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SCHOOL ACTIVITIES FOR MORAL DEVELOPMENT

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By moral education I mean a process or aggregate of processes by which children and youth through knowledge and choice are brought to establish themselves in right living.

Education is a process; character is the result. The process is two-fold,—first, forming standards or ideals of conduct; second, forming habits of conduct. The latter are the crucial test of character.

Not standards or ideals but habits are the determining factor, and few are those in whose life these two elements coincide throughout. "The good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do." By suitable instruction standards are formed; by suitable training habits are acquired. By the two—instruction and training—character is fashioned.

Habits are formed by doing things,—habits of right living only by living right, by doing right things in the right way. So far as children, having formed standards of conduct, go beyond these and apply them in their life, they are being morally educated, and only so far. If believing that to be truthful is right they are truthful, believing that to be honest is right they are honest, believing that to be pure is right they are pure, their education is complete and successful.

The public schools are unceasingly active in their efforts to create standards of right living. These efforts are criticised as being indirect or incidental and, therefore, ineffective, and what are called direct means are offered. But their teaching is not *indirect*; it is unformulated and in the opinion of many wise thinkers effective because unformulated. Such training is incidental only in the means used, not in the purpose. There it is recognized as fundamental. Every day and hour of school life offers opportunity to present some standard of morals and to call attention to it. This act on the part of a teacher is no less a lesson in morals because it grows immediately out of a schoolroom experience or a bit of current news or a study of some character in history or literature instead of being set for 9:45 o'clock on Thursday morning. One is formal, the other is informal; but one is as direct as the other and likely to be more effective because more pointed.

But the schools go much further than to teach morals either formally or informally. They are engaged in the most incessant efforts

to form right habits of living within the limits of school activities, and in these efforts they are in the main successful.

Consider, first, what is ordinarily spoken of as the discipline of a school. The qualities essential to the life of a good school are punctuality, silence, obedience, order and industry. Children not only learn that these things are right; they learn to act accordingly. They not only learn that they ought to be punctual and quiet and obedient and orderly and industrious; they are all these things. Of course, not all and not always. But a school where the children do not habitually live these virtues is not a good school.

It is easy to treat these qualities with scant respect in discussing moral education; but they are fundamental, entering into the warp and woof of society.

If they are lacking in a home or a community, that home or community is called demoralized. They are basal qualities in all vocational training also, though the advocates of vocational education habitually ignore them.

The habit of punctuality, for example, is essential in all industrial life, and nothing prepares for the seven o'clock factory whistle or the eight o'clock office rule but the nine o'clock school bell. I have been told lately that the children of recent immigrants from Southern Italy, peasants who have never known the rigid requirements of modern industrial life, are most slow to learn this school habit. The effect of this sort of discipline is cumulative. When successive generations of children have been subjected to it, it is easier for each new child as he enters school to inhibit his wayward and individualistic impulses and to learn the lesson of self-control. The discipline of all schools is easier, pupils and teachers are less mutually hostile and "cruel and unusual punishments" are far more rare than was the case a century ago.

Passing from the life of the school, which as we have seen is a moral force of prodigious influence, to the work of the school,—the everyday tasks of study, recitations, examinations,—we find that here the demand for the exercise of moral qualities is urgent and incessant. Here again not only are the teachers engaged in setting standards of conduct but in securing habits. And the moral qualities involved are fundamental and condition all social life.

The daily activities of every school train in truthfulness, honesty, fidelity, general trustworthiness. These qualities are the basis of all that mutual confidence upon which family, business and civil relations depend.

The child learns that it is right for him to prepare his lesson, to recite it orally or in writing, to do this as well as he can, and to do it himself. He learns that to neglect or shirk preparation is wrong, to pretend knowledge which he does not possess is dishonest. He learns various school tricks to deceive, but he knows he is deceiving and that he is dishonest.

All this is so well known that there grows up a school conscience and a school sentiment which regards with scorn a pupil known to lie or to cheat in his lessons. The result is that the great majority of the children in school are transparently honest and trustworthy in their school work. In these respects the school standards are higher and the school life more exemplary than is the social and business life into which these pupils will go.

We are told that the schools are doing nothing to prepare for vocational life. They are doing the most essential things. Ask any employer of labor what is his first requirement, and he will say attention to business and trustworthiness. Without these, technical training is valueless. These are the two things that the child learns through his school life and his school work.

Not long ago the question was asked of one hundred large employers of labor and business men: "What special qualities do you consider of prime importance in your employees?" Some of the replies are as follows and they are typical of most:

"Manliness, intelligence, application."

"Absolute honesty and truthfulness."

"Honesty, regularity of attendance, accuracy and energy."

"Order and neatness."

"Honesty, loyalty, ambition, self-reliance."

"Sobriety, industry and interest in work."

These are moral qualities and are the very ones which the life and work of the schools foster.

There is another department of school activities equally rich in its moral content,—the department of play from the simple games of the kindergarten to the highly organized athletics of the high school. These touch the moral nature on another side, build up another set of standards, and develop virtues peculiar to themselves. To play fair—in school boy or girl language—means to be just and helpful and generous. It demands regard for the rights of others and it suggests regard for the feelings of others. The desire to win—to beat—is tempered by the obligation to win by fair means. Limits are put to self-seeking and the Golden Rule finds its most natural and

unchallenged field of control. The hellishness of war is nowhere exhibited more vividly than in the saying, "Everything is fair in war." The schoolboy learns in sports that nothing is fair that is not fair.

The more advanced forms of team-work develop another virtue,—loyalty. The individual is sunk in the team, and its spirit, its honor or its dishonor, its reputation, its work and its rewards are his.

And through this department, too, are the most hopeful avenues of approach in building up those more personal and sacred virtues,—temperance and chastity. It is doubtful if moral habits here can ever be successfully developed by negative means,—by emphasizing penalties, by exhibiting horrible examples,—or by cultivating scientific intelligence. Standards, ideals, may be so created, but the most promising work in character-building will come as the boy who wants to *do* realizes that to *do* he must *be*, that to win in any department of effort he must be strong, and that to be strong he must be clean. Between him and the Italy of his success lie the Alps of self-restraint. To make the boy feel this in his soul and gird himself for the effort is the supreme end of educational effort. Herein lie the elements of strength in the modern organizations of boys,—the Boy Scouts and the Knights of King Arthur. The boys are taught not only to admire Sir Galahad, but they are led into activities where they must act like Sir Galahad, and by acting they are educated.

As in the other department, so in this lie foundation stones of civic life. If in school standards have been framed and habits developed of temperance and chastity and loyalty and justice and fair play, the best preparation for citizenship has been made. Civil liberty is liberty under law, regulated liberty,—it is playing the game of life according to the rules of the game. To play fair is the same self-restraining obligation in politics and business and marriage that it is in "I spy" and baseball.

I have tried to show that in a three-fold way,—in its discipline, its work and its play,—the school is actually educating in morals,—forming both standards and habits. I know there are many excellent people who cannot believe that moral education is possible unless it be formulated "in good set phrase" and have a time and place set apart for it in the school curriculum. I can only express my inability to agree with them.

The schools, however, are not without some concessions to this belief. Two or three schemes for moral education have found teachers willing to work them.

There is the Brownlee System of Child Training worked out in practice by Miss Jane Brownlee of Toledo.

In this system certain virtues are made the subject of morning talks, one a month, to fix standards of conduct and the effort is made to have the children practice the virtues during the month, so forming habits.

The scheme includes Kindness (in September) and in order by months, Cleanliness, Obedience, Self-Control, Courtesy and Cheerfulness, Work, Honor, Honesty, Truthfulness, Manners and Review of the Year. Miss Brownlee's own report of the system shows that the children were successfully trained thereby.

There is what is called by its author the Progress System, in which in order are taught Purpose, Right-Thinking, Originality, Good Judgment, Resolution, Energy, Self-Control, Self-Confidence, the first letters of these words spelling Progress. The words are analyzed and the children are encouraged to shape their conduct in harmony with the ideas. This plan, too, is said to be in successful operation in some schools.

There are various schemes of Student Government by means of which the pupils have to control themselves and to acquire the moral qualities of good citizens, and there are individual schools all over the land where experiments are being tried in formulated ethics. That these are useful in developing moral intelligence and fixing standards is undoubtedly true.

Yet, in spite of much formal and informal effort, so many boys and girls and young men and women out of school exhibit signs of depravity that many good people think there is no moral education. The existence of this very society grew partly out of a condition and partly out of such a theory. The question is a legitimate one: If the schools are doing so much, why are there so many bad boys and girls?

What confronts a child on looking away from the school and its teaching? He finds in the home laxity of discipline and little insistence on even the outward marks of respect. He does not find in the world that practice of justice and fair-dealing that he has been led to expect. He cannot help seeing that fraud and chicanery and dishonesty are prevalent and their practice by the people in good society is winked at or condoned.

In business and politics and often in social affairs he learns that a sacred regard for the truth is not considered consistent with a workable policy. He finds that "Man's inhumanity to man" still "makes countless thousands mourn." When he has formed in school a stand-

ard of temperate and frugal living, he is confronted in his own home by domestic waste and expenditure for unnecessary luxury and on every street corner by a drinking saloon licensed by public authority. He has been taught industry and he sees the idle rich faring sumptuously every day and the idle poor supported at public expense. And as for chastity, he finds that society insists on it only for women. He sees every form of vice made heroic in the yellow journal and on the yellow stage.

Is it any wonder that some youth, many youth, confused by the contradiction between school and life, between what they have been taught is right and what they see is done, their character yet in the gristle, yield to the temptation set before them and follow the multitude to do evil? Is it not rather a matter of surprise and thankfulness that so many maintain correct standards and strengthen themselves in the habits of right living?

It seems to me clear that, if any substantial improvement of society is hoped for, this play of conflicting forces in the teaching and training of children and youth must cease. All social forces must become mutually co-operative and sustaining. They must act in the same direction and cumulatively and not as now athwart and opposite each other.

The church needs to reorganize and modernize its methods of instruction. Its Bible schools need to embody the best methods of modern pedagogy in their appeal to children. Formulas of doctrine need to give way to concrete principles of living. The Bible needs to be presented not as a dead book, telling about dead people and dead races; but its men and women should be made luminous with human qualities shown to be types of men and women of today, and their experiences made helpful in shaping conduct now.

Out of the heart are the issues of life. The home is the heart of human society and out of it are the issues of character. This is the basic law of human nature, universal and everlasting. No change of social customs can abrogate it. It is not subject to the caprice of fashion. To violate it or ignore it means disaster. No other human being can stand *in loco parentis*. The phrase is only a legal fiction.

If in the home are not exemplified piety and justice and a sacred regard for truth, industry, frugality, chastity and temperance, it is an uphill task for teachers or preachers to make these virtues so alluring as to influence conduct.

If the mottoes, "The teacher makes the school," and "Like priest, like people," are true, much more true is the saying of Eurip-

ides, "The errors of parents the gods turn to the undoing of their children."

If the parents neglect their children, it matters little whether they are absorbed in cares of State, or business, or pleasure, or sin, the children suffer the penalty. And it matters little whether the home be one of poverty or riches, so far as its moral influence goes.

The most needed social reform is to make good homes universal. Parenthood should be a throne and obedience should be the "bond of rule." There should be dignity without austerity, firmness without severity, affection and sympathy without silliness, morality without hypocrisy, and religion without cant.

Such homes would give efficacy to the teaching of the school and the church.

The community has much to answer for when children go astray. It has put temptation in their way. It has tolerated practices in business and in politics which tend to break down character. It has allowed vice to flaunt itself in a hundred ways attractive to the young. In its dealing with children it has often been severe when it should have been lenient and lenient when it should have been severe.

It has so handled the making, the interpretation, and the execution of law as to produce moral confusion and obliquity. While punishing the poor and friendless criminal to the limit, it has allowed the rich and the influential to go free. It has rarely anywhere reached the guilty ones "higher up." Its penalties have been retributive rather than reformatory. It has so dealt with juvenile delinquency as to implant the seeds of suspicion and hostility toward society itself.

The streets of every large city in the world are filled with young persons who have been confirmed in evil habits by the sins of society, —sins of omission and commission. The lack of suitable playgrounds, of proper places for evening recreation, and of adequate instruction in industry has left the young of both sexes a prey to their own natural but perverted instincts.

So the work of moral disintegration which the unfaithful home has begun the equally unfaithful society has completed.

We have no occasion for surprise, therefore, that children and youth show as many lapses from virtue as they do. The wonder is that there are so few.

The remedy for it all is a simple one. To make the instruction in the schools more systematic or to introduce into them religious

exercises where now there are none might be useful, but it would not be adequate.

Higher standards of conduct in life, fewer legalized temptations in the path of youth, more intelligent dealing with juvenile delinquency, more adequate provision for recreation and vocational education, more appropriate methods of moral and religious nurture by the Church, and above all a keener sense of parental responsibility, more judicious restraint, and more sympathetic aid in trying to be good,—all of these are needed.

The moral education of youth is suffering today for the lack of comprehensive grasp. Efforts at reform are too narrow and one-sided. When the discussion assumes this broader phase, and not till then, the real magnitude of the work will be seen and the necessity for co-operative effort of all social forces will appear.

OVER 100 ADDRESSES ON

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