

Some Thoughts on Education.

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One important part of education is mental cultivation and it is nothing else than the satisfactory way in which the mind will function when it is cocked up into activity. And the most austere of all mental qualities is the sense of style. Style is an aesthetic sense based on admiration for the direct attainment of a foreseen end simply and without waste. Style in art, style in literature, style in science and style in practical execution have fundamentally the same aesthetic qualities, namely, attainment and restraint. The love of a subject in itself and for itself, where it is not the sleepy, the pleasure of pacing a mental quarter deck, is the love of style as manifested in that study. Style in its finest sense is the last acquirement of the educated mind. Style is the exclusive privilege of the expert.

Though knowledge is one chief aim of intellectual education there is another ingredient, vaguer but greater and more dominating in its importance. The ancient philosophers called it "wisdom". Wisdom concerns the handling of knowledge, its selection for the determination of relevant issues, its employment to add value to our immediate experience. You can not be wise without some basis of knowledge, but you may easily acquire knowledge and remain bare of wisdom. The only avenue towards wisdom is by freedom in the presence of knowledge. But the only avenue towards knowledge is by discipline in the acquirement of observed facts.

So freedom and discipline are the two essential elements of education and therefore it should be the aim of an ideally constructed education that the discipline should be the voluntary issue of free choice and the freedom should gain an enrichment of possibility as the issue of discipline.

According to Rousseau, there are three sources of education and these are derived from Nature, from men and from things. Education from Nature is the internal development of our faculties and organs—that is to say our vital growth. Education from men is the use which we learn to make of this development and of our natural growth and this he says is the only education of which we are truly masters. And education from things is the acquisition of personal experience from the objects that affect us.

Education may be classified into two different but correlative classes. It may be technical as well as liberal, the former is one which enables us to do well in our practical life or to apply the theoretical education into practice. It is more important than the other class viz. liberal education, an education for thought and for aesthetic appreciation. It proceeds by imparting a knowledge of master pieces of thought, of imaginative literature and of art. The action which it contemplates is command. This is an aristocratic education implying leisure and this best suits one in old age.

The two sorts of education are extremely correlative to each other. The antithesis between a technical and liberal education is fallacious. There can be no adequate technical education which is not liberal and no liberal education which is not technical. There is no education which does not import both technique and intellectual vision. In simple language education should turn out the pupil with something he knows well and something he can do well. The intimate union of practice and theory aids both. Technical education gives theory and a shrewd insight as to where theory fails.

What then is the essence of education? The essence of education is that it should be religious. Pray! what is religious education.

A religious education is an education which inculcates duty and reverence. Duty arises from our potential control.

over the course of events. Where attainable, knowledge could have changed the issuing ignorance, which has the guilt of vice. The foundation of reverence is the perception that the present holds within itself the complete sum of existence, backwards and forwards, whole amplitude of time which is eternity.

The art of education is never easy. To surmount its difficulties, especially those of elementary education is a task worthy of the highest genius. It is the training of human souls.

Rousseau says—Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Author of Nature, but everything degenerates in the hands of man.

He advances his argument thus: Men of civilised countries always try to educate their children early. So children are enforced to utter words even indistinctly. In this way they can not learn to articulate properly even in their old age. They can speak with only their family members and outside their hearths they can not venture even to look steadily. Whereas a farmer child of the remotest village can utter very distinctly. This is due to the influence of Nature. Therefore we should wait until they are quite equipped for the receiving of education. Not only they are devoid of proper utterances but also their minds remain undeveloped. Upto the age of seven or eight let them be nursed by Nature.

The first intellectual task which confronts an infant is the acquirement of spoken language. And then introduce a few important ideas which they can easily grasp and gradually give them more important and more serious ideas after which they can master written language. But never introduce many and serious ideas to educate your child within a short time. Because the consequence of plethora or half digested knowledge is deplorable.

The principle is merely this—that different subjects and modes of study should be undertaken at fitting time when

they have reached the proper state of mental development. The people should be taught grammar of literature, grammar of science bit by bit and then poems which are understood easily in easier language which they can follow and these are expanded by added new facts and harder poems and so on.

I am referring here to a scheme which is called by Whitehead as a golden rule of education.

"Whatever interest attaches to your subject matter must be evoked here and now; whatever powers you are strengthening in the pupil must be exercised here and now; whatever possibilities of mental life your teaching should impart must be exhibited here and now."

The problem of education is to make the pupil see the wood by means of trees. And this requires the genius of the teacher, the intellectual type of the pupils, their prospects in life, the opportunities offered by the surroundings of the schools and allied factors of this sort.

I come to the next point, the aspect of University education. The aspect of University training is the coincidence or union of theoretical training and practical utility. Youth is imaginative and if the imagination be strengthened by discipline, the energy of education can in great measure be preserved through life. The tragedy of the world is that those who are imaginative have but slight experience and those who are experienced have feeble imagination. Fools act on imagination without knowledge; pedants action knowledge without imagination. And the task of a University is to weld together imagination and experience.

University is the chief agency for this fusion of progressive activities into an effective instrument of progress. University furnishes the students, definite knowledge sense of duty and equip them to be social and successful in their practical life.

Here I conclude my essay with reference to influences of education on progressive societies and on human races.

The race which does not value trained intelligence is doomed. Not all your heroism, not all your social charm, not all your will, not all your victories on land or at sea or in the air move back the finger of fate. The immediate need of a nation is a large supply of skilled workmen, of men with inventive genius and of employees alert in the development of new ideas.

A progressive society depends upon its inclusion of three groups—scholars, discoverers and inventors. Its progress also depends upon the fact that its educated masses are composed of members each with a tinge of scholarship, a tinge of discovery and a tinge of invention. I am here using the term "discovery" to mean the progress of a knowledge in respect to the truths of some high generality and the term "invention" to mean the progress of knowledge in respect to the application of general truths in particular ways subservient to present needs. All these three qualifications are only obtained as the product of Education.

The Problem of Suffering.

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The problem of suffering is, perhaps, the most knotty problem that is ever met. We face thousands of problems in our daily life and the present problem is regarded as the most complex one. No Philosophy has yet been able to offer a perfect solution of the problem. The reason is very simple. In our struggle for existence nothing is seen which is so real and so complex—We can leave off everything but we can't call in question the existence of miseries which have so closely been connected with our daily life in new forms and new aspects. Sometimes it seems that men are subject to endless suffering and they are born-sufferers and that is why people are apt to doubt the 'all beneficent' dispensation of God. The great Philosophers of the world declare unanimously that what God does—however good or bad at the first sight it may appear,