

# PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

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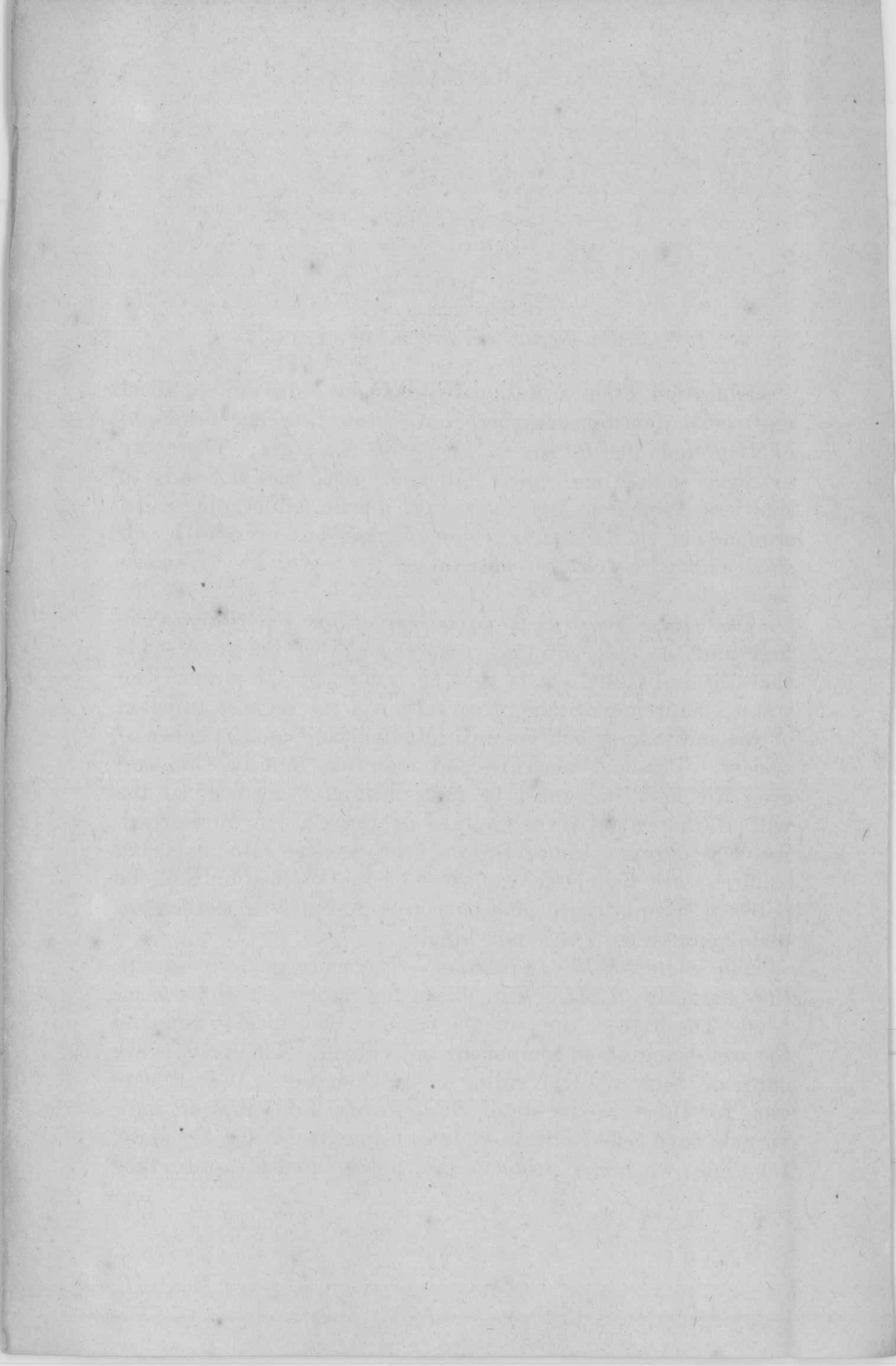
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## PART I

### THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF EDUCATION



## CHAPTER I

### THE FUNCTION OF EDUCATION

**Education From a National Standpoint.**—In our political and social development there have been two conceptions to explain and justify the existence of the state. These are extremes in aim and spirit and have given rise not only to limitless discussion and conjecture among philosophers and students of political and social sciences, but even to bloodshed among the classes constituting the social group known as a state.

*The Older Theory: The Individual for the State.*—The first and the older of these two theories of the state holds that the individual exists for the benefit of the state. The state is supreme. State preservation is the highest function of the individual, both as an individual and as a member of society. Personal pleasure and ambition, family ties, and even life and limb must be unhesitatingly sacrificed at the will of the ruler if the welfare of the state is threatened. Assyria, Egypt, India, Sparta, the modern Mohammedan countries are the classic examples of the civilization and the political organization which have been founded upon the complete repression of the individual.

*The State for the Individual.*—The more modern conception maintains that the state exists for the benefit of its members. The highest duty of the state is therefore to promote the well-being of its component individuals. Their rights are supreme, their will the ruling force, their needs the ultimate aim, for they are the state. This theory holds that all individuals have ceded certain rights to a central body, the state, for their own better protection. They created the state, they

can recreate and reshape it, make the most radical modifications, if their happiness and their well-being demand the change. This conception of the state shows appreciation of the true worth of man, the apotheosis of the individual. This doctrine is responsible for the rise and growth of republican government, the separation of church and state, the death of the divine right of kings. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it secured religious freedom, in the eighteenth and the nineteenth, political freedom, and our economic soothsayers predict industrial freedom as its result in the twentieth.

*Conclusion for Education.*—Opposite as these two views are, they nevertheless lead to a common conclusion when viewed from an educational standpoint. If the state is supreme and its welfare is the center about which individual life must revolve, then its growth and power depend upon the moral strength and intellectual enlightenment of its members. In the final analysis the state is no stronger than its representative member; like a chain, it is only as strong as its weakest typical constituent. The better the development of its component individuals, the stronger will the state, as a whole, be. Its final safety and ultimate permanency lie in the education and progress of its members.

If, on the contrary, the state exists for its individuals, the very best protection that it can give to them is to help them realize their own native powers, to teach them to use their own strength and to rely on their own resources.

We know, full well, that we are destined to a life of social interdependence and mutual social help. True social efficiency can be attained only when each individual is prepared to contribute his best endowments to society and to enjoy the advantages which society has to offer him. This process of self-realization through social life is the highest result of the educative process. From the educational standpoint, both theories seem to teach the same lesson, viz.—*Education is the greatest function and the final safeguard of society and its organized form, the state.*



**What Kind of Education Should Society Give?**—Admitting this broad and theoretical conclusion, we come to a consideration of the kind of education which society must give. Before attempting to formulate a program of education, we must analyze very carefully the nature of the individual whom society is to educate. All human conduct and action are outward expressions of inner motives; they are only the resultants of conflicting inherent impulses. If we turn the searchlight upon our inner motives, we find that each individual is the slave of two instinctive tendencies, all-powerful and all-controlling.

*Conduct in Terms of "Individuating" vs. "Socializing" Nature.*—First, we note the "Individuating Nature" which impels man to be himself, to differ from everybody else, to excel others, to stand above and apart, to lead. The teacher, the reformer, the inventor, the social and religious leaders are people with strong individuating natures. They assert themselves, set up new standards of civilization, of right and wrong, of good and bad, because existing conditions, satisfactory to the average person, offend them. They are the prime factors in the movement for progress; they are the moral derricks that lift mankind to a higher plane and a nobler destiny.

But let us note the implication; how can we excel and lead others unless we associate with them? The individuating nature, in trying to assert itself or merely to make itself manifest, must give way, partially, to a second and almost opposite impulse, the "Socializing Nature." We suppress our individuating natures to such an extent that we become, at least, tolerable in the society of our fellow men. We find a peculiar pleasure, therefore, in being in the company of others. This social nature not only makes communal life possible but encourages us to follow as well as to lead, to remain partially content with existing conditions, to live within the standards and customs of the rest of the community.

Each person is hence a duality, a composite of two contending forces, one striving toward individualization and the

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other toward socialization. Should society, in its education, suppress the individuating nature? Evidently not, for then all initiative, all invention, all improvement, all progress would be stifled. Stagnation and decay would be the inevitable results. Should society, on the contrary, then give to the individuating nature unlimited sway and allow it to express all its inherent promptings? This may be an attractive ideal to some, but it can lead only to an exaggerated ego, to selfishness; it puts a premium on domineering haughtiness; it unsocializes the individual and makes organization impossible. Individuality is a blessing indeed. But too much individuality is as bad as too little. It is an infallible sign of an anti-social personality.

The question is not, therefore, which of these two natures shall we develop and which neglect. Both are inherent; both make up the sum total of man; both help make the balance which means safety. The problem is rather, in what proportional relations shall we develop these two natures so that man may live in harmony with himself and the rest of mankind. The best possible education, from the point of view of society, emphasizes both the individuating and the socializing nature. That education, then, is the best which gives the individuality the greatest possible latitude, the freest possible development that is consistent with the welfare of the rest of society.

**How Can This Ideal Be Realized?**—We have accepted an ideal in education, an ideal both broad and liberal. The very vital problem which confronts the teacher is the practical one of how to attain this ideal, how to make it approach reality. Let us consider the solutions offered by the great figures and the leading thinkers in the history of education.

I. *Education as Harmonious Development.*—Many believe that education can realize this goal if it will seek to give each individual a "harmonious development of all his powers and capabilities." For a long time the definition of education which held sway declared that education was the process which sought the harmonious development of the individual.

This is the Greek ideal which many would eagerly set up to-day as a modern desideratum. This was the educational dream of Plato and his followers for centuries. Will such a conception of education lead to a realization of our ideal? Let us see.

What is the whole scope of the educative process, according to this conception? The individual. An education which sees no further than the individual, whose field of operation does not transcend the individual, is narrow. In the final analysis we are social beings and must be prepared for life in society. Our highest development is attained only through life and contact with others. All individuals are social individuals, and all society grouped individuals. Education which seeks only the harmonious development of each individual's powers does not point sufficiently to a training which will fit man for his social environment.

Then, too, why should man's powers be developed at all? Why do we consider them an asset in life? For the same reason that everything else that is valuable is so considered,—for its use. A picture is valued because of its use in giving the pleasure which the æsthetic nature craves. A commodity or power is appreciated and wanted merely because it is usable. Utility is the keynote of value. Does this conception of education suggest the use to which these powers will be put in society? It merely sets up as the goal of its endeavors the attainment of harmoniously developed powers and capabilities. Before we develop our faculties, we must decide on their use, otherwise we are developing powers for their own sake. We must remember that in the economy of human life, a truism of axiomatic force is, “Aside from its function, a power has no value.”

To the two limitations that were noted above we must add that it is an error to presuppose that we need a harmonious development of all our mental and physical endowments. No graver error is ever made than to labor under the belief that nature intended us to be equal. “We are born equal” is a catch phrase, as empty as it is erroneous. By nature we are

gifted in one direction rather than in another. We have capabilities which fit us for one line of activity rather than for another. Nature shows a most decided and positive preference for specialization. She has intended some of us to do one thing, others another. There is a special niche in the great social structure that each is to fill. Our varying gifts and degrees of endowment show clearly that we each have a special message to deliver, a special mission to fulfill for society. Education must take cognizance of this primary law and give each individual a training in harmony with his natural gifts, but not a training which seeks the harmonious development of all his powers and capabilities. The person artistically gifted must be artistically trained, the intellectually favored must be educated accordingly. To give each of us a harmonious development of all capabilities would neglect our natural aptitudes, and develop us along the weak as well as along the strong lines. If the modern sponsors of this Greek ideal had taken social needs and social life into account, if they had not been so individualistic, they would have realized that each member of the community must be given the opportunity to be trained for the special life that nature intended for him in society.

As a final point in our estimate of this conception of education, we must note how impossible it would be to tell when an individual has been developed harmoniously. What is the standard of measurement? If by nature we are not all equal, harmonious development for one is not harmonious development for another. In addition to its other limitations, this standard is vague and impractical; its scope is limited and inefficient; it surely will not enable us to achieve our guiding ideal. Let us turn to a second theory of education.

II. *Education and Spiritual Inheritance*.—President Butler breaks away from the Greek conception and offers another in its stead. He defines the function of education as the "acquisition of the spiritual inheritance of the race." The followers of this standard of education set up culture as their goal, "Knowledge for its own sake" as the summum bonum

for all educational endeavor. All that the race in its history has accumulated in the fields of science, art, and ethics should be handed down to the individual as his heritage. Will this conception bring us nearer to our initial ideal?

This cultural conception of education lays too much stress on the acquisition of facts, the absorption of knowledge. Education is not a "taking-in" process. Its very etymology contradicts this idea; "e," out, and "duco," to lead, suggest a process which unfolds the powers and capacities of the child. The individual gains strength and mental power only as the capabilities of his mind are evolved and used for necessary ends. This acquisitional aim of education overemphasizes filling the mind with data, storing it with facts. This conception does not realize that what is most important in education is not the imparting of facts or the giving of culture but the development in each individual of the power to find his own knowledge. It is hence a static conception of education.

Then, too, these "culturites" who would give the "spiritual racial inheritance" rely too much upon the dead past. Living beings look to the future, which throbs with life and hope. Our goals lie before, not behind us. Education must prepare us for the life that is to be, not make us relive the life that was. We saw, a moment ago, that education should seek to develop each individual in harmony with his natural aptitude so that he may best perform the work which nature, through her gifts, has intended. Acquiring what the race has experienced in the past is no adequate preparation for one's individual work in the living present and future.

There is no doubt that the past is necessary for present and future life. But do we need all the past? Evidently not. We want only that in the past which serves to explain our present social organization and which foreshadows the probable line of future development. The followers of Butler in education do not give enough attention to the actual living present, to preparation for life in the actual social environment. Their conception of education will not bring us

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to our goal, will not help us realize our ideal. Let us try still another.

III. *Education and Habit Inculcation.*—James conceives education as the process which inculcates in an individual such habits of thought and of action as will fit him for his physical and social environment.

The superiority of this conception of education over the two that we have just presented is unquestionable. It looks to the future, it seeks action rather than mere knowledge, it strives to prepare the individual for his proper place in society. Life's necessary future adjustments are set up as the goals to be attained; educational endeavor seeks to subordinate the whole personality to them. This conception of education makes for the greatest economy in mental and physical life. All necessary actions, all essential adjustments are made automatic, and the individual thus becomes self-acting in all vital situations. Proper conduct is guaranteed through force of habit.

But may we not question its desirability as the final stage of human development? The supreme force in human life is reason, not habit; the most desirable individual is the rational, not the automatic one. The highest form of character development is found in the individual who is self-controlling and self-directing. Would not this conception of education in terms of habit make all life routine, every individual a duplicating machine? To habituate life to the extent that James advocates would make us all slaves of our yesterday's selves. Our ideal sought to give the freest possible expression of the individual consistent with social welfare. To reduce life to the plane of habit means curbing and repressing the freest expression of the individual.

IV. *Education and Complete Socialization.*—In recent years sociological and pragmatic thinkers have tried to make their impress upon education. Prof. John Dewey, a representative leader in these schools, has furnished us with his contribution to educational thought. His conception we can safely submit as the means of attaining the ideal we set be-



fore ourselves at the beginning of the inquiry. The strength of the position of the sociological educators lies in the fact that their education seeks the harmonious adjustment between individual and society. Education for social efficiency is their shibboleth.

Every action we perform, every choice we make, is dictated by the needs and the organization of society. We are pursuing this work, striving in this field of activity, because society has either made it the most attractive for us, or has forced us into it. It is society that establishes for us our final ends, and sets up our ultimate standards of conduct.

Mentally, too, our judgments and decisions are fixed for us by society. We judge, we reason, we select, in accordance with social standards. Our moral and ethical views reflect the moral and ethical standards of our society. Mind, then, is nothing more than a social function. The sole aim of the school must be to fit man for a most efficient social life. But we must not erroneously make social life and citizenship synonymous. Citizenship is only a small part of the social training which the school should give. As a member of society, the individual has more duties than the mere political ones. We must insist that the individual's membership in his family, in his club, in his trade, and in his church is just as important. The school must reflect all these phases of life. It must teach the industrial arts, the vocations in society, so that he may find his place in our present industrial organization. It must seek to develop leadership, for our democracy depends upon the people for its leaders. Training for mere citizenship is not enough; the school must train for complete social life. To quote, "Apart from the thought of participation in actual social life the school has no other end or aim."

*The School as a Training for Social Life.*—How can the school train for complete social life? First, through its discipline and control, and, second, through the curriculum.

*School Discipline and Social Life.*—In our class-rooms we have rules of conduct, attendance, industry, neatness, all striving to attain the whole galaxy of school virtues. Strict ad-

herence to these rules is demanded of the children, because we hope that, through constant repetition, these will become habits. The child obeys, not because he realizes the necessity of the regulations, but because he is driven to obedience through fear. The reason for these rules we seldom, if ever, give. We demand that the children walk up one stairway and down another. Ask them why. The children have not the faintest idea that these regulations are made for emergencies of fire and panic. They do not see that these rules are inherent and absolutely essential in the social organization of the school. They obey blindly, for these rules are arbitrary to them. But blind obedience to a set of arbitrary rules will not develop character, the power of self-direction and guidance so necessary in real social life. Every regulation in society has its origin in social needs. Every law that has been added came to safeguard some one's interests, to prohibit some one from trespassing on the rights of others. Just as society's needs have prompted our laws for society, so the social and communal life of the school has given rise to the regulations made and enforced by teachers and principals. Few children realize the need of the regulations. Hence, they disobey whenever an opportunity presents itself. In their eyes the rule is made to deny them privileges and make more burdensome the lot already too heavy for them. Many children, therefore, find the joy of revenge in disobeying school regulations. The school, then, too often falls short of its possibilities in training for rational social conduct.

*School Curriculum and Social Life.*—Let us apply the same thought, social efficiency, to the school subjects. Just as the child does not see that the school regulations are socially necessary, so, too, he fails to realize that what we teach him has social value. When the child can glibly repeat that a mountain is a high elevation of land, or that a cape is land projecting into the water, we feel that our work is completed and we rest content. But who cares whether a mountain is only an elevation of land, or a cape a projection of land? We do not, and surely the child who repeats these definitions



is even less concerned. Of what importance is it to teach such a fact? What answer would we give our children if they asked such a question? These geographical definitions must be taken out of the realm of mere facts and given social significance, interpreted in terms of social need and social life. From the social point of view a cape is very important; it is the greatest danger point in commerce; the mariner and the foreign trader are highly interested in these projections of land. Capes break the coastline, make harbors, produce shipping facilities, and thus give opportunity for intercourse between nations. The continent with the least number of capes—Africa, the Dark Continent—is the least civilized; the one with the greatest number—Europe—is the center of intellectual life. We are interested in capes because they have significance for human life. When aërial navigation is developed to the same point that we have reached in water transportation we shall emphasize, in our geographical teaching, not capes, but promontories, mountainous capes, and plateaus, for these may be the great harbors for the future winged ships. But, in all cases, social needs determine what is to be taught. For similar social reasons we are interested in mountains, rivers, all of the important geographical forms of land and water. Their real significance is not physical but social.

The same thought applies to the teaching of history. If the topic is "Plymouth Colony," great stress is too often laid upon the fact that one hundred five souls came, that a child was born during the voyage, that the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, *et al.* Upon closer examination, what difference does it make whether one hundred five or one hundred twenty-five souls came, whether they landed at the rock or on a sandbar? Our national history would have been the same. The real vital point to remember in teaching "Plymouth Colony" is that, before landing, the colonists drew up a compact which provided for a democratic rule and election of officers. Here we see the seeds of modern democracy planted in the new world. Those facts which reflect present