because my theology was so nuanced, so unique, that I really didn’t fit within any denominational paradigm. The deal is, Reverend, I’m in a class by myself. His reply was: Mark, I’m not sure that’s something to be proud of.

Rationalism, Romanticism, Individualism. Three false paths which are easy to take. But whichever path you take, education is always shaped by a conscious, or sub-conscious, vision of human flourishing. But what might it look like to draw our humanism from the Scriptures? John Calvin once said that true wisdom teaches us two fundamental things – both the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves – and that those two things are intimately connected.\textsuperscript{34} So whilst it is true that the Bible is a book that is all about God, it is at the same time also a book that is about us. This book gets me.\textsuperscript{35} So what can we say?

\textsuperscript{30} To quote Walt Whitman.
\textsuperscript{31} Michael P. Jensen, \textit{You: An Introduction} (Kingsford: Matthias Media, 2008), 11.
\textsuperscript{32} Mark Sayers, \textit{The Road Trip That Changed the World: The Unlikely Theory that will Change how you view Culture, the Church, and Most Importantly, Yourself} (Chicago: Moody, 2012), 29.
\textsuperscript{33} The sociologist Wade Clark Roof states: ‘the real story of American religious life in this half century is the rise of a new sovereign self that defines and sets limits on the meaning of the divine.’ (Wade Clark Roof, as cited in Sayers, \textit{The Road Trip}, 33).
\textsuperscript{34} John Calvin, \textit{Institutes of the Christian Religion}, I.1.i.
\textsuperscript{35} As Graham Cole says; ‘One thing a frame of reference must do if it is to have any plausibility is to give some account of being human in which we can recognise ourselves.’ (Do Christians Have a Worldview?, available at http://henrycenter.tiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/CCI-Graham-Cole-Do-Christians-Have-a-Worldview-Final.pdf).
The first and most fundamental thing about human beings is that we are made in the image of God.

26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness ... (Genesis 1:26)

Which means you will never find yourself by looking within. To a generation obsessed with identity we say you'll only ever find yourself when you are found by the One whose image you bear. Indeed, the New Testament makes it even more specific, because now we see that Christ himself is the image of the invisible God, and therefore, you'll only ever find yourself when you are found by Christ. Hence the beautiful way that C. S. Lewis ends his book Mere Christianity.

Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.36

The consequence of all this is that any kind of humanism which screens out God is no humanism at all.37

Yet whilst image-bearing is the obvious headline, can we say anything specific about what it means to be human? For the final part of my talk tonight, I want to offer up just a few specific points, none of which are meant to be exhaustive, nor are they meant to hang together as a neat system. I simply pick out these specific points because they seemed to be Scriptural emphases that might pose some challenges to our present thinking.

**Point 1: Human Beings are Embodied Creatures**

Against Descartes, against Plato, against a thousand Christian worship songs, human beings are embodied creatures, not minds or souls trapped in a physical prison. It might seem strange to you that I would go straight for the body. Indeed, perhaps you were expecting me to talk more about the soul38 Do

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36 C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2001 [1952]), 227. As Tim Keller argues, bringing the gospel to people involves showing them how the plotline of their story can only find a happy ending in Christ. Timothy Keller, Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centred Ministry in Your City (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 90.
37 Packer and Howard, Christianity: The True Humanism, 12.
38 Of course, in many ways it is just as important to focus on the fact that human beings are more than just bodies. See Paul D. Spears & Steven R. Loomis, Education for Human Flourishing (Downers Grove: InterVarsity 2009), 43-63. However, Spears and Loomis are at pains to point out that ‘fully functioning humans are neither just body nor just soul, but are complexly interwoven beings made of both body and soul’ (49).
not get me wrong, I think souls are great things, in fact I think everybody should have one. But being human doesn’t reduce down to being a soul.

The first human, ‘Adam’, is made from the adamah, the earth.39 We are meant for embodiment from the beginning. And all throughout Scripture God keeps affirming bodies, with the pinnacle affirmation coming through the incarnation of Jesus.40 And just in case we didn’t get it, our future hope is never pictured as immortality of the soul, but bodily resurrection of the dead.41 Resurrection is crucial, because through it embodiment has been made permanent. God has had every chance to rid us of our bodies, and at every point he has acted to redeem them.

Therefore being truly human isn’t simply soulcraft or soulwork, rather it means teaching people to live a God-glorifying life in their bodies.42 Somewhat ironically, spiritual formation doesn’t just focus on a person’s spirit, because what we are forming are embodied lives.

So what does thinking embodiment do for education? Well, for starters, education can never be limited to making great minds. That would be entirely reductive. At this point the physical education teachers, and the dance teachers, are whispering to themselves that, finally – a nerd gets it!

But the truth of embodiment takes us much deeper. For one thing, it should challenge the way we engage our present context, in particular the proliferation of technology, including educational technology. Much of our technology, particularly those associated with the Internet, tend to enable a disembodied existence.43 In so many ways this can be helpful, such as eliminating the tyranny of distance. But it also means that technology can be used as a way of avoiding having to relate to anybody. Instead you simply relate through the disembodied world of the Web – and disengage from the

39 Genesis 2:7. Cf. John Schneider’s comment: ‘Human beings are “earth beings” — of, by and for the earth. We are fashioned from the earth to live upon the earth, to dominate, cultivate and care for the earth — and to use and enjoy the fruits of the earth.’ (Godly Materialism: Rethinking Money and Possessions [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994], 55.)
41 Romans 8:18-23; Philippians 3:20; 1 Corinthians 15:35-58. For more see Ross Clifford and Phillip Johnson, The Cross is Not Enough: Living as Witnesses to the Resurrection (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012); Tom Wright, Surprised by Hope (London: SPCK, 2007), 159-176.
42 Romans 6:19; 12:1; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Philippians 1:20.
43 Frost, Incarnate, 23-5.
messiness of real life. As Rollo May once said: ‘Technology is the knack for so arranging the world that we do not experience it’.\footnote{Rollo May as cited in Craig Detwiler, \textit{iGods: How Technology Shapes our Social and Spiritual Lives} (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2013), 2.}

So people might be in the same physical space as you, but they’re unavailable because they’re ‘in the cloud.’ What is worse, disembodiment can also too easily undermine authentic engagement. Technology enables us to know about so many worthy causes, but it also enables ‘slacktivism,’ where you can virtue-signal your righteousness by pressing ‘Like’ on a global campaign, all whilst avoiding the poor who live in your own city.\footnote{I believe I first heard the language of ‘slacktivism’ from Krish Kandiah, in his talk ‘Digital Discipleship’, available for free at \url{http://www.regentaudio.com/RGDL4100H}. I borrow the language of ‘virtue signalling’ from James Bartholomew, ‘I invented “virtue signalling”. Now it’s taking over the world,’ \url{http://www.spectator.co.uk/2015/10/i-invented-virtue-signalling-now-its-taking-over-the-world/}. I’m preaching to myself here – as a 22 year old I walked the slums of Kiber in Kenya, but I’ve never been to a Sydney soup kitchen. Is that true humanity? If the embodied example of Jesus teaches us anything it is that real life happens by getting local, where you meet and eat with real people, touching people and getting them to touch you.\footnote{For a pointed, and merciless, critique of this whole phenomenon, one could consult the Instagram account of White Saviour Barbie - \url{https://www.instagram.com/barbiesavior/}.} It is always worthwhile to ask how many of our students who build houses for Africans and Filipinos have ever volunteered in a homeless shelter in Sydney?\footnote{For various perspectives on the debate over short-term mission trips, one could consult Brian M. Howell, ‘Mission to Nowhere: Putting Short-Term Missions into Context,’ \textit{International Bulletin of Missionary Research} 33, no. 4 (2009): 206-11; LiErin Probasco, ‘Giving Time, Not Money: Long Term Impacts of Short Term Mission Trips,’ \textit{Missiology} 41, no.2 (2013): 202-24; Kraig Beyerlein, Gary Adler and Jenny Trinitapoli, ‘The Effect of Religious Short-Term Mission Trips on Youth Civic Engagement,’ \textit{Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion} 50, no.4 (2011): 780-95.} I ask you, how do your educational structures enable people to flourish as embodied image-bearers?

\textbf{Point 2: Human Beings are Culture-Makers}

I could have said human beings are ‘workers,’ but everybody despises that word because it sounds like ... work. And ‘work’ is a curse word in our culture, therefore, following Andy Crouch, I prefer to reword the idea that God creates us to be culture-makers. Culture is ‘what we make of the world,’ and it happens whenever we see the world in front of us and do not leave it as we found it.\footnote{Frost, \textit{Incarnate}, 12.} Whether you are gardening, crafting a school timetable, painting, or writing curriculum – all of those things are culture-making.
Here is a message that I never heard as a young person in Christ – Genesis 1 and 2 picture creation as a project which God invites me to contribute to. Indeed ‘creation requires cultivation.’\textsuperscript{50} The repeated exhortations to have dominion, to subdue the earth, to work and keep the garden, picture a world where God leaves room for human creativity.\textsuperscript{51} We are meant to be gardeners of God’s good world, we aren’t meant to leave it as we found it, but rather to discover its richness, unfold its goodness, and add to its beauty. We are designed to be cultivators and creators, in everything we do. Our achievements matter, because the culture we make lays down a track that someone else will run on.\textsuperscript{52}

So at an educational level, do you see your job as preparing them for a salary or preparing them as culture-makers? Because culture-makers are what human beings are. Indeed, culture-making is inevitable, the only question is whether the culture they create will bring blessing or curse. And if you demote the importance of culture-making as outside the sphere of godly concern, then your students will simply find another script to perform their work within. That’s why most Christians know where God is on a Sunday, but they’re not quite sure where he disappears to on Monday. Whether they become engineers or educators, lawyers or farmers, nurses or nuclear scientists, your students will not leave the world as they found it. But what will they make? How will they build? How can we encourage and direct their desires to make culture which enables human beings to flourish? How do we stop them building Babel yet encourage them to seek the welfare of the city?

**Point 3: Culture Making includes both Beauty and Function**

If human beings are culture-makers, then we are made to be productive. But what does it mean to make a real contribution? Have you ever noticed how we coordinate being grown-up with certain industries and certain vocations? Child, you need to grow up and get a real job. Yet according to Scripture, productive work is both beautiful and functional.

This starts with God. Our Creator is presented to us as both an engineer and an artist. On the one hand, God makes a functional world, a world whose design is

\textsuperscript{50} Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering your Creative Calling* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009), 106.
\textsuperscript{51} Crouch, *Culture Making*, 109-110. The premier example in Genesis 2 is the naming of the animals by Adam in 2:19-20, which is clearly something that God could have done, and yet he condescends to allow it to be that ‘whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name’ (2:19). Another example would be the brief allusion to gold in the land of Havilah (2:11-12). As Glenn Davies has pointed out to me in personal conversation, such gold would need to be discovered and extracted, which is part of unfolding all the goodness that is latent within God’s beautiful world. See also James K. A. Smith, ‘What Are We Made For? Creation and the Cultural Mandate,’ available at http://www.colossianforum.org/2011/11/08/biblical-meditation/.
\textsuperscript{52} Schaeffer, *Death in the City*, 95.
revealed in how well it works. But God is also an aesthete. The cosmos is beautiful. God makes a world that is pleasing to the eye and good to taste.\textsuperscript{53} If this world is merely meant to be functional, then God is wasteful. He could have designed sexuality to be purely functional, he could have given us eyes that can only see grayscale, he could have designed food to be tasteless. But instead God gave us mangoes.\textsuperscript{54} What kind of a God makes mangoes? A very good God.

In likeness to our Creator, human beings reflect the glory of God through both beauty and function. Both the accountant and the actor are imaging God, both the painter and the podiatrist are doing something productive. But my emphasis here is on beauty because Protestants hardly ever talk about it, and if they do try and defend it, they start stammering. But as the great Christian art critic Hans Rookmaaker once said: ‘Art needs no justification.’ It is God’s gift to us that we make something beautiful and he intends for us to actualise it.\textsuperscript{55}

It is intriguing to consider how this point is ironically affirmed in tech-addicted contemporary culture. If we take the example Steve Jobs, he mastered the world of technology by being an artist. He was never really a techie, rather, Jobs made computers beautiful.\textsuperscript{56}

What does your school articulate to your students as being a worthwhile contribution to society? What do you celebrate? What do treasure in your rituals and your marketing? What would it mean to produce people who can both solve our most intractable problems and add to the beauty of the world?

**Point 4: Human Beings were made for Virtue**

The whole idea of Imaging God has at its heart that we reflect his character. In both testaments, whenever God calls people to himself, he forms them to be like him ethically.

Virtue describes the settled patterns and habits of our entire life. We too easily define ethics by abstract statements or hypothetical crisis situations.\textsuperscript{57} But our characters are predominantly formed not by the extraordinary, but by the

\textsuperscript{53} Genesis 2:9
\textsuperscript{57} Such as the infamous ‘trolley dilemma.’ Cf. Thomas Cathcart, *The Trolley Problem, or Would you Throw the Fat Guy off the Bridge?: A Philosophical Conundrum* (New York: Workman, 2013).
ordinary – through our rituals and our habits. At Ruse I learnt how to be competitive because that was what we did day in and day out. News flash ... You can write on your crest 'Serve others' but if you habituate your students according to a different ritual, guess which value sticks?

Yet when I say we were made for virtue, I mean everything we are, and everything we do, is made for virtue. When I was a teenager Christian leaders were quick to point out that my genitals were made for virtue. It was rarer for them to speak of other parts of my life. Take my mind for example. Thinking is not some amoral capacity. Thinking well means learning to think virtuously. Will your learning lead you to be intellectually proud, or humble? Will your learning make you bitter or courageous?\textsuperscript{58} I have met a few people in my life who are ruined by their intelligence, because, frankly, they are educated beyond their obedience. It’s not simply what you know, it’s what you become with what you know. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.\textsuperscript{59}

Indeed virtue is a live question for all the capacities which education might bring us. Virtue impinges on everything we do. The philosopher Owen Barfield once said: 'How is it that the more able man becomes to manipulate the world to his advantage, the less he can perceive any meaning in it?'\textsuperscript{60} In his book The Road to Character, David Brooks draws a distinction between resume virtues and eulogy virtues.\textsuperscript{61} Resume virtues are the strengths we list when we want to advertise ourselves to an employer. Eulogy virtues are the items we would want others to recount when we die. Here is the paradox of our culture: we spend most of our lives crafting a resume filled with virtues that we don’t want to be remembered for.

But do not misjudge my intention here. I am not about to launch some jeremiad against the skills on your CV. On the contrary, I think the role of education is to show how to bring your resume into conversation with your eulogy. We should not fear our talents, what we should fear is that we would waste our skills on injustice and idolatry. The tragedy of humanity is not our capacity, it is our use of those capacities to no good end. Therefore the answer is not to diminish human ability, but rather to ask: how might we nurture their excellence and yet bend it towards servanthood? How might we encourage

\textsuperscript{58} Phillip Dow, Virtuous Minds: Intellectual Character Development for Students, Educators, and Parents (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013), 22-24. Cf also Paul J. Griffith’s argument that curiosity, in modern conception, is a vice because it is addicted to looking at the object of knowledge, and fails to see that object in relation to God (‘The Vice of Curiosity,’ Pro Ecclesia 15, no.1 [2006]: 50).

\textsuperscript{59} 1 Corinthians 8:1.

\textsuperscript{60} Owen Barfield, as cited in Iain McGilchrist, The Divided Brain and the Search for Meaning: Why are we so unhappy? (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 1.

\textsuperscript{61} David Brooks, The Road to Character (London: Allen Lane, 2015), ix.
their talent, but orient it towards justice? And ultimately, how do we cultivate their brilliance so that they become image-bearers not idols? See an image bearer is someone whose work is translucent to the glory of God, because translucence means something through which the light can shine through. But an idol is different, an idol is opaque to God’s glory, because the glory stops with them. Are you raising up image-bearers or idols? How do we teach students to take all those things on their resume, and use them in such a way that people will see through their gifts, to the Giver?

**Point 5: Human beings are made for Hospitality**

I could have entitled this final point as ‘human beings are made for community.’ But I need to come clean with you that I am starting to despise the word ‘community.’ There is actually nothing wrong with the word, rather, it is what the word has become in our contemporary discourse. We tend to treat community as if it were a commodity, a kind of product we can offer to people off the shelf. Come to our school, we have great community, or ‘I’m not getting much from this community.’ Moreover, I’m disturbed by the way community gets interpreted to mean forming small groups with my best friends. I see this happen all the time in churches, where Bible Study groups are just a baptised version of last Saturday’s BBQ. I often feel compelled to point out you can’t fulfil most of the commands of the New Testament unless you are in a community where there are people who you struggle to get along with. Being kind and patient to your BFF is hardly hitting a home run for holiness. Therefore I am not interested in forming students to be relational consumers, who see community as forming exclusionary tribes with the like-minded. Human beings are not made for tribalism, human beings are made for hospitality.

As I read of the life and ministry of Jesus, the truly human one, what I see is grace expressed through hospitality. He touches the leper, he eats with the sinner, he welcomes tax collectors to the table. Indeed, the gospel is about a God who is so hospitable he throws parties for prodigals. Hospitality is where community moves from idea to reality, which is why the people of God are commanded to be hospitable. A community without hospitality is a social club, and true community doesn’t look like social club. Jesus said, when you throw a banquet, ‘invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be

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63 Luke 15:11-32
blessed.” Are we forming people to be hospitable? How does our school culture enable people to love the stranger? How might we nurture all their brilliance, and use it for the sake of hospitality?”

Conclusion

Let me draw things to a close. Ultimately, my real contribution tonight is not to offer conclusions, but to propose questions, which can function both to diagnose our present and to guide our future. What kind of people does your school help produce? If that question doesn’t matter to you, it should. In enabling them to be lawyers, do you also help them to be just? In enabling them to be thinkers, do you also help them to be humble? In enabling them to know the truth, do you also prioritise that they live it? Do you ever think how your students will be eulogised? What would it mean for us to teach with humanity in mind?

65 ‘Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.’ (Luke 14:12-14).
66 I am reminded of the way David Smith at Calvin College reconfigured language learning away from a tourist model, and moved it towards a model of learning from the stranger.