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The Education of Free Men



Herbert Read

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NOTE

This treatise is a shorter statement of the theory of education put forward by the author in Education Through Art, London (Faber & Faber) 1943. The reader is referred to that work, not only for a more detailed exposition of the subject, but also for the particular sources of many of the author's ideas. His debt to recognized authorities such as Plato and Godwin will be obvious in the present summary: two contemporaries whose influence might have been more frequently acknowledged are the Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, and the American psychologist Trigant Burrow.

WE stopped in the thicket beyond the threshing-floor at the very end of the village. Sämka picked up a dry stick from the snow and began striking it against the frosty trunk of a lime tree. Hoar frost fell from the branches on to our caps, and the noise of the blows resounded in the stillness of the wood.

'Lëv Nikoláevich,' said Fédka to me . . . 'why does one learn singing? I often think, why, really, does one?'

What made him jump from the terror of the murder to this question, heaven only knows; yet by the tone of his voice, the seriousness with which he demanded an answer, and the attentive silence of the other two, one felt that there was some vital and legitimate connection between this question and our preceding talk.

TOLSTOY
(*trans.* Aylmer Maude)

The social question will be decided by molecular processes in the life of the people which bring the tissue of society to a new birth. It will be decided from below, not from above, as an effect of freedom, not by the act of authority.

N. BERDYAEV

1. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION?

"THE true object of education", wrote William Godwin in the first sentence of his *Enquirer* (1797), "like that of every other moral process, is the generation of happiness." I know of no better definition of the aim of education, but like all definitions, it is regressive, throwing us back on the need for further definitions. What, for example, is meant by the word "generation"—is it a natural process which only requires encouragement, or is it a regimen enforced by a special technique of teaching? And can happiness be defined in a way which would include the contradictory desires of any average group of men? More interesting perhaps than the definition itself is Godwin's parenthesis, which asserts without argument that education is "a moral process." A century and a half ago that might have been an obvious point of view, but it is a measure of our different outlook to-day that we would not immediately agree that morality enters into the question. The precept "Be good, and let who will be wise," would not nowadays find acceptance even in a Sunday school. Education—we do not say, but unconsciously assume—is an acquisitive process, directed to *vocation*. It is a collecting of means for a specific end, and most of the complaints about our educational system are directed against the adequacy of such means, or the failure to specify clearly enough the ends. Efficiency, progress, success,—these are the aims of a competitive system from which all moral factors are necessarily excluded. In that respect, at least, our schools reflect truly enough our social order.

Happiness is an individual affair. It is ripeness in each fruit: the full degree of maturation, of sweetness, of fertility. But the fruit hangs on a tree, and though the fruits do not all ripen at exactly the same time, or in the same degree, the health of the tree is shown by its over-all ripeness. As Godwin went on to say, man is a social being. "In society the interests of individuals are interwisted with each other, and cannot be separated. Men should be taught to assist each other." In other words, a factor in individual happiness is mutual aid, and these two aspects of man's existence are interdependent. Education is the process of their adjustment.

All the possible words we may use to express the purpose of education—tuition, instruction, upbringing, discipline, the acquisition of knowledge, the inculcation of manners or morality—all these reduce to two complementary processes, which we can best describe as "individual growth" and "social initiation." In no respect do the educational systems characteristic of the

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various nations of to-day favour either of these processes. Either they force individual growth into a pattern which destroys its natural grace and vigour; or if a free and independent person does emerge from the process of education, it is only to find himself at odds with a society into whose concept of normality he does not fit.

The trouble about happiness, as Aristotle pointed out, is that it is a platitude: to give it as the aim of education, or of political science, seems somewhat superficial, especially to people with pretensions to wisdom, who are often animated by a desire to make men suffer before they enjoy. In Christian philosophy especially, there is always a premium attached to happiness. It is very necessary, of course, to deepen the concept of happiness, because we all soon discover how impermanent is the sense of well-being which comes from good nourishment, a pleasant environment, adequate means and perfect health. Happiness, in a word, is *psychological*, and all material riches are worthless unless we have peace of mind. This was realised by the ancient philosophers, by Confucius and Lao-Tze, by Socrates and Aristotle; and they therefore defined happiness in some such words as Aristotle's, who said that it is "an activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue." But that, again, is merely a definition which demands further definitions, and so Aristotle had to define what he meant by *virtue*. He came to the conclusion that there was no such thing as virtue, but only virtues, intellectual and moral. Wisdom and understanding, knowing how to act or behave in given circumstances, the science of life—that is one aspect of virtue; but a man may have all this knowledge but not be able to control his own impulses and desires. He may have perfect understanding, but be a creature of bad habits. Knowledge and self-discipline are therefore two different aspects of virtue, both essential to happiness, and both to be learned in the normal course of education.

The difference between these two aspects of virtue—let us follow the usual practice and call them intellectual and moral virtue—is that whilst the first can be made a subject of general agreement, the second depends on the temperament or disposition of the individual. Intellectual virtue can be codified and accepted as a system of beliefs and customs; but moral virtue is the interior function of each man's physiological and nervous make-up. Since a man deficient in moral virtue cannot be expected to appreciate properly the values of intellectual virtue, moral virtue has a fundamental priority in education. The first question in education, therefore, is how best to develop the moral virtues of children,—that is to say, how best to train the physical senses with which each individual is endowed so that they mature to that state of temperance, harmony and skill which will enable the

individual to pursue the intellectual virtues in freedom of will and singleness of mind.

Aristotle pointed out that moral virtue—the integrated personality, as modern psychologists would say—comes about as a result of habit. We are conditioned by nature to form habits, and the form our habits should take is inherent in nature. "Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them and are made perfect by habit."

The pattern of those habits which we are adapted to receive—*i.e.* to be taught—is found in nature: from nature we must take that pattern: and by habituating our children to that pattern, we shall perfect their moral virtue and enable them to achieve true happiness. That does not mean that we are slaves to nature, but that we can only discover freedom in nature. The free man is a man of nature, perfected in natural ways of behaviour.

Such is the theory of Aristotle: he derived it in a large measure from Plato, and to Plato we must turn for a detailed account of this natural pattern, and of the only effective method of adapting ourselves to it. But first let us note that the general tradition of education in Europe and America since the Renaissance has neglected or distorted this classical theory of education—first by blurring the clear distinction between intellectual and moral virtue, and then by ignoring the essential priority of moral virtue, by attempting to inculcate intellectual virtue into minds which have not received the necessary preparation. It is only onto a stock of goodness that knowledge can be safely grafted: by grafting it onto stocks that are unbalanced, undeveloped, neurotic, we merely give power to impulses that may in themselves be evil or corrupted.

2. THE PATTERN IN NATURE.

TO suggest that the pattern of moral virtue is to be found in nature seems immediately to involve us in a scientific approach to our subject. We have become so prejudiced by the claims put forward by certain scientists, that we have been content to leave "nature" to science, and to let it be assumed that "art" is something outside nature. Science implies measurement and classification—what is called "scientific method" or analysis. But it is only one "method" and wisdom, which includes science in its scope, implies also synthesis—the apprehension and understanding of wholes and relationships, the workings of the imagination and creative activity—in short, a subjective and sensational approach to reality; and this aspect of wisdom

might be called the method of art, or "aesthetic method". As such, it must be regarded as an indispensable instrument of education; and since scientific method is not within the mental capacity of young children, and aesthetic method is natural to them, we must turn to art as the only method available for the first stages of education.

During the past fifty years a world-wide revolution has taken place in the appreciation of children's art; gradually we have come to realize that we have in art an instrument of education and not merely a subject to be taught. Children have an art, that is to say, a way of expressing themselves in visual and plastic images, appropriate to their stage of mental development and this pictorial language of theirs is something which exists in its own rights and which is not to be judged by adult standards. It is a means of communication possessed by every child, and one which can be used to give us an understanding of the child, and to give the child an understanding of its environment. Art is not now an "extra": we no longer seek to pick out a few children with what used to be called an artistic temperament, and educate this minority to be artists. We recognize an artist of some kind in every child, and we maintain that the encouragement of a normal creative activity is one of the essentials of a full and balanced development of the personality.

This is a revolution to which many philosophers, psychologists and teachers have contributed, but it was John Ruskin who first suggested that the child's artistic activity should be entirely voluntary. It was an English psychologist, James Sully, who first made any considerable study of the characteristics of this voluntary activity. But great educationalists all over the world, following the lead of Froebel, were beginning to insist on the importance of spontaneity in all forms of education. The position we have now reached implies a claim that of all forms of spontaneous activity, a special educative value attaches to the artistic activity.

From this point of view, art is not to be treated as something external which has to be inserted into the general scheme of education. Nor, on the other hand, can education be regarded as something which can ever be complete without art. There is a certain way of life which we hold to be good, and the creative activity which we call art is essential to it. Education is nothing but an initiation into this way of life, and we believe that in no way is that initiation so successfully achieved as through the practice of art.

Art, that is to say, is a way of education; not so much a subject to be taught as a method of teaching any and all subjects. For this view of the educative rôle of art no originality can be claimed: we are but restating in modern terms the ideals which Plato expressed twenty-four centuries ago.

And when we say we are restating these ideals in modern terms we do not mean that we are adapting Plato's ideas to modern needs. We are not distorting his meaning or intention in any one particular. When Plato uses abstract terms like harmony, grace and rhythm, and when we use the same abstract terms, we want to convey exactly the same meaning. It is only when we use more particular terms, like music or painting or architecture, that we diverge a little from Plato in that we illustrate our meaning from our richer store of experience. It does not follow that we are any nearer to the truth than Plato, but we are entitled to claim, if we have any faith at all in human evolution, that the use we can make of arts like music or painting or architecture is potentially much greater than it was for Plato. But only potentially. For what is the history of the modern world, a world so rich potentially, but one long record of unrealized potentialities, of missed opportunities? Not much is known about that obscure subject, Greek music; but not even our classical scholars have ventured to suggest that Greek music was anything but a primitive affair in comparison with the music of Bach, of Mozart, of Beethoven. But what proportional use have we ever made of this modern art in education? Our music, compared with Greek music, is a veritable extension of human sensibility. But what commensurate place does it occupy in our schools? We have eurhythmics, it is true, and let us pay all honour to Dalcroze who has in this one aspect of education set us on the right path. But even in those schools which have been wholly devoted to Dalcroze's ideals, it is to be doubted whether we have advanced even so far as the educational methods contemplated by Plato on the basis of the primitive music of Greece.

The claims made by Plato for an aesthetic mode of education are quite simply stated. Indeed, one cannot do better than translate Plato's own words. "We attach such supreme importance to musical education"—he makes Socrates say in the *Republic* (III, 401-2), "because rhythm and harmony sink most deeply into the recesses of the soul, and take most powerful hold of it, bringing gracefulness in their train, and making a man graceful if he be rightly nurtured, but if not, the reverse." Plato then describes in what we call considerable psychological detail, the exact effects of rhythm and harmony on the growing mind. But he does not, as is too often assumed in the discussions of his educational theories, ascribe these qualities to music only. He says that the same qualities "enter largely into painting and all similar workmanship, into weaving and embroidery, into architecture, as well as the whole manufacture of utensils in general, nay, into the constitution of living bodies, and of all plants; for in all these things, gracefulness or ungracefulness finds place." And he adds, for he

has always the negative picture in mind, "the absence of grace, rhythm, and harmony, is closely related to an evil style, and an evil character."

There is something at once so simple and so comprehensive about this theory of Plato's that really we do not need to go beyond it. Music, painting, the making of useful objects, the proportions of the living body and of plants, these will, if made the basis of our educational methods, instil into the child a grace and harmony which will give it, not merely a noble bearing, but also a noble character; not only a graceful body, but also a sober mind. It will do this, says Plato, long before the child is able to reason, because it will inculcate what he calls, "the instinct of relationship,"* and it is upon this instinct that reason itself depends. Possessing this instinct, the child will never do wrong in deed or in thought.

I ought perhaps to explain, at this point, what Plato meant by this "instinct of relationship," for it is the foundation of his theory of education, and one, moreover, which he never abandoned throughout the development of this thought. The theory as I have already given it comes from *The Republic*. This was a work of the philosopher's early maturity. Thirty years later, at the age of seventy, Plato wrote his *Laws*, which Professor Taylor has described as "to-day the least generally known of Plato's major compositions," and yet "in some respects his most characteristic work."§ Here, in the second Book, we find his theory of education through art restarted in unmistakable terms—"handled," as Professor Taylor says, "with a psychological thoroughness to which the *Republic* affords no parallel." The theory, I would maintain, is as simple as it is true. It is this: that the aim of education should be to associate feelings of pleasure with what is good and feelings of pain with what is evil. Now such *feelings* are aesthetic—a fact which would have been obvious to the Greeks. This word "aesthetic" as we use it is cold and abstract, but it indicates a relationship which to the Greeks was very real and organic, a property of the physiological reactions which take place in the process of perception.

Now, says Plato, there exist in the physical universe, which we experience through our senses, certain rhythms, melodies, and abstract proportions which when perceived convey to the open mind a sensation of pleasure. For the moment we need not consider *why* these rhythms and proportions exist: they are simply part of the given universe. But if, says Plato, we can associate the concrete sensation of pleasure given by these rhythms and

* This is, of course, a translator's phrase (Davies and Vaughan) and not always adopted by other translators. But it represents accurately enough Plato's general meaning.

§ *The Laws of Plato*. Trans. into English by A. E. Taylor, M.A., D.Litt., LL.D., London (J. M. Dent & Sons), 1934.

proportions with good, and the concrete sensation of pain given by the opposite qualities of disharmony and ugliness with evil; if we can do this systematically in the early years, while the infant mind is still open to such influences, then we shall have set up an association between natural and spontaneous feelings and graceful or noble behaviour. Lest it should be thought that I am reading into Plato more than is justified, let me quote his actual words, as translated by Professor Taylor:

"And therefore what I would say is this: a child's first infant consciousness is that of pleasure and pain, this is the domain wherein the soul first acquires virtue or vice . . . By education I mean goodness in the form in which it is first acquired by a child. In fact, if pleasure and liking, pain and dislike, are formed in the soul on right lines before the age of understanding is reached, and when that age is attained, these feelings are in concord with understanding, thanks to early discipline in appropriate habits—this concord, regarded as a whole, is virtue. But if you consider the one factor in it, the rightly disciplined state of pleasures and pains whereby a man, from his first beginnings on, will abhor what he should abhor and relish what he should relish—if you isolate this factor and call it education, you will be giving it its true name."

Plato then illustrates his argument in this way: "No young creature whatsoever . . . can keep its body or its voice still: they are all perpetually trying to make movements and noises. They leap and bound, they dance and frolic, as it were with glee, and again, they utter cries of all sorts. Now animals at large have perception of order or disorder in these motions, no sense of what we call rhythm or melody." But man, Plato goes on to point out, is distinguished from the rest of animal creation precisely by the fact that he possesses an aesthetic sense, which he defines as "the power to perceive and enjoy rhythm and melody." Link this power of aesthetic perception to the power of discriminating between good and evil and then the most fundamental aim of education has been achieved. Good is *spontaneously* associated with pleasure, evil with pain.

Such is Plato's theory of education, and it seems to me to be essentially simple and obviously true. Why, then, should it offer such difficulty and, indeed, incomprehensibility to the modern educator? Professor Taylor, in his Introduction to his translation of the *Laws*, offers this explanation: "To Plato, as a true Greek, the ugliness of conduct which is morally out of place is the most immediately salient fact about it, and the beauty of holiness, if the scriptural phrase may be permitted, is something more than a metaphor. To judge by the tone of much of our literature, we are less sensitive on the point; we seem slow to perceive ugliness in wrong-doing as such, or even

ready to concede the "artistry" of great wickedness. It may be a wholesome discipline to consider carefully whether this difference of feeling may not be due less to a confusion on Plato's part between the beautiful and the morally good than to a certain aesthetic imperceptiveness on ours."

3. ART AND HUMAN NATURE.

PLATO was an authoritarian. His political utopia has always been a model for exponents of the totalitarian state. It is therefore necessary to ask ourselves whether there does not lurk in this theory of education some denial of that freedom and integrity of the human personality which is the basis of our libertarian philosophy. Granted the prevalence of "aesthetic imperceptiveness," this danger would surely exist: the "order of nature" would be interpreted in a systematic and insensitive manner, and the emergent faculties of the child would then be "conditioned" to this rigid pattern. Plato's republic can undoubtedly be regarded as a rigid pattern of this kind: it is the creation of a poet, but its beauty is objective, calculated, classical: it is like a crystal of ice. But nature is a living growth, and human nature is warm and mobile. Between the form natural to growth, which is a creative achievement of the life force or whatever impulse animates organic matter, and the forms abstracted by the human intellect, there is this difference: the one is a continuing process of freedom or spontaneity, of growth and integration, whereas the other is an act of objectification, or externalization and fixation, of cooling and petrification. Our criticism of Plato, if this were the place to pursue it, would charge him with abstracting from the natural process, making of it a measured pattern, and thereby destroying its quality of spontaneity, which in the human personality is the quality of spiritual freedom.

Two quite distinct developments during the past sixty years have made it possible for us to accept Plato's theory of the place of art in education without incurring the dangers which it would offer to imperceptive minds. One is the complete revolution which has taken place in our conception of art itself, and the other is the revolution in psychology.

The revolution in art is by no means complete, nor has a definite new standard or style yet been established. To some people it seems that the present state of art is merely confused and incoherent. But it must be obvious, even to the most bewildered spectator of the modern scene, that there is more essential similarity between a modern functional building and the Parthenon, than between the Parthenon and the classical buildings of our own time. The functional building and the Parthenon both exhibit the same fundamental features of good architecture—fitness for purpose, harmony

of proportions, good manners: whereas a modern building in the classical style can only be described as a fantasy in architectural inappropriateness. As for modern painting, there again one need not accept all its confused manifestations as a progress towards the ideal of beauty which Plato had in mind. Nevertheless, those with an eye to see, and no censoring prejudice, will find among these confused manifestations of the modern spirit works of art which answer to the Platonic canon, and are symbols of the grace and rhythm and harmony which led Plato to make art the basis of his educational system. One can assert of all the arts that a spirit of enquiry and scientific understanding has, during the last thirty years or so, led us back to the basic principles, and that though we cannot yet point to the creative achievements of a great age, we are now in a position to understand the significance of art such as has not existed since Plato's time. That is a large claim to make for the modern philosophy of art; it is perhaps a conceited claim. But however humble and soberminded we may be, it is difficult to find any intermediate period which reached such an understanding. It is true that during the Renaissance there were great humanists like Alberti who owed much to the Platonic doctrine, and the art of that period was, of course, a much nearer approximation to Plato's ideals than anything we have so far produced in the modern period. But neither Alberti nor any of the later humanists, however far they went in the direction of identifying moral and aesthetic ideals, ever committed themselves to anything as radical as an aesthetic method of education. They were all grammarians at heart, and like Browning's hero,* had "decided not to Live but Know," a noble ideal for the few who are content to work "Dead from the waist down," but not a principle for those who believe with Plato that the function of education is to promote the good life.

However much an increased understanding of the nature of art has enabled us to appreciate the truth and relevance of Plato's theory of education, we have been helped in an even larger measure by the increased understanding of human nature which we owe to modern psychology. Adequately to demonstrate this fact would lead us into a technical discussion which would not be appropriate now, but perhaps I might briefly indicate three directions in which modern psychology tends to support our claims.

The first relates to the significance of imagery in thought—imagery of all kinds, although it is simpler to discuss the subject in terms of visual imagery. We know, on the basis of many recent experiments, that the child begins life with a mind full of extremely vivid imagery. One school of psychologists even maintains that in the first years the child has difficulty

* *The Grammarian's Funeral.*

in distinguishing between its perceptions of the external world and its secondary images, and that the normal memory-image is only gradually separated from these vivid eidetic images. Whatever may be the truth of this theory, we do know for certain that the next stage in development, the stage of conceptual thought, is only reached by the gradual suppression of imagery. Now the whole Aristotelian tradition in education is so committed to the superiority of conceptual or logical processes of thought that all means have been taken to drive images out of the child's mind and to make it an efficient thinking machine. It was accepted as axiomatic that logical methods of procedure were uniquely efficient, and the ambition of every pedagogue was to devise a logical scheme for every subject in the curriculum. It was experimentally established that images performed no useful function in abstract thought, and the more abstract the thought the more intelligent it was assumed to be. To quote a well-known educationalist,* "Those children of the most fertile imagery . . . were by no means those of the highest school intelligence . . . the correlations between vivid and clear visual and auditory imagery and school intelligence are low, or it may be negative . . ." and so on.

I have no desire to question these established facts. But what we must question is the standard of "school intelligence" implicit in all such tests. It is nothing but the logical bias in its most blatant form. We know the examinations and tests by means of which the standard is established. Most of us have suffered from their indignities. But now, with the support of other schools of psychology, we are in a position to challenge the whole of this logical or rationalistic tradition. We must not commit the mistake of putting forward another exclusive standard. Our science teaches us toleration. But we do assert, on evidence, that there is more than one standard of intelligence, and indeed, more than one mode of thought. The purpose of thought is to arrive at truth, and truth, we say, is not found exclusively in the possession of those with a high "intelligence quotient"; it is just as likely to proceed out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, poets and artists, even madmen.

What has been established, by the particular school of psychology we are relying on, is that these babes and sucklings, poets and painters, visionaries of all kinds, have one thing in common—an imagination so vivid that it must be regarded as the use of the particular kind of imagery, that kind already referred to which has been called eidetic imagery. This imagery, which is natural to babes and sucklings, is in certain rare cases retained beyond adolescence, and among these rare cases are to be found our poets

* Charles Fox, *Educational Psychology*, London, 1930, p.86.

and painters and visionaries of all kinds. But more: when we come to investigate the nature of scientific thought, in so far as this thought is an inventive or creative activity, and not merely a logical arrangement of accepted facts, we find that it too relies on images. The whole of modern physics, for example, is studded with imagery, from Newton's falling apple to Eddington's man in a lift. Possibly there is more imagery in modern physics than in modern poetry.

With such facts in our hands we need not stop to defend the biological utility of the arts. We can turn on the scientists and convince them on the evidence of their own processes of thought. In so far as it is creative and biologically useful, their thought is imaginative. Yet the systems of education which they have devised, and the tests which they have imposed on children, give no marks to the imagination. Images, they say *and prove*, are not essential to efficient thought. So everything is done to suppress these inconvenient sprites, and to enthrone the absolute rule of the concept in the child's mind.

The second direction from which we receive psychological support for our claims is known as the Gestalt theory. It is hardly possible to express the significance of this theory in a few simple words, but the exponents of the theory would agree that it too is in the main a protest against a logical conception of knowledge and science. What they say, in effect, is that there are no facts apart from the act or process of experiencing them, that the "facts of a case" are not grasped by enumeration, but must be felt as a coherent pattern. The word "felt" must be emphasized, for this factor of feeling in perception is aesthetic. It is not only the perception of a particular pattern, but also a discrimination in favour of that particular pattern. That is to say, out of all possible patterns of behaviour, one is chosen as being particularly fit or appropriate. It feels right—one feels at once the ease with which this particular pattern is apprehended, and the appropriateness of the action that ensues. And then, since this particular pattern of behaviour feels right, it tends to be repeated, and other modes of behaviour tend to become assimilated to it.

What the psychologists call the acquisition of a pattern of behaviour is nothing but the process of learning—learning, that is to say, in the sense of acquiring skill in the doing of anything—walking, skating, weaving, painting, assembling an engine. "Grace and skill," says one of the Gestalt psychologists, "go hand in hand; their achievement is never the result of combining acts which themselves are awkward and unskilful. In order to do anything gracefully and skilfully one must first hit upon the 'fortunate variation' in behaviour which is most suitable to the conditions."

This has led us back to Plato again. In that part of the *Republic* which precedes the theory of education already referred to, Plato analyses the nature of form and rhythm, and what he says in effect is that the laws of form and rhythm are not given *a priori*, but are to be discovered in the best and most efficient actions. The following passage is from the *Republic*, and not from the work of a modern Gestalt psychologist. In studying the law of rhythms, Plato says, "we must not aim at a variety of them, or study all movements indiscriminately, but observe what are the natural rhythms of a well regulated and manly life, and when we have discovered these we must compel the foot and the music to suit themselves to the sense of such life, and not the sense itself to the foot and the music." In other words, in modern words, aesthetic laws are inherent in the biological processes of life itself; they are the laws which guide life along the path of ease and efficiency; and it is our business as educationalists to discover these laws in nature or experience, and make them the principles of our teaching. Balance and symmetry, proportion and rhythm, are basic factors in experience: indeed, they are the only elements by means of which experience can be organized into persisting patterns, and it is of their nature that they imply grace, economy and efficiency. What feels right works right, and the result, as measured by the consciousness of the individual, is a heightened sense of aesthetic enjoyment.

We now come to the final aspect of the psychological evidence. It is even more difficult to summarise than the last-mentioned aspect, but for a different reason. The evidence is not complete. We have indeed, got out of our depths and we flounder in a stormy sea. The theory of the unconscious is still disputed, and we must be careful not to claim too high a therapeutic value for those forms of free expression which we wish to encourage as part of our educational methods. That the young child—the very young child—has its repressions and its complexes no less than its parents and teachers is now sufficiently evident, but the treatment of psychoses and neuroses in the child presents quite exceptional difficulties to the psychiatrist. It is not, of course, for the teacher to meddle in such matters without training, but the psychiatrist might well ask the teachers to co-operate with him. Apart from any other aspect of the question, a child's drawings, produced as a result of spontaneous activity, are direct evidence of the child's physiological and psychological disposition, and in the opinion of some professional psycho-analysts, these drawings have more clinical value than any other form of evidence. But that is an aspect of the matter for which we must seek expert guidance. There is, however, a simpler aspect which is well within our lay competence. We know that a child absorbed in

drawing or in any other creative activity is a happy child. We know just as a matter of everyday experience that self-expression is self-improvement. For that reason we must claim a large portion of the child's time for artistic activities, simply on the grounds that these activities are, as it were, a safety valve, a path to equableness. That is a practical reason which might convince the reluctant logicians, but of course, it is not our main reason for claiming a large portion of the child's time. We cannot hope to overcome the ramparts of the rationalist tradition with our real reason, for that would seem too impracticable, too idealistic. For our real claim has no limits. We do not claim an hour or a day of the child's time: we claim the whole child. We believe that we have within our grasp a method of education of absolutely universal validity. We believe that the grace we can instil by means of music, poetry and the plastic arts is not a superficial acquirement, but the key to all knowledge and all noble behaviour. We suspect that much, if not all, of the misery in the world to-day is due to the suppression of imagination and feeling in the child, to the prevalence of logical and rationalistic modes of thought that do violence to those principles of grace and rhythm and fair proportion which are implicit in the order of the universe. We believe that our function, not merely as artists and art teachers, but as teachers and exemplars in general, is, as Plato said in one of his most visionary flights.

"to be guided by our instinct for whatever is lovely and gracious, so that our young men, dwelling in a wholesome climate, may drink in good from every quarter, whence, like a breeze bearing health from happy regions, some influence from noble works constantly falls upon eye and ear from childhood upward, and imperceptibly draws them into sympathy and harmony with the beauty of reason, whose impress they take."*

4. THE UNIQUENESS OF THE PERSON

THESE influences of which Plato speaks fall upon the organs of a unique sensibility. Uniqueness is a natural fact. It is a result of the infinite permutations and combinations of the *genes* which are the agents of life transmitted and united in the process of conception. Identical twins, by the uniqueness of their identity, give us a measure of the enormous diversity of persons in general.

This diversity is not a biological accident. It is the dialectical basis of natural selection, of human evolution. Any attempt, therefore, whether by education or coercion, to eliminate the differences between persons would frustrate the natural dissemination and growth of the human race. It is

* Trans. by F. S. Cornford (Oxford Univ. Press).

possible and even "scientific" to hold that we should attempt to control this growth, just as we have controlled the growth of species like the horse and the sheep. But such control could only be effectively exercised if we had an agreed aim in view. We breed horses for strength or speed, sheep for a finer fleece. But it is a godlike assumption to breed the human race for any predetermined quality, and the idea has only entered the minds of totalitarian philosophers like Plato and Hegel, or been the policy of extreme fanaticists who have attempted to put the ideals of such philosophers into practice.

Opposed to this point of view is another equally extreme—it received its fanatical expression in the philosophy of Max Stirner, to which Marx and Engels devoted some of their most destructive criticism. This philosophy asserts, with a logical consistency which some of its opponents might emulate, that all values can only be received and judged through the instrumentality of a unique sensational system, and that everything exterior to the wishes and desires of this ego is either a false rationalization of these instinctive drives, or a form of self-deception which leads to frustration and eventually to aggression and self-destruction. Altruism, that is to say, is an illusion, and only by recognizing that fact can we achieve individual happiness.

The truth, as it is manifested in events, lies somewhere between these two extremes. "History," wrote Engels, "makes itself in such a way that the final result always arises from conflicts between many individual wills, of which each again has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life. Thus there are innumerable intersecting forces, and infinite series of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant—the historical event. This again may itself be viewed as the product of a power which, taken as a whole, works *unconsciously* and without volition. For what each individual wills is obstructed by everyone else, and what emerges is something that no one willed."§

It is not the purpose of education to eliminate this conflict between individual wills—the attempt would be foredoomed to failure because the conflict is inherent in our biological nature. But obviously "the historical event" would be very different if, instead of a blind clash of individual wills, we could substitute some form of willing accommodation.

Two necessary processes are involved. One we shall call *initiation*; the other *reciprocity*. Before we can give effective direction to these processes, we must give precision to the units involved. A game cannot be played to a conclusion unless the counters have a fixed value; trade cannot

§ Tolstoy expressed a similar view of history in *War and Peace*.

be carried on without specific tokens of exchange; and in the same way a society can only function harmoniously if the individuals composing it are integrated persons, that is to say, people whose physical and mental growth has been completed, so that they are whole and healthy, and by that very reason competent to render mutual aid.

We shall deal with the processes of initiation and reciprocity presently: but first we must fully recognize the biological significance of uniqueness. It is true that we come into the world trailing clouds of glory; a Heaven which is universal and impersonal lies about us in our infancy, and though the shades of the social prison-house begin to close on the growing boy, he is still, in Wordsworth's exact phrase, "Nature's Priest." Each infant mind is endowed with his share of a racial consciousness (an "archaic heritage," as Freud calls it). But this is but one component in a system of perceptions and instincts, a "vision splendid," which is unique. Why we affirm this uniqueness, and do not want it to "die away, and fade into the light of common day," why we do not want it to be "ironed out" by impersonal powers, is explained by our reading of the biological evidence. At the heart of life is what is sometimes called a *dialectic*, but which is quite simply a strife between positive and negative forces, between Love and Death; and it is out of the tension created by this strife that further vitality, or what is optimistically called progress, arises. We can even venture to say, that the more definite the terms of this opposition—the sharper the conflict—the more vigorous will be the life. The first charge on the educator, therefore, is to bring the uniqueness of the individual into focus, to the end that a more vital interplay of forces takes place within each organic grouping of individuals—within the family, within the school, within society itself. The possibilities are at first evenly weighed between *hatred*, leading to crime, happiness and social antagonism, and *love*, which ensures mutual aid, individual happiness and social peace. What is certain is that the more desirable outcome is not ensured simply by the forcible suppression of the less desirable instincts: the whole meaning of education is that we seek to avoid hate by *positive* means, that is to say, by encouraging the stronger growth of love, which is indeed that grain of mustard seed, "which a man took, and sowed in his field, which is indeed the least of all seeds, but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come to lodge in the branches thereof."

5. THE PARENT AND THE CHILD

THE first and most fundamental stage of education is carried on in the family circle. This fact, which in all its potentialities has always been realized by the Catholic Church, has only recently been given 'scientific' demonstration through the practice of psycho-analysis. Only a tradition of education which for centuries has cultivated intellectual virtue at the expense of moral virtue could have ignored so vital a consideration. The exponents of that tradition, who have not usually seized on children before the age of seven or eight, have then tried and often tried in vain to "mould the character" of those committed to their care; but the truth is that "the little human being is frequently a finished product in his fourth or fifth year, and only gradually reveals in later years what lies buried in him."§

It is not possible to study the implications of psycho-analysis for education without becoming convinced that they are of overwhelming importance, and that it is futile to discuss theories of education for the later stages of the child's life until we have made some reasonable provision for the first phase, during which the child is still physically dependent on its parents, and largely abandoned to their care. That this care is often inspired by loving-kindness is not a sufficient guarantee of its efficiency. Children, psychologically speaking, can be killed by kindness, or "spoilt." In our present civilization we have to deal with a situation which has become a systematic hypocrisy, organized by neurotics, and into this system the child enters, not armed with powers of resistance, but doomed to conformity.

He is doomed by his impulse to imitate, or identify himself with, some adult in the family circle—usually the mother or father. But this emotional tie is not a simple choice for the child. The boy may wish to be as big and strong as his father; but at the same time he is in love (and in a very real sense) with his mother. Gradually this boy begins to feel that his father stands in his way with his mother. His identification with his father then takes on what Freud calls "a hostile colouring" and becomes identical with "the wish to replace his father in regard to his mother." The child is therefore in its earliest years caught up in a criss-cross of instinctive reactions which involve love and hate even towards the same object. This naturally leads to a mental state of insecurity or anxiety, and since the basic instinct in life is to protect one's own life—to live securely and full of contentment—there is an equally natural instinct to repress those reactions of hate which we find lead to discontent and unhappiness. But psycho-analysis has shown that an instinct is never repressed without seeking unconscious

§ Freud: *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* (1922), p. 298.

compensation. We cannot, in this short treatise on a general subject, go into the details of all the psychological processes involved: it is sufficient to say that psycho-analysis finds in this universal situation of the infant a sufficient explanation of all those aggressive impulses, jealousies, tempers, bad manners and selfishness, which it is the particular purpose of moral education to restrain or transform.

The educator must therefore ask, to what extent can this situation itself be dealt with, so that the development of these aggressive impulses is foreseen and controlled. To that question the psycho-analysts have given no very definite answer. Freud himself seems to deprecate analysis of normal children. "Such a prophylactic against nervous disease," he wrote, "which would probably be very effective, *presupposes an entirely different structure of society*. The application of psycho-analysis to education must be looked for to-day in quite a different direction." And he then goes on to give a definition of education which to some of his followers has seemed somewhat reactionary. "Let us get a clear idea of what the primary business of education is. The child has to learn to control its instincts. To grant it complete freedom, so that it obeys all its impulses without any restriction, is impossible . . . The function of education . . . is to inhibit, forbid and suppress, and it has at all times carried out this function to admiration. But we have learnt from analysis that it is this very suppression of instinct that involves the danger of neurotic illness . . . Education has . . . to steer its way between the Scylla of giving the instincts free play and the Charybdis of frustrating them. Unless the problem is altogether insoluble, an optimum of education must be discoverable, which will do the most good and the least harm. It is a matter of finding out how much one may forbid, at which times *and by what methods*. And then it must be further considered that the children have very different constitutional dispositions, so that the same educational procedure cannot possibly be good for all children."* Later in this same paragraph Freud enumerates the task of the educator as:

- (a) to recognize the characteristic constitution of each child;
- (b) to guess from small indications what is going on in its unformed mind;
- (c) to give him the right amount of love, and at the same time
- (d) to preserve an effective degree of authority.

This approach to the first phase of the child's life has carried us beyond the family circle, into the general field of education. But it should be obvious from this very brief consideration of the problem that the relationship first established between the child and its parents, and then extended to the

* *New Introductory Lectures* (1933), pp. 191-2. (My italics).

family circle, is fundamental. Joined to the innate disposition of the child (its physically determined temperament), this first stage of growth and initiation controls all the later stages. If the behaviour of parents towards their children were dependent on learning a technique (as the behaviour of the teacher is held to be) the situation of mankind would be desperate. Luckily in this respect healthy parents are guided by healthy instincts, and mutual love between parents and children can prevent and heal the wounds to which we are liable. But more often than not in the modern world parents are not healthy: they participate in a vast social neurosis, which has many causes and many aspects, but which is essentially due to that drastic suppression of the sexual impulses demanded by our modern civilization. It follows from this that the reform of education can never be a departmental affair: it is the whole man that is spiritually sick, and we cannot make him well by repressing this or that aspect of his daily existence. At the same time it is too optimistic to assume that a particular social revolution will carry all the necessary reforms in its sweep. It is man's relationship to society itself that is wrong, and none of the forms of society which at present prevails, or is in prospect, attempts to change that relationship. We change the name but not the form of that relationship. Parents, family, school, workshop, local environment—all that is still a *physical* or biological reality to which the child can be emotionally and morally related; beyond are the abstractions of church, state and nation to which only the mind responds, a mind open to all the ambiguity of words, symbols and ideals, the ground of all our misunderstandings, an unreal world which bears no correspondence to the pattern of nature.

6. THE TEACHER AND THE CHILD

NEITHER in the passage I have quoted, nor elsewhere in his writings, does Freud venture to suggest even the outlines of a successful *method* of education. But it will be seen that he tends to throw the burden on the individual educator: that is to say, there is no single psychologically correct system of education, but only the possibility of developing a right relationship between the particular teacher and his pupil. This is in line with the general doctrine of psycho-analysis, which is a psychology of individuals. (The psychology of the group must seek some other name, such as phylo-analysis). The assumption is, of course, a realistic one, for however much a child may be influenced by the environment of a particular school or the general aspects of a particular discipline, the funnel through which this experience is poured into his mind is always the individual teacher. This is due, not only to the fact that it is the obvious function

of the teacher to mediate between his pupil and the outer world, but even more to that process of identification to which I have already referred and which is one of the psychological mechanisms whose existence and scope have been revealed by psycho-analysis. This "earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person" (the boy with his father, for example) soon takes on complexities due to what we would normally call subjective and objective attitudes (*e.g.* the boy's desire to *be like* his father and the boy's desire at the same time to *have* his father). Without going into all the further complexities which ensue in the family circle, it should be obvious that a new situation arises when the child leaves the family circle for the school and finds there another adult with whom he must develop an emotional tie. The result in most cases is a transference—partial or complete—of the symptoms of identification from the parent to the teacher. Incidentally, other children are experiencing the same transference, from *different* parents to the *same* teacher, and this mutual tie is the nucleus of the first *group* in whose unity the child is likely to participate. § This is the situation of which the teacher has to take advantage and it is one which requires infinite tact and charity. It easily degenerates, on his part, into an attitude of dominance, and on the part of the child, into a state of hypnotic dependence. (The parallel in the wider sphere of politics will be obvious).

During the course of this change from absolute dependence on and ideal identification with the parent, there is established in the mind of the individual what Freud has called the "super-ego." The "ideal" element is, as it were, separated from the physical parent, and becomes the growing child's conscience, his faculty of self-observation and moral purpose. Freud himself has observed that "during the course of its growth, the super-ego also takes over the influence of those persons who have taken the place of the parents, that is to say of persons who have been concerned in the child's upbringing, and whom it has regarded as ideal models."* This gives the teacher his only possibility for what is called "character-formation." Unfortunately, as Freud also pointed out, parents and teachers are seldom disinterested in this situation. Instead of teaching children a rational morality, they "follow the dictates of their own super-ego." ". . . In the education of the child they are severe and exacting. They have forgotten the difficulties of their own childhood, and are glad to be able to identify

§ "A primary group of this kind is a number of individuals who have substituted one and the same object for their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego."—FREUD: *Group Psychology and Analysis of Ego*, p. 80.

* *New Introductory Lectures*, p. 87.

themselves fully at last with their own parents, who in their day subjected them to such severe restraints."§

In this way, not merely the sins, but also the prejudices and psychological abnormalities of the parents are passed on to the children from generation unto generation.

The good teacher is one who is able to break out of this vicious circle, and establish a wholly personal relationship with his pupil, one which is based on love and understanding for the unique personality which has been entrusted to his care. Such a teacher will not attempt to impose on his pupil arbitrary conceptions of "good" and "bad", which the child is unable to feel or understand (and which therefore lead to a state of tension or disunity which is one origin of neurosis). He will ignore the whole system of "make-believe" with its rewards and punishments, its constraints and inhibitions. He will try instead to establish a relationship of reciprocity and trust between himself and his pupil, and one of co-operation and mutual aid between all the individuals within his care. The teacher should identify himself with the pupil in the same degree that the pupil identifies himself with the teacher, and he should probably endeavour to make this process, on the pupil's part, more conscious than it would normally be. What is required is the give and take of a mutual relationship. The child is likely to develop his side of the relationship in the natural course of his development: from the teacher a more deliberate approach will be necessary, for he must really identify himself with the other person, and feel and do as he does. The teacher sees the situation from both ends, the pupil from one only. In this way the teacher gradually learns to distinguish and anticipate the real needs of his pupil, and only in this way is it possible for him to accomplish those tasks which Freud assigns to the teacher—to recognise the child's disposition, to understand his mind, to love him and to preserve effective authority over him.*

§ *Ibid.* p. 90.

* Godwin, in an essay "Of the Obtaining of Confidence", long ago expressed this truth in words which have lost none of their relevance to this discussion:

"If any man desire to possess himself of the most powerful engine that can be applied to the purpose of education, if he would find the ground upon which he must stand to enable himself to move the whole substance of the mind, he will probably find it in sympathy. Great power is not necessarily a subject of abuse. A wise preceptor would probably desire to be in possession of great power over the mind of his pupil, though he would use it with economy and diffidence. He would therefore seek by all honest arts to be admitted into his confidence, that so the points of contact between them may be more extensively multiplied, that he may not be regarded by the pupil as a stranger of the outer court of the temple, but that his image may mix itself with his pleasures, and be made the companion of his recreations." *Enquirer*, pp. 124-5.

7. THE PERSON AND THE GROUP

IF this right relationship is developed between the teacher and his pupil, and the teacher thus becomes the focus of a group of pupils who love him and trust him, it is then easy to establish the precepts of mutual aid within that group. This means that within the group—the class, the house, the school—a relationship of reciprocity has been formed which can take the place of those relationships of constraint which are normal in traditional methods of education.

If this feeling of trust in the teacher were the only psychological motive active within such a group, it is possible that complications due to envy and rivalry would ensue. But actually the group develops spontaneously a social life and cohesion which is independent of the teacher. The spontaneous emergence of groups among children has been studied by educationalists like Jean Piaget and Susan Isaacs, and a social experiment on a large scale which covers the whole development of the individual is being conducted at the Peckham Health Centre,* with results which fully support this thesis.

The importance of this development, in the life of the child, is that it leads the child *by natural stages* from a self-centred state of egotism to an attitude of social co-operation. There is then no question of forcing the child to recognize and accept a moral code whose justice it cannot appreciate. That abstract "sense of duty" is wholly outside the child's mental range: the child can only be coerced into its observance. But that sense of "playing the game" which emerges when children evolve their own activities is a real thing: it is a felt relationship between little human beings who must co-operate to achieve their common aim. And to achieve this aim they must create a pattern—the rules of the game which give coherence and form to their activities. In such spontaneously evolved patterns, giving pleasures and satisfaction to the growing animal instincts

* " 'Community' is not formed merely by the aggregation of persons assembled for the convenience of sustaining some ulterior purpose, as in a housing estate connected with a single industry; nor by the aggregation of individuals kept in contiguity by the compulsion of necessity, as in 'special areas' wrecked by unemployment; nor held together, as in some social settlements, by the doubtful adhesive of persuasion; nor indeed meeting the needs of war time as in 'Communal Feeding', 'Communal Nurseries'. Its characteristic is that it is the result of a *natural functional organisation in society*, which brings *its own* intrinsic impetus to ordered growth and development. In our understanding, 'community' is built up of *homes* linked with *society* through a functional zone of mutuality. As it grows in mutuality of synthesis it *determines its own* anatomy and physiology, according to biological law. A community is thus a specific 'organ' of the body of society and is formed of living and growing cells—the homes of which it is composed." *The Peckham Experiment, a study in the Living Structure of Society*. By Innes H. Pearse, M.D. and Lucy H. Crocker B.Sc. London (Allen & Unwin), 1943, pp. 291-2.

and desires, lies hidden the pattern of a society in which all persons are free, but freely consenting to a common purpose.

It is impossible to exaggerate the fundamental nature of this aspect of education, which I have called *initiation*. At this stage of life a choice must be made which inevitably dictates the form which our society will take. In one direction we can institute objective codes of conduct and morality to which our children are introduced before the age of understanding and to which they are compelled to conform by a system of rewards and punishments. That way conducts us to an authoritarian society, governed by laws and sanctioned by military power. It is the kind of society in which most of the world now lives, ridden by neuroses, full of envy and avarice, ravaged by war and disease.

In the other direction we can avoid all coercive codes of morality, all formal conceptions of 'right' and 'wrong'. For a morality of obedience we can substitute a morality of attachment or reciprocity, that living together in perfect charity which was once the ideal of Christianity. Believing that the spontaneous life developed by children among themselves gives rise to a discipline infinitely nearer to that inner accord or harmony which is the mark of the virtuous man, we can aim at making our teachers the friends rather than the masters of their pupils; as teachers they will not lay down ready-made rules, but will encourage their children to carry out their own co-operative activities, and thus spontaneously to elaborate their own rules. Discipline will not be imposed, but discovered—discovered as the right, economical and harmonious way of action. We can avoid the competitive evils of the examination system, which merely serves to re-enforce the egocentrism inherent in the child: we can eliminate all ideas of rewards and punishments, substituting a sense of the collective good of the community, to which reparation for shortcomings and selfishness will be obviously due and freely given. In all things, moral and intellectual, we should act on the belief that we really possess only what we have conquered ourselves—that we are made perfect by natural habits, but slaves by social conventions; and that until we have become accustomed to beauty we are not capable of truth and goodness, for by beauty we mean the principle of harmony which is the given order of the physical universe, to which we conform and live, or which we reject and die.

8. THE FREEDOM OF THE SCHOOL

THE reader who has followed me with agreement so far must now be prepared for some logical consequences which are at variance with the general trend of progressive thought. Progress in education throughout the civilised world has been for the most part conceived in terms of "national systems," and all our endeavours have been to make such systems more and more inclusive, and more and more standardised. If only the system is perfect, we have argued, the products will be as good as possible.

We might have proceeded in other ways: we might, for example, have concentrated on the training of teachers, and having made that perfect, said to them: Go out into the world, and wherever there are children to listen to you, in village halls and at street corners, in highways and byways, gather little children round you and teach them as once Christ taught them. We might, that is to say, have thought of teachers as missionaries rather than as masters; and who would venture to say that the state of the world would then have been worse than it is?

There are still other possibilities. Instead of entrusting the education of children to bureaucratic organisations divorced from the main business of life, we might have developed the apprenticeship system, and made education a preparation for vocation—the doctors educating some children, the lawyers others, the engineers others, the weavers and the miners still others. Each guild or trade would have taken in its future apprentices from the beginning, much as, even now, some religious orders supervise the education from early years of those children destined to become novices. Instead of these and other possibilities, we have established *national* or *state* systems of education. In some countries, England among them, a few schools still manage to exist outside the official orbit, but unless, like some of the so-called "public" schools, they are richly endowed, they fight a losing battle against the increasing ubiquity and efficiency of the state schools.

There is no need to describe this system, because we all have experience of it. But few people are conscious of its dangers. These are of two distinct kinds.

The first of these dangers was anticipated by Godwin, and I cannot do better than repeat his warning:

"The project of a national education ought uniformly to be discouraged on account of its obvious alliance with national government. This is an alliance of a more formidable nature than the old and much contested alliance of church and state. Before we put so powerful a machine under the direction of so ambiguous an agent, it behoves us to consider well

what it is that we do. Government will not fail to employ it to strengthen its hands and perpetuate its institutions. If we could even suppose the agents of government not to propose to themselves an object which will be apt to appear in their eyes not merely innocent but meritorious, the evil would not the less happen. Their views as institutors of a system of education will not fail to be analogous to their views in their political capacity: the data upon which their conduct as statesmen is vindicated will be the data upon which their instructions are founded. It is not true that our youth ought to be instructed to venerate the constitution, however excellent; they should be instructed to venerate truth, and the constitution only so far as it corresponded with their independent deductions of truth. Had the scheme of a national education been adopted when despotism was most triumphant, it is not to be believed that it could have forever stifled the voice of truth. But it would have been the most formidable and profound contrivance for that purpose that imagination can suggest. Still, in the countries where liberty chiefly prevails, it is reasonably to be assumed that there are important errors, and a national education has the most direct tendency to perpetuate those errors and to form all minds upon one model."*

It is difficult to realize that this passage was written more than 150 years ago, before the growth of national states like France and Germany, and before the institution of totalitarian régimes which make this very use which Godwin feared of their educational system. We in Great Britain have attempted to impose certain safeguards, such as school managers and local educational authorities, but these bodies are gradually losing their independence, and the new Education Act virtually abolishes their powers. Here as elsewhere a system of national education has become potentially a system of national propaganda, designed to inculcate certain attitudes and beliefs which *may* not correspond with our independent deductions of truth. National socialism in Germany, with its wild distortions of scientific truth and of historical fact, would not have survived so long had not the Government utilised the national system of education for the dissemination of the party's doctrines. The same is true of the national communism established in Russia. To regularize and nationalize the instruments of education is merely to convert these instruments into weapons of dictatorship.

A second objection to a national system of education is psychological rather than political. Mankind is naturally differentiated into many types, and to press all these types into the same mould must inevitably lead to distortions and repressions. Schools should be of many kinds, following different methods and catering for different dispositions. It might be argued

* *Political Justice*, VI, 8.

that even a totalitarian state must recognize this principle but the truth is that differentiation is an organic process, the spontaneous and roving association of individuals for particular purposes. To divide and segregate is not the same as to join and aggregate—it is just the opposite process. The whole structure of education, as the natural process we have envisaged, falls to pieces if we attempt to make that structure rational or artificial.* Like life itself, animal as well as human, education must follow a principle of organic consistency: we must *feel our way* to the right units, and out of the natural grouping of these units round the biological actualities and practical activities of man, free and healthy institutions will emerge. Among these we shall find institutions in which children can mature the principle of growth innate in each one of them while at the same time they are initiated into the fellowship of their familiars.

9. A COMMUNITY OF INDIVIDUALS

FREUD was never tired of warning us of the thinness and brittleness of the shell we call civilization. "Civilized society," he writes in one place, "which exacts good conduct and does not trouble about the impulses underlying it, has thus won over to obedience a great many people who are not thereby following the dictates of their own nature. Encouraged by this success, society has suffered itself to be led into straining the normal standard to the highest possible point, and thus it has forced its members into a yet greater estrangement from their instinctual dispositions. They are consequently subjected to an unceasing suppression of instincts, the resulting strain of which betrays itself in the most remarkable phenomena of reaction and compensation formations . . . Anyone thus compelled to act continually in the sense of precepts which are not the expression of instinctual inclinations, is living, psychologically speaking, beyond his means, and might objectively be designated a hypocrite, whether this difference is clearly known to him or not. It is undeniable that our contemporary

* Such a "rational" organization is attempted in the new Education Act. The division of secondary schools into three types, grammar, technical and modern, represents artificial categories based on "aptitudes" determined by a cursory examination held at the immature age of 10-11. Subsequent interchange between these categories is legally possible, but administratively difficult and therefore unlikely. The articulation proposed here is regional or local, the smallest units being nursery schools, several of which feed a primary school, of which in turn several feed a secondary school—the schools increasing in size as they cater for higher age groups and wider areas but always remaining "multilateral" in their curricula. Only in this way can we hope to retain that dialectical interplay between diverse dispositions which is the basis of a natural character-formation. The vocational segregation of "like-minded" children from the age of eleven onward can only lead to intellectual dullness and social apathy. Birds of a feather flock together, but what is now proposed by our rulers is that they should be caged together.

civilization is extraordinarily favourable to the production of this form of hypocrisy. One might venture to say that it is based upon such hypocrisy, and that it should have to submit to far-reaching modifications if people were to undertake to live in accordance with the psychological truth."* Freud himself never ventured to outline those "far-reaching modifications" which society would have to undergo for the sake of psychological truth, which I think we may assume is the same thing as psychological happiness. But he did indicate in unmistakable terms that he did not consider such necessary modifications to have been achieved under the collectivist systems of Russia and Germany.‡ For this reason Marxists have often condemned this great scientist as a reactionary, and it is true that by their insistence on the integrity of the family, for example, psycho-analysts find themselves in the company of conservative forces such as the Catholic Church. But they will not for this reason be deterred from stating the psychological truth, as they see it. That scientific obligation will also lead them to side with those political forces which oppose the state as such. Already certain followers of Freud set drastic limits to the beneficial effects of state interference. For example Dr. Edward Glover, the director of the Psycho-analytical Institute of Great Britain, does not hesitate to declare that "state worship is a form of fetishism derived from the displacement of family dependence," and suggested further that "however useful the state may be in the regulation of material things it is nevertheless a backward and superstitious organization.* Its true function is "to promote and strengthen in every possible way the status of the family within which civilization is born and maintained and by which it is transmitted."

It is important to realize that these psychologists are not recommending a particular policy on ideological grounds; they are dealing with the psychological and the physiological health of the human organism, and they assert

* *Collected Papers*, Vol. IV, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death". Schiller said very much the same in his *Letters upon the Aesthetical Education of Man*: "In this way individual concrete life is gradually extinguished, in order that the abstract whole may prolong its miserable existence, and the state remains for ever a stranger to its citizens, because it is nowhere present to their feelings. Compelled to reduce to some order the multiplicity of its citizens by classifying them, and only to know humanity through representation at second hand, the governing classes end by altogether losing sight of their citizens, reducing them to some figment of the mind. Meanwhile the subject classes cannot but welcome coldly laws which are so little addressed to them personally. In the end, tired of a bondage which the state does so little to lighten, positive society disintegrates—a fate which has long ago overcome most European states. It dissolves into a moral state of nature, in which the public authority is nothing more than a class, hated and betrayed by those who make its existence necessary, respected only by those who can do without it."

‡ Cf. especially *New Introductory Lectures*, Lecture XXXV, "A Philosophy of Life".

* "State Parentalism", *New English Weekly*, March 23, 1944.

that this health cannot be maintained unless certain conflicts which are the product of modern civilization are avoided. These conflicts arise when in the course of his childhood and youth man finds that he has to adjust himself to unreal systems of law, morality and convention—systems which are unreal because they are remote and abstract, not necessarily in conformity with his biological needs nor with the general pattern of nature. Man is born free; and everywhere he is in *mental* chains. Neurosis, crime, insanity—these are but so many symptoms of a disorder which is basic to our form of society. Man is ill-adjusted from the nursery up, and this ill-adjustment and consequent unhappiness is not something which can be prevented or removed by individual analysis—it is a group disorder and can only be removed by “far-reaching modifications” of our contemporary civilisation.

We who demand freedom in education, autonomy in the school and self-government in industry are not inspired by any vague ideal of liberation. What we preach is really a discipline and a morality as formal and as fixed as any preached by Church or State. But our law is given in nature, is discoverable by scientific method, and, as Aristotle points out, human beings are adapted by nature to receive this law. Because we are so adapted, freedom, which is a vague concept to so many people, becomes a perfectly real and vivid principle, because it is a habit to which we are pre-conditioned by biological elements in our physical frame and nervous constitution.

Education, from this point of view, is an undeveloped science. To discover, for example, the degree of poise and co-ordination in the muscular system of the body is an art which has never yet been defined and practised. Harmony within the family, harmony within the social group, harmony within and among nations—these are no less psycho-physiological problems, questions of pattern and practice, of adjustment to natural proportions and conformity to natural harmonies.

Each individual begins life as a dynamic unity. Into that original unity tensions and distortions are introduced by an unconscious and largely alien environment. It is alien because it is unconscious. Unless we were motivated by hatred towards the human race, we could not consciously introduce those abstract systems of law and morality on which the evolving body and soul of the person, born to potential unity and beauty, is disastrously stretched and deformed.

I do not pretend to know what are the exact precepts of a morality of love and mutual aid: I doubt if they can be formulated more explicitly than they were long ago in the Sermon on the Mount. But life, which is an organic growth, cannot be lived according to an abstract formula

of words, but only to a pattern, and not to a pattern in the abstract sense of a defined form, but only to a living, evolving form, which obeys rules, not in stasis, but in growth. Life is movement: we cannot halt it for a moment without killing it. The pattern is only visible in time. We can give pattern to our span of years, but we cannot, without death or distortion, give life to a pattern of law, to any “purely verbal, symbolic system of behaviour.”* The basis of a living community, the basis of individual happiness, is physiological: it is only in so far as this physiological basis has unity with nature (*physis* = nature) that society itself can have harmony and health. It is in small units—in the family circle, in the classroom and in the school, that this harmony and health must be first achieved. In so far as some abstraction called the state interferes with the integrity of these groups—and by their integrity we mean their capacity for spontaneous growth—in that degree the state is denying life and health to its citizens. Freedom is simply space for spontaneous action: men live in communities solely to secure that space.

10. SUMMARY

I HOPE I may now expect from my reader a clearer understanding of what is meant by “freedom in education.” We can now see that it is more exact to speak of “education for freedom.” But this is a misleading slogan unless we remember the means, which is the discipline of art, the only discipline to which the senses naturally submit. Art, as we have seen, is a discipline which the senses seek in their intuitive perception of form, of harmony, of proportion, of the integrity or wholeness of any experience. It is also the discipline of the tool and the material—the discipline imposed by pencil or pen, by the loom or the potter’s wheel, by the physical nature of paint, textiles, wood, stone or clay.

But the point about such discipline is that it is innate: it is part of our physiological constitution, and is there to be encouraged and matured. It does not have to be imposed by the schoolmaster or the drill sergeant: it is not a kind of physical torture. It is a faculty within the child which responds to sympathy and love, to the intelligent anticipation of impulses and trends in the individuality of the child. For this reason the teacher must be primarily a person and not a pedagogue, a friend rather than a master or mistress, an infinitely patient collaborator. Put in a drier and more pedantic way, the aim of education is to discover the child’s psychological type, and to allow each type its natural line of development, its natural form of integration. That is the real meaning of freedom in education.

* Dr. Trigant Burrow.

The art of children is supremely important for this very reason: it is the earliest and the most exact index to the child's individual psychology. Once the psychological tendency or trend of a child is known, its own individuality can be developed by the discipline of art, till it has its own form and beauty, which is its unique contribution to the beauties of human nature. This, of course, is the antithesis of those totalitarian doctrines of education (not confined to totalitarian countries) which strive to impose a unique concept of human nature on the infinite variety of human persons.

A child's art, therefore, is its passport to freedom, to the full fruition of all its gifts and talents, to its true and stable happiness in adult life. Art leads the child out of itself. It may begin as a lonely individual activity, as the self-absorbed scribbling of a baby on a piece of paper. But the child scribbles in order to communicate its inner world to a sympathetic spectator, to the parent from whom it expects a sympathetic response.

Too often, alas, it receives only indifference or ridicule. Nothing is more crushing to the infant spirit than a parent's or a teacher's contempt for those creative efforts of expression. That is one aspect of a crime which disgraces the whole of our intellectual civilization and which, in my opinion, is the root cause of our social disintegration. We sow the seeds of disunity in the nursery and the classroom, with our superior adult conceit. We divide the intelligence from the sensibility of our children, create split-men (schizophrenics, to give them a psychological name), and then discover that we have no social unity.

We begin our life in unity—the physical unity of the mother and child, to which corresponds the emotional unity of love. We should build on that original unity, extending it first to the family, where the seeds of hatred are so easily and so often sown, and then to the school, and so by stages to the farm, the workshop, the village and the whole community. But the basis of unity at each successive stage, as at the first stage, is creativity. We unite to create, and the pattern of creation is in nature, and we discover and conform to this pattern by all the methods of artistic activity—by music, by dancing and drama, but also by working together and living together, for, in a sane civilization, these too are arts of the same natural pattern.

PUBLISHERS NOTE

For many readers this pamphlet will be the first they have read bearing the imprint of the FREEDOM PRESS and they may therefore be interested to know more about this organization and what it represents. An 8-page leaflet giving a short history of the FREEDOM PRESS since its inception in 1886 will be sent on application.

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We are glad to publish this pamphlet by Herbert Read because, even though it does not pretend to deal with the whole problem of education (it purposely omits the history of and discussion on the different aspects of education, and the organization of teachers in the new society) it covers new ground by relating the problem of education to that of liberty. This is particularly important at a time when many people think that the question of education can be solved by State legislation. But we hope that this work will be only the first of a number of studies to be published by the Freedom Press on the different problems of education. For this purpose we need the active support of teachers who have been interested in the views put forward by Herbert Read and who would like to see more publications on education. Both the author and the publishers will welcome suggestions and concrete proposals which should be addressed to the Freedom Press.
