Life, on its own terms. Srsly.

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IN THIS SPECIAL GUESTPOST, Marcella Purnama of Melbourne, Australia, talks about the various received wisdom we get during our education — that they might not have been received, or even wise, unless we take pains to look how our ideas about education fit in with Life.

Marcella’s views make quite a lot of sense, even if not necessarily even similar to those of The Naked Listener, whose ideas are considerably naughtier or even frivolous. The main point is that Marcella has given us a tight summary, and a nicely done one too. Figure out your own position or tolerance in all this.

The Naked Listener’s Weblog is delighted to reproduce Marcella’s full article below. Her article originally appeared on 18 August 2010 on her blog.

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BEING EXPOSED TO MANY SUBJECTS during my education (Science, Arts, and Business), I finally figure out what is wrong with all these three streams. During my high school years I was a Science person, and now in my tertiary study I am pursuing an undergraduate degree in Arts, with a breadth subject in Business. Thus, confronted with many different ideologies and theories, I conclude that there is something really wrong with life and these educations. Well, at least, some parts of them.

The problem with SCIENCE

Most of you will agree with me: science is a stream of education that focuses on facts, researches, proofs, and in absolute, indisputable truths. Science bombards us with a series of theories that we need to memorise and just ‘take it as it is.’ We are forced to swallow the gospel that says anything which can be verified through scientific means are the only reality. It may even hinder our critical thinking as we just take things for granted. Thus, it disables us to have faith.

Moreover, believe it or not, most people do not even believe that they have a ‘consciousness,’ or ‘being,’ the one you may call your ‘heart and soul’ — yourself.

In one sentence, I believe that: Science tries so hard to make definitions out of life, and misses life altogether.

The problem with ARTS

[Note: By ‘Arts,’ Marcella means the Liberal Arts.—TNL]

When I first entered this degree, I thought that Arts subjects will enable us to look at life in a different perspective. Yes, it does look at life in a different point of view, but it is even more complicated way of viewing. Let me say this: Arts complicates the already complicated things. It even complicates the simple things. In this area, you are propelled with critical thinking, saying that everything is TRUE, you only need reasons and evidences to back you up.

To some extent this critical thinking is good, we ARE required to give reasonings to things that happened, and actively make judgments and take actions out of it. However, they think TOO MUCH that I come to the conclusion that they have forgotten the most important thing: the action. But the next crucial thing is: Arts takes too much time in critical thinking and in the end it comes to the holy quote of ALL THINGS ARE THE TRUTH, if only you have reasons to support you. Thus, this JUSTIFIES all people’s actions — as long as their MOTIVES are logical.

Put it in one sentence: Arts pushes itself so hard to critically think and reflect about life, and in the end misses life altogether.
Business is the stream that may be seen as ‘advantageous.’ Well, we make money out of it. But let me put it this way: Business takes the two streams (Science and Arts), exploits them, and turns them into money-making machines. Business makes people actively CONSUME things — either products or services. They make people assume that these so-called ‘things’ (products, services, etc) are the focus of life.

So in one sentence: Business exploits life, and in the end it misses life altogether.

Maybe this is why I tend to go with Hospitality, because at least it provides people with satisfaction and it strives to provide the best quality of service towards the others, and gives them unforgettable moments that may last a lifetime. I guess the most important thing in life (aside from God), is loving others, right? If we can impact other people’s lives, wouldn’t it be great?

I am not saying that these educations — Science, Arts, and Business — are bad. They are good. They are all good. But if we misplaced them as the focus of our lives — we will miss life altogether.

But hey — what is life?

Dictionary defines it as: (1) the condition that distinguishes animals and plants from inorganic matter, including the capacity for growth, reproduction, functional activity, and continual change preceding death. or (2) the period between the birth and death of a living thing.

Thus, what is the most important thing in LIFE?

Christians will say that the most important thing in life is God, and the need to tell others about salvation. Others will argue that it is LIFE itself — to do whatever you want to do, to think whatever you want to think — to enjoy every single thing that is pleasurable to human beings. Another will propose that it is love, because life without love is no life at all. And there are many other views regarding this. I believe this is a tough question, which may not have its concrete answers until now.

So let’s take to the opposite of life: DEATH.

Death is an easy task: life is a difficult one. Death is the end; life is the beginning. People used to say these things but what is death? Death is the period when we stop living, that’s for sure. And then we come to this question: what do you want to achieve in your life before it ends? When your time is up, will you remember all those achievements that you have, all those theories you made, all those technology inventions that you may have introduced to the world? I believe the thing that matters when you have reached this phase is: the people. Keep aside Christianity for a moment, the people matter. How many people will be standing there in front of your coffin, saying how much your life has impacted theirs? How many people, with tears in their eyes and smile on their faces, saying, “Thank you, for living your life. You make me live mine”? How many people have you brought to the Lord?

I walked into my Arts subject tutorial today and I saw so many people thinking and keep thinking and just thinking — reflecting on the globalisation that is happening and what the past has said about that, what the present will be doing, and what are the future prospects of the world if we continue progressing this way. Well, it may be essential (I say, "may be"), but somehow I just believe that all these thinkers (including me) have missed life in one point or another.

This is the problem with life

People are too busy filling their lives with all other things other than life itself and misses life altogether. I do not say that all these people (from science, arts, business — all those politicians, scientists, artists, doctors, poets, and blah) miss life. But most people try so hard to focus on all these little insignificant details (compared to love, people, family, friendship, and of course — GOD) so that they may miss life. It is a common cliche to "live our lives to the fullest." But only a few defined what a "full life" is. A lot of people talk about this, a lot of people make this their lives’ motto; only a few are actually living it.

In the end I want to draw on Jesus. I believe that I will be INSANE if I do not know Him. In some ways, Christianity keeps me on a sane level. When we are confronted with many beliefs, ideologies, ideas, principles, or doctrines, we may have all these endless possible thoughts, and end up overloading our brains (like what I did today). But when I reflect on Christianity, Jesus, and the Bible, I know that I have clear boundaries, a guide on life about the things that I need to do and not to do. The things that I can do and cannot do. The things that I should be doing and not be doing. About life. About what is important in life. About everything we need to know about life.

Life is God.

Without God, there will be no life.

He is the provider of life, and we live for Him.

People have lived pursuing earthly goals. They forgot that the eternity is the one that matters. Live for eternity.

Conclusively, Science tries so hard to make definitions out of life; Arts pushes itself so hard to critically think and reflect about life; Business exploits life — and in the end they miss life altogether. Why do we make things so complicated? Make it simple: Life is about you and me. Life is about the people — the love and interaction between
humans. Life does not need much definition; life does not need to be critically thought all the
time so that you miss out the actions; life does not need to be exploited. Life needs
love. And love is God, and God is love. Well, formulaically, life = GOD! It is as simple as
that ;)

Life is simple. Humans are the ones who complicate the simple things. We are
curious creatures, that's for sure. But let us be curious about life! Most people ARE NOT!

Only a life lived for others is a life worth while. — Albert Einstein

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Marcella Purnama describes herself as 'Female, a dreamer. "She is a Melbourne University
student reading psychology and media and communications, and also currently a magazine
intern. She runs two blogs of her own: A Life Review and Marcella Purnama: a life in Net
Communication.

The comments generated by Marcella's article are
highly thought-provoking and insightful.

READ THEM ON HER ORIGINAL PAGE

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