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## WHAT IS EDUCATION

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### I

The problem of education is of such magnitude, importance, and difficulty that all through the ages it has claimed attention, but has not been satisfactorily solved. The high mark of disagreement is reached when our leading thinkers attempt to answer the question: What is Education? For proof of this statement we need but turn to the history of education. Every pedagogical writer formulates his own aim and works out his own principles to support this aim. One aim is pietistic; a second is practical; a third is philosophic; a fourth is scientific; etc., etc. And to one's great surprise, they all claim to be right. Thus Montaigne and Locke firmly believe in physical education. Rousseau points out the principle of adaptation to nature. Basedow, Campe, Salzman, Trapp, and Dositheus Obradovich plead for happiness and usefulness in life. Herder is for the humanities; Spencer and Francke for piety and holiness; Niemayer for perfection and harmonious development; Pestalozzi for the training of the mental powers and general human education; Diesterweg for self-activity for the sake of truth, beauty and goodness; Runholzer for freedom and goodness; Denzel for self-culture; Krug for a strong intellect and a free will; Herbart for moral character; and so on *ad infinitum*.

I could continue this enumeration, including ancient as well as modern educators, but it would be difficult, indeed, to find a single case of agreement. This does not mean that all hope is lost. Other sciences have been in a similar chaotic condition, yet they have developed into what they are to-day.

Scientific pedagogy may be called the scientific expression of every movement that contributes to education, both in theory and in practice. Each movement tried to force its aims and principles upon the current pedagogy. Not only this, but other movements were not tolerated. These historical contrasts in the aims of education are due to: (1) the natural sciences, (2) philosophy, (3) religion and ethics, (4) politics and national influence. All these made their due claims upon the curriculum and won out. All these educa-

tional doctrines are neither fortuitous ideas nor events without significance. We have to study them most carefully.

## II

All these conflicting historical conceptions and aims of education we may classify under the following pedagogical movements.

### I. THE INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT IN EDUCATION

As its name suggests, this movement is for intellectual education. The highest kind of intellectual education is that which trains the reason for the sake of developing judgment and logical thinking. The ideal was the scientific schooling of the child. The child's judgments are to be based as much as possible on his own experience and elementary knowledge.

This movement originated in a false metaphysical psychology which claimed that psychical life consists of ideas. It was supported also by the false and one-sided conception of virtue. It had its champions even among the Greeks. Socrates believed that knowledge is virtue. Aristotle, on the other hand, separates knowledge from virtue. Intellectualism was accentuated in mediæval times by Descartes and Spinoza. To them the process of thinking was of primary importance, and feeling (emotion) and volition were but phases of thinking. The latter claimed that complete development of thought and reason is manifested only by those who show full control of their passions.

The central idea of the Renaissance was that the knowledge of virtue makes virtue. Leibnitz, Wolff, and Hegel supported this view. Kant was opposed to it. Basedow said that through reason the reason must be developed. Pestalozzi was also an intellectualist, but only in his "Lienhard und Gertrud." He hoped to kill superstition by intellectual enlightenment. Later he changed his educational doctrine to become the greatest exponent of the so-called pedagogical formalistic movement.

### 2. THE UTILITARIAN PRINCIPLE IN EDUCATION

This pedagogical utilitarianism is a sort of subdivision of the intellectual movement. Many philanthropists, especially Basedow and Francke, were in this movement. Herbert Spencer was also an ardent supporter of this movement but, of course, from the standpoint of practical evaluation. Herbart included some of this utilitarianism but it was strongly colored with ethicism.

### 3. THE ÆSTHETIC MOVEMENT IN EDUCATION

This is a very old movement. Among the ancients æsthetic education was the chief and only aim. The ability to speak, to dance, to sing, to wrestle, etc., was the goal of the Greeks and Romans. In the 19th century, a group of artists brought this movement again to the surface. They believed that this education is not only æsthetic, but that it is also moral. Schiller and Schelling are the great representatives of this great movement. They are entirely too extreme in their statement that art is the highest accomplishment of man. Many of the modern philosophers are of the same opinion. Among these are Schopenhauer, Richard Wagner, and Nietzsche.

Even to-day this movement has a strong hold on educators. Konrad Lange, Seemann, Lichtwark, Hirt, Linde, C. Schubert, the Dresden Congress of Educators, and many others argue vehemently for this movement. But this movement and its supporters are very presumptuous. It is presumptuous to ask that all school children be trained as dilettanti, acquiring the artistic sensibility without putting it into practice. It is presumptuous to require all school children to be sort of middlemen between art and the common people. It is presumptuous to believe that a child can make use of the general principles which are dominant in our nature. A uniform education of all the people is a Utopia. It is a presumption to act on the belief that a uniform education of all people will enable them to see all that is beautiful and strive for all that is good and true.

### 4. PEDAGOGICAL ETHICISM (Ethical aim in education)

This is a one-sided ethical movement that is brought to the support of certain pedagogical aims. It accentuates ethics, which is strongly advocated by Kant. Kant says that the moral nature, the ego, is the most important thing in man. The fulfillment of a moral duty is, therefore, the highest aim of education. Other supporters of this movement were Fichte, Lotze, Schleiermacher, and Herbart.

### 5. PEDAGOGICAL CONFSSIONALISM (Sectarian religious aim in education)

This movement was championed by many pietists and some philanthropists. Later it was revived by Palmer and Graser. Confessional Christianity formulated the aims and theories of school instruction and education. This movement is still upheld by many Catholic Theologians.

### 6. PEDAGOGICAL HUMANISM AND REALISM

This movement has more to do with secondary than with

elementary education. Realism requires that all education be placed on a realistic basis (natural sciences and modern languages), while humanism demands instruction in the classical languages (Latin and Greek), literature and history. This movement is still very strong in Europe. But its field and influence are limited more and more by the recognition of the natural sciences. In many of the European "Reform Gymnasiums" the natural sciences are given precedence over the ancient languages.

#### 7. PEDAGOGICAL INDIVIDUALISM AND SOCIALISM—INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL (CULTURE, UNIVERSAL) PEDAGOGY

This contrast comes from politics and not from pedagogy. The second cannot crowd out the first, because social pedagogy is based on pedagogical individualism. The representatives of Pedagogical socialism are Natorp, R. V. Stoy, Bergmann, Auguste Comte, Rissman, Scherer and others. Natorp in his *Sozial Paedagogik* believes with Pestalozzi that the aim of education is socialization. The determining factors of education are found in the community. He believes that the apparent hiatus between pedagogical individualism and pedagogical socialism may be bridged by the fact that the community is indissolubly identified with individuals, just as the individuals are ever part and parcel of the community. Pedagogical individualism, on the other hand, starts with the relation between teacher and pupil, and not with the relation between school and society.

Since its birth, in the middle of the 19th century, social pedagogy has claimed that the individual conception of education is superfluous. The individual as such, does not exist. The individual is a pure abstraction. We know that all sciences deal with abstract terms. If an object or natural phenomenon is to be treated scientifically a good many abstract terms will be used. Social pedagogy deals also with abstract terms or concepts: society, community. According to this pedagogy society is something real; an individual man does not exist, he is only an abstraction. But we have to keep in mind the fact that the term abstraction has two meanings: First, abstraction is putting out of view the concrete conditions in observing concrete facts (objects and phenomena). Second, abstraction is the process of building up abstract logical concepts. The false conclusion of social pedagogy is due to the confusion of these two meanings. Many social pedagogues do not care for this distinction. The summation of pure phenomena cannot lead to something real. According to Bergmann's "Sozialpädagogik" society is real and the individual is phenomenal. But we know that ethical problems

are always studied with reference to individuals and later with reference to society or applied to it. Social pedagogy must perforce await the development of individual pedagogy and then serve to supplement it.

In order that social education be recognized and developed beyond the somewhat narrow limits established by Natorp and Bergmann, O. Willmann in his book: "*Didaktik als Bildungslehre*" proposes a conception of civilized life which is to supplement not only egoism but also altruism (sympathy) by an appreciation of social associations. According to this theory, the possessions which are transmitted by means of education and instruction represent not mere collections of separate entities, but rather organic forms endowed with inherent life, and even the most minute details of pedagogical theory must be imbued with this idea.

According to individual pedagogy, the teacher is the educator, the moulder of the child. According to Willmann's social pedagogy, a teacher is the representative of previous generations, the culture possessions of which he is to give to the child. "Education is nothing more than a transmission of culture wealth from one generation to another," says Willmann. A teacher is the representative of a social will which has to be realized in an individual by means of the total consciousness of society or the state. In this sense, all state employees are to some extent teachers to the individual.

The main point in social pedagogy is the duty or loyalty of the individual to society. Individual pedagogy looks to the school as the means of educating the child; social pedagogy says that the school is only the result of social organization. According to individual pedagogy, the aims and purposes of education are individual ideals toward which the teacher is working; the aims of social pedagogy are expressions of the total will of the community and state. The whole educational problem depends upon the point of view from which it is solved. The specific educational problems fall under the individual point of view (relation between teacher and child). Social pedagogy deals only with the relation of pedagogical facts to any other department of life. Moreover, in social pedagogy, the purely pedagogical problems are not touched at all. The only value of social pedagogy is its influence in supplementing the individual pedagogical problems; it can never serve as a substitute for individual pedagogy.

The relation between teacher and child is the prime factor in all pedagogy, and this relation is an individual one; a relation between individual and individual. This relation may later take into account the community, but first and fore-

most the relation is purely individual. There may be many pedagogical facts which cannot be solved and are not even touched by social pedagogy. I mean here all those problems which arise from the child's psycho-physical nature. These problems are treated only by individual pedagogy, the representatives of which are very numerous:—Meumann, Stern, Schulze, W. E. Lay, Thorndike, Colvin, Burt, Burnham, Partridge, Whipple, Seashore, Winch, Scripture, Goddard, Binet, Simon, Schuyten, Swift, Messmer, Henri, Biervliet, Claparède, Netschajeff, Roumyanzeff, Sancte de Sanctis, and many other American and European original contributors.

#### 8. PEDAGOGICAL FORMALISM AND MATERIALISM—DEVELOPMENT OF MENTAL ABILITIES OR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL

This educational conflict is still unsettled. According to the formalists the aim of education is to develop the child's mental powers: attention, memory, observation, reason, imagination, will, etc., regardless of what material or subject matter is used. Formalism does not believe in teaching history, natural science, geography, etc. Its object is only to develop and train the child. The teacher is to develop the child's abilities in the very best ways, by the very best methods, regardless of how many facts he pounds into him. If during this development one can use means which at the same time teach facts, so much the better. The culminating point of this theory was reached by the great "father of modern pedagogy," J. H. Pestalozzi.

The public school of to-day considers primarily the evaluation of knowledge and skill; it is materialistic in its curriculum. But both of these extremes are one-sided. Here we must thoroughly understand what is meant by intellectual education. It must be discussed on a pedagogical basis showing that there are immediate (primary) and mediate (secondary) aims of education. In school, formalism and materialism, as well as other pedagogical principles, must be based on scientific investigation.

### III

What is the *scientific* movement toward defining the nature of education? There are three scientific conceptions of education:

1. *One-sided Historical Conception of Education.* This movement is championed by Otto Willman. Very much like social pedagogy, it considers education as a tradition and transmission of the thoughts and ideals from one generation to another.



2. *The Psychological Conception of Education.* The followers of this conception argue that education is but applied psychology. Most of these are either too engrossed with the subject of psychology or they are poor practical teachers. Münsterberg rightly ignored all such pedagogies. However, recently, in his book "Psychology and the Teacher," he abandoned the idea of autonomy of education as a science. Meumann and his school clearly show that the point of view in pedagogy is different from that in psychology. Yes, pedagogy has to make its own bread and not wait for the crumbs falling from the tables of the psychological laboratory. To-day there should be few who agree with Sully, who openly says that the real and only business of the teacher is to take the "principles" of the psychologist and to clothe them with "concrete" and "practical" illustrations. Why, is it not true that to different systems of psychology correspond different systems of education?

3. *Evolutionary Conception of Education, or, Developmental Pedagogy.* This movement originated with Herbert Spencer, who tried to apply the principles of evolution to all the sciences and to education as well. In his book on "Education," however, he is very brief with his biological principles and too general. The first assumption of all education is the education of man according to the dictates of nature. The natural education we receive without our knowledge or will. Therefore, pedagogy is to have a biological basis. Consequently, education is a planned and guided development according to natural biological laws and conditions of evolution. But what is this development? It is the observation of *conditions* and *processes* (according to Spencer *evolution* includes both growth or a gradual, natural increase of bulk, and *development* or an equally gradual natural change of structure, form and self-mobility). What are these conditions and processes? The conditions are:

a. VARIATION—continued changing of the individual; individual variation is the main consideration.

b. ADAPTATION—every individual adapts himself to conditions of life.

c. PURPOSIVENESS (Baer's "Zweckmässigkeit"): all evolution shows a tendency toward perfection. (Of course, we don't know as yet, what to say about a will toward perfection). All these principles are based on comparative and experimental study of animals and plants, but not on a study of children.

The processes may be put in the following familiar schematic form.

- These five or six principles are based primarily on study of animal life and biological philosophy.
- a. Use and misuse of certain organs. (Lamarckism).
  - b. Heredity (Lamarck — Weissmann and Galton).
  - c. Survival of the fittest.
  - d. Natural selection.
  - e. Struggle for life.
  - f. Mutual aid ("consciousness" being a new factor in evolution): Kropotkin.
- } Darwinism.

Spencer seems to be almost alone in this movement. Those who follow developmental pedagogy are more exact, specific and clear in their conception of education than Herbert Spencer. I have in mind here the great American educators: President G. Stanley Hall, James Mark Baldwin, A. F. Chamberlain, C. H. Judd, and many of their followers. Baldwin is a follower of Spencer, while Hall and others proclaim the theories of Haeckel,—theories of recapitulation. Of course, the recapitulation theory as applied to education is—as they say—still in its infancy. I do not mean here the extravagant theories based on the misuse of the biogenetic law (psychogenetic law of Ziller and the Herbartians fancifully applied to "historical" instruction). A child recapitulates its philogeny. Yes, but how much does it recapitulate? The child makes some short cuts in his recapitulation? Yes, but how many of them does it make? Much will come without teaching. Yes, but just how much? Something will be done by instruction and elucidation. Again, how much? Will a child begin to walk sooner because he first crawls? Will he make greater progress if he starts his schooling at three instead of at five years of age?<sup>1</sup> All these questions must be answered, not by mere guessing, but by painstaking, scientific pedagogical investigations. President G. Stanley Hall has taught how to labor and to wait. Just now the scientific data regarding these questions are very meager. Many theories have to be tested. And much experimental work has to be verified in the field of education. Many pedagogical experiments have been performed, but their verification is still forthcoming. Thus the questionnaire methods of Galton and DeCandolle in regard to heredity are too crude to be accepted by modern scientific pedagogical eugenics. Thorndike is right when he says that in pedagogy a good deal is said, but nothing is proved. We expect much from Stern's psychography, Meun-

<sup>1</sup>Winch: A modern basis for educational theories (Mind, Vol. 18, 1909).

mann's experimental school pedagogy, and Hall's comparative study of children. So far these are the only three hopes for modern pedagogy. The first laboratory to study human beings was founded in Russia (1908). A child by the name of Seryoga Parinkin is the first subject of study in this institution under the direction of Bechterew.

The historical and scientific conceptions of education, if taken separately, prove to be one-sided. It cannot be denied, however, that each movement has contributed something to the general uplifting of pedagogy. Perhaps we would sooner reach our goal if we should attempt some compromise between the various movements. Let us try!

#### IV

To get a complete idea of the nature of education, we have to take into account, at least the following four considerations:

##### I. EVOLUTIONARY CONSIDERATION OF EDUCATION

1. Individual variation and adaptation to natural conditions of life are the basis and the most general assumption of all education. "Education is variation." An educator must know that education is not planned variation. Variation begins with nature, but education tends toward equalization, or the suppression of variation.

"Education is adaptation." We try to adapt the growing generation to present conditions. Education should not be adaptation to present conditions only. We should not only strive for adaptation to present conditions, but to so fit the child that he will consciously strive to better present conditions. We are not only growing beings, but we are growing beings who consciously strive for the attainment of certain ideals.

In short: *considering the natural development, and deducing therefrom all the evolutionary facts, we may adopt a natural basis for education.*

2. If we compare the processes of conscious education with natural development, we see at once, that education is something more than development or perfection. In all forms of organic life there is evidence of a strife for development and perfection. But this strife is not guided below man by any consciousness of the end to be attained. Only in man is this conscious and voluntary strife for the realization of an ideal of perfection manifested. Education is, therefore, an organized effort in natural development to induce the child to strive after an ideal of perfection. In short: *education, unlike natural development, is a conscious effort toward the realization of human educational ideals.*

3. In addition to this last partial definition of education, we must add the element of compulsion. To realize the conscious educational ideal natural development alone is not enough. In the training of domestic animals, and in the training of athletes, we notice the forcing of the natural powers beyond their natural development. So in the realization of the educational ideal, man must strain his powers beyond their merely natural evolution. In short: *in contrast to the natural course, education has a strong element of compulsion, a force toward a higher plane of development.*

4. But this is not sufficient. Education must transform this outer compelling force to an inner impelling desire for the attainment of the educational ideal. This is the only guarantee that the individual will continue his education after his period of schooling is over. In short, then: *in contrast to mere natural development, education is the conscious and persistent and impelling effort toward the realization of the human ideal.*

Next to the evolutionary consideration of education is the:

## II. SOCIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION OF EDUCATION

1. Education is transmission or tradition. Every generation takes an interest in its cultural wealth, customs, manners, social ideals, political and religious beliefs, and virtues. This is shown by the transmission of traditions from one generation to the other. It may be called the "occult coadjutors."

2. Education is the introduction of the individual into society. More particularly, education is the introduction of the individual to the moral atmosphere of the community; the adaptation of the individual will to the will of society; the training of all impulses and will directions according to the standards of the social or communal life — especially the development of sympathy, altruistic activities, and a sense of common interests, etc., familiarity with the prevailing habits and customs; familiarity with and performance of the duties of family, state, nation and finally philanthropic duties. To summarize: *Considering the different classes of human society, education is partly the building up of the moral sense, and partly the acquiring of the traditions and cultural wealth of former generations.*

Besides the evolutionary and sociological considerations of education we must now consider:

## III. INDIVIDUAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION OF EDUCATION

According to this conception or consideration, education is the cultivation and development of the individuality of

the child and perfecting his mental abilities and dispositions according to the periodicity and peculiarity of his being. We must never forget the fact that each individual is *sui generis* in periodicity. Education must consider the child, not as an adult, but from the point of view of child psychology and experimental pedagogy.

In education, we have to deal with the child's intellectual, volitional and emotional abilities. These abilities are essentially developed by exercise and habituation. Our present methods of education are characterized by a certain unintentional harshness. This is because our school system (based on all but pedagogical principles) is not in a position to form a clear and precise idea of the state of the pupil's mind, of his wants, of his thoughts and feelings and of his *abilities*.

Intellectual education includes the acquisition of knowledge and skill. From the individual-psychological point of view, education consists of the practicing and habituation of volitional action and mental abilities, cultivation of emotional reactions, and communication of knowledge and skill. The success of this kind of work will depend upon our ability to enter into the pupil's innermost heart, and to look at things through his eyes. In other words: *from the individual-psychological point of view, education is partly communication of knowledge and skill, and partly cultivation of the mental abilities* — intellectual, emotional and volitional.

But education cannot be regarded merely as a training of the mind and of the moral nature. It must stand for the development of power and function in the organism as a whole. We must, therefore consider, lastly:

#### IV. PHYSIOLOGICAL-HYGIENIC CONSIDERATION OF EDUCATION

Under this heading we include:

1. The development of all physical powers upon which depends the development of mental abilities, especially the development of the senses and motor abilities.
2. The care of bodily powers and health, including everything under the term "Dietetics" ("School Hygiene").

In short: *from the physiological-hygienic point of view, education consists in teaching the child the proper use and care of his body.*

"Nothing new under the sun!" . . . But nevertheless, the sun is placed in a new position in the heavens from which it casts at least a ray of light from a new angle on this large subject.

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