

BERTRAND RUSSELL

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**EDUCATION  
AND THE  
MODERN  
WORLD**



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EDUCATION  
AND THE MODERN WORLD

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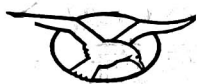
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# CHAPTER I

## THE INDIVIDUAL VERSUS THE CITIZEN

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**T**HAT education is desirable is the opinion of all modern civilized States, but is, nevertheless, a proposition which has at all times been disputed by some men whose judgment commands respect. Those who oppose education do so on the ground that it cannot achieve its professed objects. Before we can adequately examine their opinion, we must, therefore, decide what it is that we should wish education to accomplish if possible: on this question there are as many divergent views as there are conceptions of human welfare. But there is one great temperamental cleavage which goes deeper than any of the other controversies, and that is the cleavage between those who consider education primarily in relation to the individual psyche, and those who consider it in relation to the community.

Assuming (as will be argued in the next chapter) that education should do something to afford a training and not merely to prevent impediments to growth, the question arises whether education should train good individuals or good citizens. It may be said, and it would be said by

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any person of Hegelian tendencies, that there can be no antithesis between the good citizen and the good individual. The good individual is he who ministers to the good of the whole, and the good of the whole is a pattern made up of the goods of individuals. As an ultimate metaphysical truth I am not prepared either to combat or to support this thesis, but in practical daily life the education which results from regarding a child as an individual is very different from that which results from regarding him as a future citizen. The cultivation of the individual mind is not, on the face of it, the same thing as the production of a useful citizen. Goethe, for example, was a less useful citizen than James Watt, but as an individual must be reckoned superior. There is such a thing as the good of the individual as distinct from a little fraction of the good of the community. Different people have different conceptions of what constitutes the good of the individual, and I have no wish to argue with those who take a view different from my own. But whatever view may be taken, it is difficult to deny that the cultivation of the individual and the training of the citizen are different things.

What constitutes the good of the individual? I will try to give my own answer without in any way suggesting that others should agree with me.

First and foremost, the individual, like Leibniz's monads, should mirror the world. Why? I cannot say why, except that knowledge and comprehensiveness appear to me glorious attributes, in virtue of which I prefer Newton

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to an oyster. The man who holds concentrated and sparkling within his own mind, as within a *camera obscura*, the depths of space, the evolution of the sun and planets, the geological ages of the earth, and the brief history of humanity, appears to me to be doing what is distinctly human and what adds most to the diversified spectacle of nature. I would not abate this view even if it should prove, as much of modern physics seems to suggest, that the depths of space and the "dark backward and abysm of time" were only coefficients in the mathematician's equations. For in that case man becomes even more remarkable as the inventor of the starry heavens and the ages of cosmic antiquity: what he loses in knowledge he gains in imagination.

But while the cognitive part of man is the basis of his excellence, it is far from being the whole of it. It is not enough to mirror the world. It should be mirrored with emotion: a specific emotion appropriate to the object, and a general joy in the mere act of knowing. But knowing and feeling together are still not enough for the complete human being. In this world of flux men bear their part as causes of change, and in the consciousness of themselves as causes they exercise will and become aware of power. Knowledge, emotion, and power, all these should be widened to the utmost in seeking the perfection of the human being. Power, Wisdom and Love, according to traditional theology, are the respective attributes of the Three Persons of the Trinity, and in this respect at any rate man made God in his own image.

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In this we are thinking of man as an individual. We are considering him as he has been considered by Buddhists, Stoics, Christian saints, and all mystics. The elements of knowledge and emotion in the perfect individual as we have been portraying him are not essentially social. It is only through the will and through the exercise of power that the individual whom we have been imagining becomes an effective member of the community. And even so the only place which the will, as such, can give to a man is that of dictator. The will of the individual considered in isolation is the god-like will which says "let such things be." The attitude of the citizen is a very different one. He is aware that his will is not the only one in the world, and he is concerned, in one way or another, to bring harmony out of the conflicting wills that exist within his community. The individual as such is self-subsistent, while the citizen is essentially circumscribed by his neighbours. With the exception of Robinson Crusoe we are of course all in fact citizens, and education must take account of this fact. But it may be held that we shall ultimately be better citizens if we are first aware of all our potentialities as individuals before we descend to the compromises and practical acquiescences of the political life. The fundamental characteristic of the citizen is that he co-operates, in intention if not in fact. Now the man who wishes to co-operate, unless he is one of exceptional powers, will look about for some ready-made purpose with which to co-operate. Only a man of very exceptional greatness can

conceive in solitude a purpose in which it would be well for men to co-operate, and having conceived it can persuade men to follow him. There have been such men. Pythagoras thought it well to study geometry, for which every school-boy to this day has reason to curse him. But this solitary and creative form of citizenship is rare, and is not likely to be produced by an education designed for the training of citizens. Citizens as conceived by governments are persons who admire the *status quo* and are prepared to exert themselves for its preservation. Oddly enough, while all governments aim at producing men of this type to the exclusion of all other types, their heroes in the past are of exactly the sort that they aim at preventing in the present. Americans admire George Washington and Jefferson, but imprison those who share their political opinions. The English admire Boadicea, whom they would treat exactly as the Romans did if she were to appear in modern India. All the Western nations admire Christ, who would certainly be suspect to Scotland Yard if He lived now, and would be refused American citizenship on account of His unwillingness to bear arms. This illustrates the ways in which citizenship as an ideal is inadequate, for as an ideal it involves an absence of creativeness, and a willingness to acquiesce in the powers that be, whether oligarchic or democratic, which is contrary to what is characteristic of the greatest men, and tends, if over-emphasised, to prevent ordinary men from attaining the greatness of which they are capable.

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I do not mean to be understood as an advocate of rebellion. Rebellion in itself is no better than acquiescence in itself, since it is equally determined by relation to what is outside ourselves rather than by a purely personal judgment of value. Whether rebellion is to be praised or deprecated depends upon that against which a person rebels, but there should be the possibility of rebellion on occasion, and not only a blind acquiescence produced by a rigid education in conformity. And what is perhaps more important than either rebellion or acquiescence, there should be the capacity to strike out a wholly new line, as was done by Pythagoras when he invented the study of geometry.

The issue between citizenship and individuality is important in education, in politics, in ethics, and in metaphysics. In education it has a comparatively simple practical aspect, which can be to some degree considered apart from the theoretical issue. The education of the young of a whole community is an expensive business, which, in the main, is bound to fall to the lot of the State. The only other organisation sufficiently interested in forming the minds of the young to have any really important share in education is the Church. The purpose of the State is, of course, to train citizens. For certain historical reasons, this purpose is as yet considerably mitigated by tradition. In the Middle Ages education meant the education of the priest. From the Renaissance until recent times it meant the education of a gentleman. Under the influence of snob-

bish democracy, it has come to mean an education which makes a man seem like a gentleman. Many things of little utility to the citizen as such are taught in schools, with a view to making the scholars genteel. Other elements in education remain from the ecclesiastical tradition of the Middle Ages, of which the purpose was to enable a man to apprehend the ways of God. Gentility and godliness are attributes of the individual rather than of the citizen. The Christian religion as a whole is a religion of the individual, owing to the fact that it arose among men destitute of political power. It is concerned primarily with the relation of the soul to God; and while it considers the relation of a man to his neighbour, it considers it as resulting from the man's own emotions, not from laws and social institutions.

The political element in Christianity, as it exists at the present day, came in with Constantine. Before his day it was the Christian's duty to disobey the State, while since his day it has, as a rule and in the main, been the Christian's duty to obey the State. The anarchic origin of Christianity has, however, left a leaven which has led, throughout its history, to revivals of the primitive attitude of disobedience. The Cathari, the Albigenses, the Spiritual Franciscans, all in their various ways rejected authority in favour of the inner light. Protestantism began in a revolt against authority, and has never found any logical justification for such exercise of theological jurisdiction as it has been inclined to claim after it had acquired con-



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trol of the government. Consequently, Protestantism has been driven by an inner logic to the acceptance of religious toleration, a view which Catholicism has never adopted in theory, and has only accepted in practice for reasons of temporary convenience. In this, Catholicism represents the tradition of the Roman Emperor, while Protestantism has reverted to the individualism of the Apostles and the Early Fathers.

Religions may be divided into those that are political and those that concern the individual soul. Confucianism is a political religion: Confucius, as he wandered from court to court, became concerned essentially with the problem of government, and with the instilling of such virtues as to make good government easy. Buddhism, on the contrary, in spite of the fact that in its early days it was the religion of princes, is essentially non-political. I do not mean that it has always remained so. In Tibet it is as political as the papacy, and in Japan I have met high Buddhist dignitaries who reminded me of English archdeacons. Nevertheless, the Buddhist, in his more religious moments, considers himself essentially as a solitary being. Islam, on the contrary, was from its very beginning a political religion. Mahomet made himself a ruler of men, and the caliphs who succeeded him remained so until the conclusion of the Great War. It is typical of the difference between Islam and Christianity that the caliph combined within himself both temporal and spiritual authority, which to a Mahometan are not distinct; whereas Chris-