

This article was downloaded by: [University of Auckland Library]

On: 01 December 2014, At: 16:01

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/urea20>

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND MORAL EFFICIENCY

Emil G. Hirsch D. D., LL.D.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Rabbi Sinai Congregation , Chicago, Ill.

Published online: 10 Jul 2006.

To cite this article: Emil G. Hirsch D. D., LL.D. (1909) RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND MORAL EFFICIENCY, Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association, 4:2, 129-138, DOI: [10.1080/0034408090040201](https://doi.org/10.1080/0034408090040201)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0034408090040201>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND MORAL EFFICIENCY.

EMIL G. HIRSCH, D. D., LL.D.  
*Rabbi Sinai Congregation, Chicago, Ill.*

Two propositions I shall undertake to defend. They are first that moral efficiency can be attained and sustained only through the sanctions and sanctifications of religion and therefore religious education is indispensable if moral efficiency is desired and striven after, and secondly that religious education must be planned and carried into effect with this end in view.

Efficiency is the keynote of modern man's ambition in all fields of human activity. It spells the educational ideal of this generation. Not culture, not erudition but efficiency is the goal which to reach constitutes the dominant passion inflaming the zeal of every new educational departure. This universal enthronement of this deity is easily explained. Never before has man been more fully conscious of his mastership over the forces and resources of nature. Not only has he laid his yoke on plains and mountains, on oceans and canyons, laughing to scorn the jealousy of distance and the stubborn grudge of separating time. He has proclaimed his sovereignty even over the air toying with its whimsical currents whether in innocent quest of gossip or in distressful search for help. To maintain his supremacy and to enlarge his dominion he knows that relentless and efficient toil is laid on him. Only for those that are equipped with such knowledge and skill as tells in the struggle to maintain man's ascendancy there seems to be place and function in the economy of modern society. From early morning till far into thickening night the cry is dinned into our ears for efficient engineers, efficient physicians, efficient workers at this or the other highly specialized task. Were it not timely to vary this insistence somewhat and emphasize the need of efficient men and women without accentuating so exclusively the limiting qualification?

One may not be convinced with Hegel that whatever is is reasonable, and yet agree that the plan of highly specialized and intensely differentiated activities which modern civilization has carried into operation has justified itself by its result. It were as wise to attempt to bid Niagara Falls halt the majestic leap down the rocks as to plead for a return to the more Patriarchal methods of production and social interaction which our predecessors followed. This, however, shall be remembered that the danger is imminent of our being submerged in the tidal flood of this specializing process which grows more subtle and more intense as the years turn. Department stores are significant inventions of our commercial civilization. They have, however,

been also symptomatic of the tendency toward departmentalizing brains. There is good reason for the suspicion that we are on the verge of departmentalizing our souls.

The application to the utmost degree of the principle of division of labor to industry and commerce, to the production and distribution of wealth has indeed heightened in a most marvelous manner our industrial efficiency. But this very increase of capacity in handling the raw products of nature and in transmuting them to the uses of man has not been attained without some and to my mind grievous loss in other and more precious qualities. Man always has to pay for the tribute nature lays at his, its conqueror's feet. And the ransom exacted is not only the sweat of his brow or the spark of his brain. His soul as well is laid under contribution. Our progress toward greater moral efficiency has not kept pace with our advance in technical supremacy. On the contrary it has been retarded thereby. And this for reasons easily diagnosed.

In the first place this intensity of specialization has of necessity taken joy, the reflex of creative activity, out of work. It is hard to take delight in one's occupation when it consists in a monotonous round of tricks which in themselves have no significance and when the eye is deprived of the pleasure of seeing the product through one's creative exertions grow into perfection and take on beauty. We shall presently learn what moral significance this monotony has. But even at this point the assumption may find expression that when joy in work takes wings as it does under our system labor loses much of its dignity. And in consequence the laborer is apt to hold himself and his life to be without intrinsic worth. Other results, however, attend this extreme specialization. Humanity is divided into little units. While in former periods the line of cleavage was coincident with that of race or nation and later in feudal days also with that of rank and order now in addition to these we have discovered those of the trade and occupation. Every little group has a standard of right and wrong of its own. Recognition of the One Universal Law supreme over all without distinction of class or livery is held to be a figment indigenous to the days of credulity. A recent American book by one of our clearest thinkers defends the thesis that all the implications of morality are summed up in the concept of and reverence for loyalty. If we apply this test to our modern attitude to our dismay the discovery leaps into Medusa headed horror that while loyalty has not flown from earth its dominion is confined by class walls. Every clique, every trade, every occupation invokes this deity but only in favor of its particular interests. Hence the theory readily adopted for guidance in con-

duct that commerce may claim certain immunities from the stern demands of the Decalogue. Hence the ease of conscience with which Labor insists on the right to disregard explicit principles hitherto held to be universal in their insistence. Hence the disheartening and disquieting phenomenon that men distinguish between what is lawful for them to do in their individual capacity at what they sanction as stockholders and directors in a corporation. Hence the peculiar idiosyncrasy apparent in the moral judgment of the politicians.

These observations which might be multiplied extensively indicate what easy strides we have taken down the inclined plane toward the Avernus of departmentalized souls.

The corrective lies in religion and religious education. Whatever else religion may token, its supreme declaration is that "man is created in the image of God." This postulates that man as man has intrinsic worth and is dowered with intrinsic dignity. This message of religion lifts him who heeds it out of the rut of specialized consciousness. Our daily occupation may dwarf us into this, that or another specialty. It may force the partial fragmentary view of life upon us. Religion makes us see "life whole and resolutely." Religion is the appeal to us to recognize that above all we are men and as men we have an intrinsic worth independent of the accidental task to which we are devoted and what it brings to us of honor, station or reward.

True it is religion and morality are, as it were, streams with distinct sources. But this is indisputable, at no great distance from their respective motherspring they joined their waters, running henceforth in one bed. Goethe tells us that no environment, be it even the most degrading, shall rob us of the consciousness of the divine within us, which alone may accompany us on all of our ways and has the power to make of every place a Temple unto God. This consciousness is the essence of religion. And out of it issues also the sense of obligation which underlies all moral action. Morality is antipodal to selfishness. It makes of self a servant. Religion may be a state of the emotions, but it always, when genuine, results in a disposition of the Will. It is the contemplation of a great Ideal through which man himself is led to feel and know himself as a being of more than transitory existence and intended for more than accidental struggle for partial self-preservation and self-assertion, and this ideal tends to focus conduct with a view of speeding its own realization. Religion is the root indispensable to the growth of moral efficiency. Religious education, therefore, is the prerequisite for bringing about moral efficiency.

Or is there perhaps another basis on which this fundamental conception, without which morality is rootless, may be established? The Natural Sciences clearly do not furnish it. For

them man is a bundle of muscle, bone, sinew, so much albumen and other substances, a process of functions acting and interacting upon one another with attendant results of assimilation, secretion and the like, but of his value as a man with a call to duty they know naught. Or perhaps sociology or political science in the narrower technical sense? It would confer value and dignity on the Zoon Politicon, not on man. He or she who for some reason or other was naturally or artificially incapacitated for political action would be rated among the negligible quantities. Or it would be a question of productivity and ability to consume. The scale of values would thus be a sliding one, and furthermore be graduated not according to intrinsic constants but according to fortuitous variables. Or may we derive the formula from aesthetic canons? They would single out the physically perfect while they would disown the imperfect or the less perfect. Religion alone spreads the secure foundation and impels and sustains conduct expressive of the fact that man as man is vested with worth whatever his varied and accidental circumstances and preoccupations be, whatever the height of his strength or the depth of his weakness, and therefore is called to worthiness.

This will become still clearer when we examine somewhat more fully the implications of efficiency. It is plain that efficiency is dependent upon the conviction that what is to be done efficiently must be worth while doing. Outlay of energy and skill must be repaid in the outcome. If there is no return, or the return is such as to be disproportionate to the investment of effort, what boots the doing? and what difference does it make how it is turned out if in the end it is of no consequence?

It is easy to understand that when men are forced to work at tasks the worthwhileness—if this word is permissible—of which is not apparent to them, effort becomes drudgery. The highly specialized organization of productive labor in factories condemning men to monotonous repetition of the movement of hand in driving a peg or what not without outlook into the bearing this one seemingly trivial trick has on the finishing of the product has necessarily contributed to the lowering of the dignity of manual labor. In English prisons convicts are compelled to shovel sand with no practical end in view. Work of this order is indeed a curse and a punishment. It does not require and does not foster efficiency. With deep psychological penetration rewards of one kind or another have been invoked as incentives to efficiency. The skies resound with the insistence that efficiency is bound to pay in any walk of life. In this manner testimony is given to the correctness of the assumption that efficiency is dependent to a large extent on the recognition that what would be done must be worth while the doing.

True morality cannot operate with calculations of rewards and penalties. That conduct is not morally efficient in the higher sense of the word which is inspired solely by desire for recompense or fear of penalty. Long before Kant, a Jewish teacher, cautioned his disciples not to be like servants that would serve the master with expectation of reward, but to be like servants that served the master regardless of personal preferment and profit. Kant, the Columbus of modern thought, has certainly brought home to us the fact that moral efficiency must draw its incentives from within; that the efficiency of moral conduct cannot be measured by extraneous results. Utilitarian and Hedonic ethics, as well as that of mere conventional respectability, parade under a name which is usurped. Religion alone unfolds the worthwhileness of the moral life; not according to my conception and that of my religion, because it operates with menace of punishment and promise of reward temporal or otherwise, but because it assures me that the Universe is so ordered as to express a moral purpose and serve a moral plan. In this moral order man himself holds place and function. He is created to be a co-worker with God. And the forces of the universe are so constituted as to co-operate with him in his endeavor to work with God. Without this consciousness of worth and dignity conferred on him in this capacity, without the impressive conviction that his days on earth and the task they set before him value in the unfolding of the divine intention of creation, his lot will necessarily wear the dispiriting semblance of uselessness. What is man? is the question which always obtrudes into the shout of revelry as well as into the sigh of agony. Religion replies Thou hast him made little less than Elohim; Thou hast crowned him with honor and glory. All Thou hast placed beneath his feet.

Greece and Rome, in whom ancient culture came to climax, lacked this insight; they came to fall. Oscillating finally between Epicurean Hedonism and stern, yea self-possessed Stoicism, the ancient world phrased the blackness of its despair in the pitiable query *cui bono?* and gave answer thereto in suicide. Palestine had seen the light. It conquered the world and saved it. Even the Kantian maxim, that individual conduct should be so ordered as at any time to become the universal law, hangs in midair unless it rests on the postulate that between the individual man and all men exists a covenant inherent in the conception of a moral cosmos in which to man as man has been assigned a special distinction, conferring on him and his work an intrinsic value. Nietzsche, it is needless here to say, refuses to abide by the Kantian insistence. Strength he proclaims a law unto itself that acknowledges no superior and brooks no limitations. Human life, labor and destiny interpreted in the light of religion's construc-

tion of the Universe's meaning take on worth. Religion, linking human existence to the plan and purpose of the Universe and thereby establishing its worth, consecrates that existence to worthiness, and announces in thunder tones that a life worthily lived is worth living. It holds up the ideal of perfection, and urges man to rise more and more toward perfection. It calls for regeneration; that is to say, for the re-shaping of the merely physical into moral and spiritual potency. Such religious education as would bring home this high conception of the worth of human life cannot but make for moral efficiency. For it proclaims in rich variation the uplifting and upholding thought that "life is earnest." Accident of circumstance, talent, opportunity it sets forth as negative quantities. Man himself is the positive factor. Be the task set before the individual mean or momentous religion inculcates the conviction that whatever our work's scope it is worth while being done, and well done, for it is what it is in consequence of the economy of the universal plan. Work in this view is vocation.

This religious construction of life's intent is the most effective neutralizer for the prevalent misconception that morality speaks no universal language. Race and class presumption, pleas for legitimatizing double standards, and a host of kindred errors, have their root in the ignoring of the fundamental insistence of religion's valuation of life and world. Every human life has worth. Neither Greek nor Hebrew, neither slave nor freeman, neither man nor woman, may claim exemption or demand privilege. In the great fellowship of co-workers with God all have their part and their particular function. He to whom modest station and correspondingly modest duty has been assigned is thereby not marked the inferior to another chosen for other and possibly more arduous obligation. The efficiency with which he performs his work is the sole test of his worthiness. Race pride and prejudice, class presumption and myopia, make for moral inefficiency. Cradled in blindness of the universal law, they have the tendency to depart from it. And in measure, as they follow this native bent of theirs, they spread obliquity of vision, and thus lower the moral tone. One who hates a brother man in his heart or affects to despise him because he is of other race, or tongue, or creed, virtually presumes to criticise the Creator. Practically he affirms that God made a mistake when he allowed these despised groups of men to share earth with the would-be better. In sober truth, he who harbors prejudice in his heart against his brother is the "fool who sayeth in his heart there is no God." In this way the universal plan being called into question morality, which is conduct in keeping with the part allotted to man in this plan, receives its deathblow. Instead of being accepted as co-ex-

tensive with all humanity it is forced now to vegetate a sickly growth of usurped distinctions and special immunities. Mountains and depressions are necessary. Difference of race and nation is providential. The principle of selection and election is operative in God's household. Yet noblesse oblige. Duty is commensurate with native dower and proffered opportunity. Out of multiform diversities events the unity of the final and supreme concordance of song and work. This is religion's explanation of the differences that obtain among men. Translated into the language of men, religion's assurance articulates the prophetic query: Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us all? Why then should man deal treacherously with his brother?

This moral efficiency is not incompatible with technical efficiency. It vitalizes it. If efficiency is fostered by the appreciation of the importance of that into the achievement of which it enters so largely, it is also to a large extent conditioned on the consciousness of power. He who feels himself weak will not as readily grow into efficiency as he who has the assurance of being strong. Religion is often declared to be an avowal of human weakness. This is pernicious fallacy. Religion which brings us knowledge of our kinship with the Power that made the All flowers forth in energy and power. Yet it transliterates power by responsibility. The moral Law is said to accentuate most solemnly the: "Thou oughtst." Religion taking up the strain adds the sweeter "Thou canst". Duty is not involved in impossibilities. Man is able to do the right. In thus fulfilling and complementing the Law Religion sanctifies every act of Duty as service divine. Life demands concentration of energy on particular and special work. By lifting such work to the dignity of religious service religion lifts also the doer out of the pettiness of self-interest. The moral disintegration of inefficiency which characterizes our day is largely due to the refusal to interpret power as responsibility. Hence the easy conscience of the mighty. Hence the deplorable indifference to civic duty and regard for the Law of the land when vested interests come into play. Religion would not arrest the development of civilization. But it would sanctify it. It calls out to man, Thou canst do what Thou oughtst if every privilege which is thine is felt to be an obligation and every opportunity which is offered Thee is hailed as an invitation to utilize it, not selfishly, but morally. That man is steward of all he has, and is for all other men, is the declaration of religion. He who has grasped this elemental contention cannot fail to attain unto moral efficiency.

We cannot wonder that the Athenian poet describes his disjointed times as a period in which ambition of youth covets war



which has not heed of the eternal Right and takes no notice of the stress and distress it entails upon the people. Some strive for glory of high station and others for power to indulge their lust. Others again rapaciously would gather lucre, and what the common citizens suffer they stop not to ask. Three classes are found in the state; lazy, worthless drones are the very rich, and never cease they asking for more. Envy has rendered the masses most dangerous and lends ear to flattering voice of agitators that covet the possession of the rich. The only hope lies in the men of modest station and humbler means. They still are loyal to Law and devoted to their civic duty. (Euripides, *The Suppliants*.) Is it exaggeration to say that this picture with little modification might pass for a photograph of our own society throughout the world? What is amiss? If those of modest station still honor Law and Truth they owe this to the influence of their religious training. We have to relearn that Power spells Obligation.

But this is perhaps the cardinal point. Religion is not only a theory. It has been practiced by the teachers who were called to articulate its message. While religion's literature is richer than the books preserved in Biblical canon, these old Hebrew writings are dowered with effectiveness as guides and material for religious education in as much as they are largely the story of lives of men who lived by the light they were the first to behold. Biblical history is pre-eminently biographical. Even the highest criticism which perhaps may doubt the historic authenticity of this or that incident, or this and that personage will not deny that as described the heroes and actors of these ancient traditional accounts stand forth strong personalities of astoundingly high moral efficiency. The appeal of the Biblical books lies to personality. As Goethe so well puts it, Man accomplishes all that he is capable of doing through his personality. This reveals the secret of the Bible's hypnotic influence in the molding of strong character. Personality affects and evokes personality. Duty personalized is the content of Moses' life, love incarnated in personality the significance of the life of Jesus. Religious education must learn to adopt the method indicated in this remarkable emphasis upon the personal factor in the book of books. Too much and often is stress laid on dogma and doctrine. These have become fresh in the great men of the Bible. Let them speak to us as they did in the days of old through personality. Let in our work as educators religious dynamics prevail over religious statics. Too much archeological lore passes for religious instruction. Let us have done with this threshing of empty straw. Our religious instruction must be vitalized would it be efficient. At our very door the limpid stream of living waters bubbles forth. Religion as personalized in the lives of the great and good who gave themselves to

others, whatever their tongue or the symbol which seemed to them the "finger of their God"; religion such as was theirs with gift to sweeten humble lots and lighten heavy loads, with potency to interpret possession as a trust and bring home to the possessor the duty of stewardship; religion that made heroes and martyrs of the weak changing for them the steps to the funeral pyres into golden stairs to glory and lending them the courage to face death without fear triumphing over their blind persecutors also in that they forgave them who in their want of knowledge put the torch to the faggots, such religion is not in the heavens, nor is it beyond the sea. It is not far off but very nigh unto us. It is in our hearts and in our mouths to do it. Such religion with the sacramental word righteousness and the service which is love, not bloody oblations vesting human life and labor with divine dignity and abiding value, is the perennial spring of moral efficiency.

This religion it is for us to revocalize. However cursory his survey of the field, the open eyed observer cannot fail to carry away the depressing certainty that our generation of world conquerers has not risen to the highest possibility of moral efficiency. Dissipation and misdirection of moral energy mar the functioning of the social machinery. Sin and Vice, Crime and Squalor, Prejudice and Presumptuousness, indicate a wide disproportion between outlay and return. To believe the *Scientific American* our railroads feed annually to their locomotives no less than one hundred and fifty millions tons of coal, seven millions and five hundred thousand of which draw the trains, while the rest goes up the smokestack. These figures tell the tale of extravagance due to imperfection in the mechanical device, but they are also a challenge to the engineers to put forth their best efforts to overcome the obstacles in the way of stopping the drain. Similarly the lurid statistics on the life of the submerged with their story of delinquency and dependency, as well as the untabulated though by no means infrequent outbursts of folly at the opposite social pole, are urgent appeals to us to remember how great the work for such as would rebuild the waste places. The combat is not against illiteracy. Familiarity with alphabet is not protection against moral supineness. Knowledge as such and culture of memory and cultivation of literary taste, mastery over the mysteries of arithmetic, and even algebra, are subsidiary and secondary factors. Well may we rejoice that the wisely devised plans are maturing to render secular education more adequate to the practical needs of life. We have good cause to wish this movement godspeed. It aims at shaping school education so as to make it explorative, an aid to the recipient to find himself, to discover his talents and thus learn for what work nature

has intended and equipped him. It would help the young to become masters of their natal gifts and thus guide them to the post for which by capacity they are predestined. For it is undeniable that such schooling as the ordinary school curriculum now provides must send forth its beneficiaries without adequate knowledge of their own capacities and the result in most cases, is that they must trust to chance to indicate to them the port for which they ought to set sail or to teach them how to steer their course. In consequence many of them drift about until they degenerate into confirmed misfits. These misfits furnish the recruits to the battalions of the morally inefficient. And yet when all is said concerning this new and better education, one word remains unspoken. We shall break this silence. The new practical education of head and hand fails to do justice to the third in the trinity, the heart. The best that secular education may bring to flower waits for still another gardener's care. Competency and capacity, skill and familiarity with scientific principles and the practice of craft or profession of trade or vocation must be lifted to a higher power, that of character. The equation of moral efficiency runs in terms of conduct polarized in the conviction that man is summoned to service and responsibility as the co-worker with God.

---

#### INDUSTRIAL ETHICS.

CHARLES W. ELIOT, LL. D.

The title of this Association is The Religious Education Association, but the subject assigned to me is Industrial Ethics.

What is the connection between religious education and industrial ethics? Any religious education worthy of the name must be in large part ethical, and must deal with the fundamental principles of morality; although religious education should be something more than instruction in ethics or morals, since it should inspire mankind with noble sentiments and love of the highest objects and the loveliest beings.

The second word in the title of this Association is Education. We are apt to think of education as a process confined to the earlier years of life. The education of a boy who never enters the high school is said to end at fourteen years of age; the education of a high school pupil is thought of as ending at eighteen; that of a student who goes through college as ending at twenty-two or twenty-three, unless, indeed, he goes on to a professional school, in which case his systematic education may cover more