

## NOTES ON EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL EFFICIENCY

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We are hearing much in our day about the "anti-social" traits of the child. We are told that when he comes among us he is fitted out with profound instincts of selfishness, anger, envy, deception, and the like, which were exceedingly prominent in his primitive ancestors. Granting the truth of this general proposition, it is equally true that the child brings with him from afar marked social as well as anti-social impulses. He early manifests social hunger. He craves personal association, which is shown strikingly in his joyful expressions when he is in the presence of people, and his lamentations when he is separated from them, which expressions do not occur with reference to things as contrasted with persons. Early in his career he displays a well-nigh irresistible tendency to share his experiences, whatever they may be, with his parents and teachers and playmates. He apparently does not thoroughly appreciate or enjoy any experience unless he can find others to enjoy it with him, or at least to whom he may communicate the experience. Nothing continues to be of genuine worth for him unless it has been approved by the social environment; unless it has social worth, that is to say. If the people about him show no interest in what he makes or discovers, or the feats he performs, his own interest therein will surely decline sooner or later. It is not long before he is governed in all his activities by the manifestations of the people who are always present as vitally interested spectators; present either in the flesh or in the child's imagination, as we say. The child's consciousness is at all times a social one to a greater or less degree; he is continually communing with people, either actually or in representation. Every act probably has reference, directly or indirectly, to persons. Thus the ego is never completely dissociated from the alter; the latter is always present in consciousness, either focally

or marginally. So egoism and altruism are not two absolutely antagonistic attitudes; an egoistic act must at the same time have altruistic reference in some way or other. Again, egoism, for the most part at any rate, can realize itself only through *service*. But an individual may strive for mean, unworthy, material ends, though he has an altruistic aim of some sort constantly in view in his striving, as when he takes advantage of a rival in business for the benefit of his wife or children. Or one may take hold on the highest things in life, as the respect and good-will of all men, in the attainment of which the really vital needs of the alter must be ministered to. The business of education must be, for one thing, to teach the child what the alter esteems as of supreme worth, and to impress upon him that in the long run the broadest kind of egoistic-altruistic action will bring the richest rewards for self.

The child's first actions, viewed from his own standpoint, cannot be said to be ethical or evil, social or anti-social. That is right which he instinctively wants to do; and there is no wrong in his conduct. In his activities at the outset he takes no account of the desires or needs of the social environment; but by the close of the first year he shows in his inhibitions, and to some extent in his positive actions, a slight regard at least for the feelings and wishes of the alter. He begins now to appreciate that certain actions affecting persons bring him discomfort in one way or another, while others bring him pleasure; and his distinctions between right and wrong take their origin from this appreciation. That is right which father, mother, and others approve and encourage; that is wrong which they frown upon and attach penalties to. Gradually, as a result of instinct clashing with social demands, there is established a self, let us say, reflecting the requirements of the social environment, and this from its most primitive beginnings makes unceasing war upon the lower self, motivated by original, narrowly egoistic impulses. With development this ideal or social self gains continually in breadth and strength, and it also becomes more and more generalized, until particular experiences, persons, rules, principles, are merged into tendencies to action in given directions; or perhaps one should

say that this social self comes in time to consist of moods or sentiments, the generalizations of early concrete social experiences. Of course, the extent to which the social self develops must depend upon individual circumstances, and also upon the extent to which the society in which the child lives has developed. But its function in any case is to coerce the individual to act in harmony with social demands, as he understands them; if he does not, this social self will cause more or less serious disturbance. Failing to get itself realized, it will create tension, unrest, discontent. One can observe in his children how, as the years pass, the social demands, consolidated more or less completely into feelings of duty, gain ever greater control over primordial impulsions. Out of such experience, as I have indicated, arises very slowly the consciousness of ought or duty; conscience and ethical sentiment grow right out of the child's experiments in social adaptation in his daily life.

What we must strive to accomplish in education, then, is to give the pupil opportunity to get into his consciousness as models or guides many persons who embody in their conduct the highest social ideals. His social self, with its motivations of duty and conscience, will be constructed from the personal copies that are set before him. It should be added that vital, give-and-take relations with persons are essential in order that their characteristics may be apprehended, and that they may be accepted as models. One's hero determines his conduct very largely. Good literature comes next to concrete personality in its influence upon conduct; it is in a way a substitute for actual social situations. The drama, too, is powerful for good or ill in social training. The question as to whether children should see evil characters exploited on the stage is too complex to be answered categorically; but in general it may be said that one is benefited if on beholding such types his antagonism toward them is aroused and sustained; while he will be injured if he approves of their conduct. It should be remembered that for the most part evil in modern life represents actions once universally practiced and passed on to the young as instinctive tendencies, and it is therefore easy to drop back into them. This it is that makes evil persons so dangerous to youth.

So the first requirement in social education is to get children to *live* together in a *vital* way, in order that they may come to understand one another, and respect each other's rights. Learning maxims about human nature or ethical conduct or right or duty or brotherly love will be of little avail without a vast amount of significant social experience. Many adults have good theories about social relations, but their practice is very bad; they have not had enough of vital give-and-take relations with their fellows to be disciplined into decent behavior. The "only child" is usually very poorly prepared for the best sort of social life, because he has not been molded into social form at the hands of his fellows. Hard knocks are essential to the most effective learning in social matters. The child must learn, not so much by being told it as by discovering it experientially, that on the whole it pays to play the game fair. We are beginning today, it seems, to appreciate the soundness of these principles, for we are devising ways of bringing children together under wholesome influences, and helping them to gain meaningful social experience. The good, old-fashioned method of isolation is passing—such a method as Dickens spent himself in trying to get abolished.

The situation in the ordinary public school, however, is still far from what we could wish. The typical school is modeled on the static plan. Children learn their lessons and recite them, largely in isolation. Spatial nearness does not imply social experience. Children may sit in adjoining seats, and not come to know one another, except in external appearance, or learn how to give and to receive aid of genuine merit. Children must *work* together, not simply sit near each other. The idea is at least partially realized in the kindergarten. But the kindergarten attempts too much in too abstruse a way. The young child's social training should be concerned wholly with his immediate relations with his parents, brothers and sisters, and playmates. He should not be lectured to about social conduct in the abstract, or about his responsibility to humanity in general.

The playground, rightly conducted, furnishes an excellent opportunity for social training. It affords children a chance to come into vital contact with one another, where the lesson of

good-will and co-operation may be learned in an effective way. The child who does not play with his fellows will not be likely to gain the sort of experience that counts for much in social education. Play of the character indicated is not only of social value in the narrow sense; it is of tremendous importance also in intellectual training and physical development. Wholesome play tends to preserve a sound mind in a sound body. The playground lessons crime, too, since it affords an opportunity for the energies of youth to be expressed in legitimate ways. Boys who have no chance to work off superfluous energy in games and plays will be likely to revert to primitive modes of preying upon their social environment. Experts testify that wherever a playground is established in the crowded quarters of a city juvenile crime is decreased by at least one-half. So the playground is not to be considered as valuable principally for recreation, though it serves this end admirably.

When children are brought together under wholesome conditions, and given opportunity to work and play together, they will train themselves in the fundamental social virtues better than most adults can do it for them. Adults are often suspected by children as hostile to their chief interests, and their counsels are neither gladly received nor readily followed. The great teacher, however, will make himself one of the group, perhaps the most experienced and resourceful one of all, but not essentially different from the rest of the group. Then he can influence the group through his suggestions; otherwise his leadership will be constantly threatened and often rejected. The teacher who is looked upon as a mere outsider, or disciplinarian, perhaps, can never have much peace or prosperity in training the young. He who antagonizes the group will have an unending fight on his hands.

In group-life the strong, those possessing the qualities of leadership, will come to the front, and the weak must and should reap the consequences of their weakness; though a child may be a follower in one activity and a leader in another. In the great social game the competent lead, while the others follow; and this régime should prevail in child-life, too. In the long run, this will result best for all concerned. We should not permit our sym-

pathies to interfere too greatly with the natural course of events in group-life. If we hold back those richly endowed by nature, we do them a greater injustice than could possibly be done the weak child by permitting him to occupy the position for which his talents fit him. We adults are liable anyway to project our own feelings into the lives of those children who stand at the foot of the class; and in this we are almost certain to commit an error. It is probable that nature does not usually combine in the same individual very mediocre talents with very lively ambitions, and a keen sense of humiliation when he cannot attain to the first place in the group.

Again, the group can very effectually discipline ill-behaved, refractory members—better than the teacher working alone can do it. The individual cannot endure the reproaches of his own kind; his deepest instinct is to keep on good terms with his fellows. So, if we would reform the individual, we must work through the group. It will avail little to try to cure a boy of some fault, when it is freely practiced by his set. For this reason the community and the school should be organized so that children can be dealt with uniformly as a whole; the isolated home or school cannot accomplish a great deal, if it works in opposition to the sentiment and custom of the community.

Locke, Rousseau, Spencer, and their disciples have taught us that the most effective way to dissuade a child from wrong-doing is to cause him to suffer the consequences thereof. He must discover in this way that it is worth while to do right. Without doubt this method is capable of accomplishing great good. For one thing, it trains the individual in the way of noting the outcome of his actions, and being guided accordingly, than which there can be nothing of greater importance in human life. But the method of natural consequences has marked limitations. Very young children cannot discern the connection between wrong action and natural penalty, unless the latter follows the former very directly. Punishment by natural consequences is more appropriate for, and will be more effective with, the youth than the child. Besides, a child should have some experience in *obeying authority* because this authority is

wiser than he, and is responsible for his protection and guidance. The parent and teacher in a sense represent the child in the world, and then the child must put his faith in them and follow their bidding. But this is not an argument for much chastisement. Indeed, the more pain we administer, the more likely we are to do the child injury. Pleasure is upbuilding, while pain kills, and should be used only sparingly as a curative agency when other remedies fail. The rod is becoming less and less prominent as a means of moral training, and to the great advantage of the whole life of the child. But we are probably not ready to abandon it altogether. It would be better for a child to be whipped soundly once than to be scolded for wrongdoing day after day. Especially would it be more advisable for the child to suffer acutely for a short period in childhood, in breaking up some noxious habit or curtailing some instinct, than to carry the habit or instinct into maturity, and bear the ills of it there continuously. Then, when punishment is clearly deserved, and the child realizes it, it is probable he does not feel the humiliation of it so much as we adults sometimes imagine he does, but that in the end he feels the stronger and happier for it.

Locke would whip a child for nothing except obstinacy. But it is important to distinguish between a refusal to obey authority for the sake merely of opposition, and a desire to carry out one's own enterprises, in which case the question of obedience does not really enter at all. Most of our troubles in disciplining the young arise from bad methods in infancy, when we often encourage the very traits which later we have to cudgel out of a child. Obstinacy in the infant is amusing, but in the ten-year-old it is a monstrous thing.

If the teacher were a true leader, he would have comparatively little need for the rod. But in the past, and it is true still in some places, the school has been the stronghold of dolts and dullards who did not have sufficient force of intellect or character to maintain a place in the world of affairs. Consequently they could not lead the young, and so they tried to drive them. The typical pedagogue of literature is a blunderer and tyrant whose hands "drip with infant's blood." We realize today, however, that we

must not let into the teaching profession anyone who is not intellectually fit; and we are just beginning to see that we ought to have some method of barring the personally unfit from the schoolroom. There are signs that we shall soon devise some method of examining personal characteristics in certificating teachers. We will take account of the voice, for one thing, since this exerts upon children a very subtle influence for good or for ill. Possibly the intellectually strong, who are in a general way selected out by our present methods of certificating, are also personally strong; but it is probable that this is not always the case, at any rate. Then good stature is of supreme importance in the classroom. A leader must suggest physical strength, among other things. Presence, in all this means, counts for a vast deal. The features are of greater consequence in determining leadership in the schoolroom than all the rules a teacher could construct.

Youth is the most vital period in social training. Most people appreciate this in a general way; even savage tribes have special ceremonies at this time. Rapid metamorphosis is the order during this epoch, and this is most marked in the emotional life. There is a birth of new emotions and interests, all of social reference. The birth of the tender passion marks the beginning of an entirely new epoch in the life of the individual. Most of his activities for a time bear some sort of relation to it, either directly or remotely. All the developments of this period probably have their place in a well-rounded character; and in education we must guide and direct, not suppress them. It seems that every power is in the beginning crude and misshapen in the light of present-day needs; but this is at once the opportunity and the justification of education.

The problems of training youth in the social virtues in the small town demand the serious attention of parents and educators. The bill-boards in these places are a source of mischief. Scenes they depict often nourish coarseness and rascality. The absence of ideals is the bane of the town, for the adolescent boy especially. There is little to awaken his higher ambitions; and the homes, on the whole, are devoid of inspiring influences, so the boy takes to the street. But the models which are presented to him here are



very apt to be vicious. The saloon, the livery stable, and the railway station in the small town are strongholds of vulgarity and vice. The worst feature of the case is that boys have nothing of consequence to do in the town, and under such circumstances they degenerate rapidly. This suggests the great opportunity and function of the school in the town. It should be the center of the life of the community. It should in every way appeal to the interests of the young, and win them to wholesome occupations and amusements. As the school exists in the majority of towns today, however, it is doing little which appeals to the spontaneous interests of young people, which influence their extra-school activities. The church is even more derelict in its duty. If it realized its opportunity, it would minister in wholesome ways to the natural tendencies of the young, and not stand apart from active life as it now does.