COLLEGE READINGS ON CURRENT PROBLEMS

SELECTED BY

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

A LIBERAL education, as Milton in his *Tractate* says, aims to fit a man to "perform justly and magnanimously all the offices both private and publick of Peace and War." Whatever else the American college accomplishes, its function is at least that of graduating prospective citizens. Efficient membership in the Republic must depend upon a knowledge of the outstanding issues of the times, intellectual and philosophical no less than political, and a sound judgment in their settlement.

College courses in composition logically and conveniently contribute to this broad training. The undergraduate, facing and analyzing these recurrent problems, seldom fails to respond with the clear and constructive thinking and the lively expression which justify such courses.

The present collection supplies material for thought-provoking assignments in oral and written composition. The student examines in turn the insistent questions of education, intellectual and moral ideals, science, literature, government, national character, international politics, sociology, and economics. He grapples with such questions as, What education is most worth while? How far shall freedom of thought and discussion be tolerated? Is the church decadent? Will science destroy or invigorate civilization? Has American literature national individuality? Does the American novel truthfully reflect contemporary American life? In a progressive democracy is cabinet government preferable to the congressional type? What are the most practicable programs for preventing international wars? Is internationalism consistent with patriotism? What are the best means of promoting re-

spect for law? What shall be the ultimate basis of immigration? Is socialism practicable? How shall harmony between capital and labor be effected?

The college student who discusses these themes, who thinks and writes about them, acquires something more than added information and added opinions. He gets some notion of the problem as a whole. He is encouraged to piece together his economic, social, and other ideas into a unified philosophy. Under the direction of a capable instructor that philosophy will promise breadth and sanity.

These selections obviously offer no complete statement of the various fields of human thinking. Neither does each individual article pretend to give an exhaustive discussion of the specific topic. These essays and addresses, nevertheless, deal with persistent issues and set forth the ideas in language and modes of thinking that are significant. Rightly used, the material will lead to detailed investigation and to matured convictions.

Each selection may be analyzed in detail for methods of composition. The underlying purpose, the order of topics, the proportion, paragraphing, the sentence, details of diction, the imaginative and intellectual qualities, the expository and argumentative elements may be studied. The instructor may assign analytical outlines, argumentative briefs, or abstracts of the articles. It is assumed that in the classroom the material will be freely criticized and weighed from every angle. It will furnish the basis for formal speeches and for original articles and arguments, oral and written. The student may develop either a general subject suggested by the selection, or he may apply the principles to some immediate problem of the campus. Out of it all he gets added knowledge of contemporary life, a technique for work and reflection, an individual method of expression — and some genuine education.

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EDUCATION

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WHAT IS EDUCATION? [1]

ARTHUR T. HADLEY

WHAT is Education? The answer to this question is not so *simple as appears at first sight. In fact there are two* different and somewhat conflicting answers. According to nearly all the dictionaries, both English and American, the primary meaning of the word, which underlies all others, is *the imparting of knowledge.* Education is treated as synonymous with instruction. The teacher is regarded as the active agent, busy in storing the pupil's mind with the things he needs to know. In putting this meaning of the word first and giving it most prominence, the dictionaries are simply following current popular usage. It is probable that eighty per cent of the American school teachers, and ninety per cent of the American public, would approve of what the dictionaries have done.

But there is another sense in which the word is employed, which is equally important and quite different. We may regard education as a *training* for the varied work of life — industrial, social, and political — in which knowledge is not an end but an incident; in which the student is learning to *do* things; in which the teacher is no longer the sole directing agency, but one among many coöperating agencies, for the attainment of this end. To set forth this meaning

[1] From *Harper's Magazine*, December, 1922. Reprinted by permission of the editor and the author.

of education no better words can be found than those used by John Milton in his *Tractate* nearly three centuries ago: "I call therefore a compleat and generous Education that which fits a man to perform justly and magnanimously all the offices both private and publick of Peace and War."

Now the mere fact that the term *Education* is employed in two distinct senses is not surprising or unusual. Nearly every word in the English language which deals with a complex conception has more than one meaning. What is unusual and surprising in this particular case is that two distinct meanings are regarded by almost everybody, dictionary-makers included, as being mere variations of the same meaning. Training is regarded as an incidental result of knowledge, rather than as a distinct process of learning to do things.

When two meanings of an important word like education have become thus confused in the public mind, so that instruction and training are treated as pretty nearly synonymous, it results in much loose thinking; and what is worse, in much misapplied power and profitless expense. We assume that we are necessarily training citizens when we are imparting knowledge, and *vice versa*. To check this sort of fallacious reasoning, and this waste of money and power, we must choose *one* sense of the word education as the basis of public discussion, and stick to it. We may either define education as the imparting of knowledge, and call the development of a man's power by the name of *training;* or we may follow John Milton in regarding education as preparation for citizenship, and call the imparting of knowledge by the name of *instruction.* Either method is good enough, provided we adhere to it consistently. The choice between the two must be determined by practical considerations.

If we were considering education from the standpoint of the psychologist only, it would not make much difference

which we chose. But we are considering it from the standpoint of the political economist. We are concerned to find out what a democratic and progressive community like ours requires of its citizens and how the schools can help them to get it. These requirements are admirably set forth in the passage of Milton which I have just quoted. Let us therefore accept this as the basis for our definition of education and call it preparation for the varied activities of citizenship. The process of imparting knowledge we shall then call instruction. Instruction is and always will be an important element in education; knowledge is and always will be of exceptional value to the citizens of a free commonwealth. But the acquisition of knowledge is not the end of education as we are now using the terms; it is simply an incident in the larger and more important process of training for citizenship.

In thus expanding our definition of education, so as to view it from the public standpoint, we are really going back to the primary meaning of the word, instead of getting away from it. To educate is to *educe;* to make something out of a man rather than to put something into him. Let us examine briefly how a modern commonwealth must go to work to bring out the qualities needed in its members, how far our present school system contributes to that end, and what we can do to make this contribution more effective. Let us view education provisionally as the process by which the human animal is fitted for membership in civilized society, and see where this way of looking at things leads us in the way of theoretical propositions and practical results.

Every community, however rude, must develop certain habits of discipline to make it strong in time of war, and certain habits of decency which serve to keep it safe in time of peace. Among communities which are at all civilized, the requirements of discipline take the form of a

social order which affords some protection to the members of the tribe who are physically weak, and the requirements of decency make some provision for cleanness of body and mind — at least at stated seasons. A civilized community must also develop certain habits of prudence, so that the labors of the present may serve to meet the needs of the future. Order, cleanness, and prudence seem to be the fundamental things which distinguish civilization from barbarism; and for a community which is governed by an absolute monarch or by a religious oligarchy they seem to represent about all that is essential as a basis for citizenship.

But a free commonwealth needs something more than this. If a community is to enjoy civil liberty it must develop habits of self-control among the great body of its members and habits of leadership among a considerable number of them. And habits of self-control or leadership are far harder to secure than habits of order, cleanness, and prudence. For order, cleanness, and prudence can be imposed and maintained by authority from above; while self-control and leadership have their source and their sustenance in each man's own soul. If we give a man liberty to do right we give him liberty to do wrong. The only security that the community has against the misuse of self-control or leadership lies in the vision and intelligence of its members. They must have the vision to see and feel what the community needs to have them see and feel; so that ideals of order and cleanness and upbuilding which tend to carry them forward will have a stronger and more constant appeal than the mere animal instincts which tend to carry them backward. And they must have intelligence to know how these ideals are to be compassed; so that the pursuit of their visions will lead them and their followers in the general direction in which they want to go — not backward into the wilderness but forward into the promised

land. To the habit by which vision is acquired we give the name imagination; to the habit by which intelligence is acquired we give the name of thinking.

These habits are what the nations of Europe and America have had to learn, gradually and painfully; these are what their individual members have had to learn, in order to fit themselves for citizenship in the free communities of the modern world. To help in the difficult process of learning these habits, nations have developed many kinds of educational agencies. For teaching habits of order or decency, we have the family and police. For teaching habits of prudence we have private property. For teaching habits of imagination, in the largest and truest sense of the word, we have the theater, the press, and the church. And for teaching habits of thinking we have the schools.

Of course these several kinds of training are hard to define accurately; and the separate agencies will often overlap one another in their educational work. The schools have a good deal to do in teaching order and decency; partly because so many of their pupils have come from families which cannot do their work as well as it needs to be done, and partly because there are some principles of social order and decency which can be learned more easily by large groups of children than by small ones. For somewhat similar reasons a good school will do a good deal of incidental work in training the imagination. But the primary duty of the school is to teach the habit and train the powers of thinking; and if it neglects this for the sake of its secondary functions, it throws the whole educational system of society as completely out of gear as does the church when it is more occupied in teaching people what they should think than in inspiring them with its ideals or as does the police when it is so overloaded with other duties that it fails to keep order effectively.

But how shall we go to work to teach the habit and train the powers of thinking? In answering this question American school boards and American public opinion have been constantly led astray by our habit of confusing the two different senses of the word education. Nine people out of ten believe that the way to train a boy to think is to impart as much knowledge to him as possible. They do not distinguish between the possession of information and the power or habit of thought; or at any rate they assume that if you can secure the former, the latter follows as a matter of course.

In no other field of life do we meet this confusion. No sensible man could think that the way to train a boy to ride was to give him as many horses as possible, or that if you could secure the necessary horses the riding would follow as a matter of course. And yet this way of looking at things would be as near the truth about riding as it is about thinking. The impulse to ride is certainly quite as universal as the impulse to think. The horse furnishes the necessary basis for the rider, just as the knowledge furnishes the necessary basis for the thinker. But this does not mean that you should begin your training by giving a boy as many horses, or as much knowledge, as he can possibly want. It is better to let him really learn to ride on one or two horses — borrowed ones if necessary — and fill his stable afterward with such animals as best suit his purposes. It is better to let him really learn to think on one or two subjects — subjects which he is very likely to forget all about — and afterward fill his mind, or even his library shelves, with the precise information which he is going to use.

Perhaps I seem to be wasting time over this point; but its importance has been brought home to me by personal experience. During each year of my life as a college president, scores of parents or guardians coming from the most

intelligent classes of the community have asked me with apparent surprise whether the acquisition of knowledge was not the all-important end of a college course, for the sake of which the institution existed. These men knew enough to despise the futility of mere acquisition in all other lines of business. They knew that even in matters of scholarship the most learned man was often far from being the most useful man. But when it came to the training of their own children, they persisted in regarding the boy's mind as a sort of reservoir, into which knowledge was to be poured by different teachers in proper proportion. What actually was the proper proportion was a question on which they differed a good deal. Some thought that their boys should learn about things they were going to use in after life, because these were what they needed to know; others thought that they should learn about things which they were not going to use in after life, because these were what they would never learn except in college. But there was pretty nearly unanimous agreement in overvaluing the subject matter taught in the classroom, as compared with that which the boy would get for himself in college and in after life if he had formed right habits of reading or thinking. There was a discouraging failure to see that if the boy was to acquire the habits of reading or thinking effectively on any line whatever he must work for it himself, and his father must expect him to work for it. A good teacher can show him how to work to the best advantage and save waste effort; he can speed up the educational process by warning against false starts and unnecessary experiments; but in learning to *do* anything, whether to ride or to think, the boy is the active agent; the teacher is only the director or at best the inspirer. Doing can be learned only by doing.

Through our failure to understand some of these cardinal principles, the history of American education represents the

confused result of a series of cross-currents of opinion, in the teaching profession and outside of it, rather than a progressive approach toward a well-defined goal of public policy.

In the early years of the republic, our American schools taught only a few things. Most of their pupils got no farther than the "three R's"—reading, writing, and arithmetic. Those who could add a little grammar, geography, or history to this meager bill of fare might count themselves fortunate. Even in college this limited scheme of studies was not very much widened. The only real change was that the reading lessons were in Latin or Greek instead of in English, and that "problems" in Algebra or Trigonometry took the place of "sums" in Arithmetic. To the modern critic, this curriculum seems poor and barren. Yet with all its poverty and barrenness, the education of our grandfathers had two great advantages which went far to balance its defects. In the first place it taught the boys habits of hard work. Whether they were writing English, or translating Greek, or solving problems in mathematics, they were doing something themselves, and usually something pretty hard, without getting very much help from the teacher — unless you call it "help" to have a prospect of being punished if the work is not done. In this school of hardship, habits were formed which enabled men to do difficult things for the sake of a remote end. "When I take a college graduate into railroad service," said one of the best operating men in the country, "I prefer one who has had the old-fashioned training in Greek; because he is accustomed to work hard to find exactly what a writer says. If he has handled a Greek dictionary to any purpose, he does not expect a book to be easy, or think that he can guess what it means with any chance of coming out right."

This was one thing which our grandfathers were taught; and they were also taught to regard the school or college

course as the beginning of their education rather than the end of it. The actual knowledge which they learned was moderate in amount and slight in human interest. What the school or college did for them was to place instruments in their hands by whose use they could teach themselves the things they needed to know. The man who could read could inform himself on public affairs. The man who could read, write, and reckon could do his share of the world's business, and learn for himself the intellectual and moral lessons which come from the handling of property. The fact that the pursuit of practical knowledge was an "extra-curriculum activity" did not prevent our grandfathers from getting such knowledge.

For a boy with a taste for books, under a teacher who knew how to reward as well as to punish, the old system was a good one. Many of the academies of Central New York in the early years of the nineteenth century developed among the pupils a proportion trained for the successful pursuit of science or letters which a modern high school with wider curriculum and larger appliances might well envy. But there are unfortunately a great many boys with little taste for books as books; and with such boys it took a very good teacher indeed to prevent the old system from degenerating into a treadmill, where the scholars hated the work so much that it never helped them to form a habit of reading or study.

To meet the needs of this wider group of students was the goal of most of our educational reformers of the nineteenth century. The first step in this direction came with the establishment of professional schools of medicine, theology, law, and applied science, where a man could be taught some of the things which he needed for the practice of his calling. The second step was the introduction of similar subjects into the curriculum of the colleges themselves — usually in the form of brief lecture courses or