



The Principle of Subsidiarity as applied at Redfield

The Principle of Subsidiarity gives an understanding the respective roles of parents and school, and of how schools should assist parents.

Core principles of social ethics include the principle of solidarity (the duty we have to help those in need), the principle of subsidiarity, and regard for the common good.

The principle of subsidiarity, as first stated by Pope Pius XI in Quadragesimo Anno, and clarified by Pope John Paul II in Centesimus Annus, maintains that a society flourishes best when its citizens recognize that different social organizations have different tasks. "A community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good." The family, the church, the market, and the government each have different tasks in society. Accordingly, there is a difference in the lived experience of freedom in each.

Gregory R. Beabout, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Saint Louis University

The principle of subsidiarity leads to a number of practical conclusions about the relationship between school and state, between parents and school, and between parents and their own children.

- ★ The principle of subsidiarity requires that a community of a higher order, civil society, may only take to itself matters which the family, a community of a lower order, cannot effectively look after. When parents seek to educate their children, they entrust specialized aspects of the children's education to schools, yet the parents still have a duty to retain responsibility for the overall education of their offspring, and certainly to set any agenda for the moral education of the child. They ought to ensure that, in the process of this specialized assistance, any values which are being imparted at the schooling institution reflect their own family values. If possible, they should seek a school which, besides providing a first class professional service, positively seeks to reinforce the family's deepest educational priorities such as the fostering of virtues.

- ★ Whatever a *child* is capable of doing for himself he *ought* to do for himself. So, when he is old enough to make his bed or shine his shoes, he ought to be expected to do so. When he is strong enough to help with the lawns, he should. When he is reliable enough to catch the bus on his own, he ought to be allowed to. When he is old enough to organize a tennis afternoon for boys and girls, he ought to be helped to organize it himself. Not to follow this approach leads to pampered children whose parents have denied them opportunities to grow in responsibility.
- ★ Parents should look after to tasks they are best placed to carry out for their own children. Hence sex education necessarily is a parental responsibility. Parents too are best placed to manage the beginning social life of their sons and daughters. They need to be able to judge the stage that their own children are at and what they are ready for. Parties and dances are best kept small and parents need to be in the loop so they can make these judgements. Father-son camps are run by the dads.