

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

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EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

CHAPTER I

EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRACY

DEMOCRACY is more than a form of government; it is a social ideal, a mode of life and a quality of the human spirit; therefore it cannot be imposed on a people; it must be acquired.

Democracy is social self-determination directed toward ideal ends. It is the civil organization of a common goodwill. It is an attitude of mind which holds that the highest good lies in the good of all, that the aim of all being is common well-being. It is a faith which holds that a common goodwill may control all society. It is an ideal which rises in the minds of a free people and depends on their wills and their wisdom for its expression in social life. Hence it has a fundamental interest in education as the means by which people gain vision, develop a social will and organize their purposes effectively.

But democracy is more than an ideal; it is a condition of living; it is a social order. It is for practice as well as for proclamation. We believe in it as a mode of social life. It is this practical realization which the world most eagerly desires. No question grips us more than this: How can our splendid vision be brought to earth and men become willing and able to solve their problems of living together? Two answers appear in American current life: by *legislation* — that is social

regulation and construction, and by *education*. Which is the better way?

In North America formal education is the product of democracy; in the world-life democracy will be largely the product of education. The American ideal of democracy has developed through the practical experience of a free people finding working modes of social organization and control. That experience not only clarified the ideal of democracy, it revealed the conditions of its realization, and convinced even the average citizen of its entire dependence on education. The government that sets men free must aid them to self-government. Political self-preservation dictated universal educational opportunity. Schools were founded to save the free state, and, of necessity, they became free schools. Education became a recognized and essential function of a democracy. The democratic state saves itself by saving its selves. Its development depends on the development of every member to the very last one.

Democracy gives birth to general education. If education is the duty of democracy it is because the development of democracy is a certain result of true education. The state must maintain the school because the school maintains the state. But the work of the schools depends on the spirit of the state. Given a state designed for democratic ends it will foster a system of education designed to develop persons in their social capacities. Here schools exist to train the young in the art of social living. It is their function so to develop in growing persons their social powers and values that they will organize an ideal society. The democratic purpose expresses itself in education in two ways: First, it establishes a definite aim and test, seeking fully developed, socially capable citizens; in a word, education in a democracy is simply society organizing itself to develop the democratic mind and democratic methods of living.

Second, it determines the conditions of success in popular education: the purposes of education can only be fully achieved under democratic conditions; that is to say, persons can develop to their fullness only in a society organized primarily for the sake of persons. This is the distinguishing mark of a democracy; it is that form of social organization which is determined by the needs of persons, in which civil rights are based upon personal qualities and rights and in which the needs of persons ultimately determine all procedures and shape all aims. These characteristics of civil life are essential also to an educational program, so that, in an important sense, democracy in action is all educative.

DEMOCRACY DEFINED

The unity of education and democracy becomes clear when, in the light of the modern personal-social aim and process of the schools, we come to examine our current concept of democracy. That concept is implied in Lincoln's famous words, "Government of the people, by the people and for the people," with emphasis on the last clause. A democracy is that form of social organization for civil purposes which existing by the will of the people directs all its powers to promoting the welfare of all the people. Other civil forms may exist to maintain the prestige of hereditary monarchs, to perpetuate constitutional modes, to extend territory or to advance trade; but a democracy has the peculiar purpose, that its people may have life and may have it more abundantly. It is well to keep in mind this distinguishing mark. It is often supposed that the right of every person to participate in public affairs makes a democracy; but that right is only incidental to this dominating purpose, that every power of the whole social organization shall be directed to the public good. That end makes public and universal participation essential. The child goes to school

for public ends and not for private motives alone; schooling is the method by which he lives and learns to live the life of a democracy.

Democracy an educational problem. If the democratic state must foster education it is not less true that education must foster the democratic state and society. An educational program of developing lives must be seriously concerned with the society in which these lives are to develop. The new social ideals of education are possible only in a social order which is essentially democratic. The social aim of the school can be realized only where society exists fundamentally for the sake of persons. The difficulties in our present system of education are largely those due to conditions of operation or control which are not truly democratic or to an environment which undoes that which the school accomplishes. We are seeking to educate persons for freedom under school-room experiences of autocracy; the controlling purpose of the school often is either the preparation of the children of the well-to-do for the dominance of others, or the training of others for efficient serfdom. The atmosphere of the school may be emphatically anti-democratic; it may be the tool of political parties or of a social cabal. We can hope to train for democracy only by the experience of democracy. At present the school is set in a society which does not yet fully believe in social education; it is not yet deeply concerned about persons, as such, or their powers or their social realizations. Rather it is anxious that each shall be prepared to play his part to his own individual advantage. And this is only to say that our society has not yet accepted democracy. All that it means and how its meaning is realized we are slowly learning.

Education a political problem. Democracy depends on education because it cannot exist by edict; it is made possible only by making democrats. It is more than a

constitutional civil order; it is a governing ideal in the minds of those who constitute the state. It is not a method of governing the people; it is a method by which people organize their common affairs. Acts of legislative bodies do not make a democracy; it often exists in spite of forms of government, as in the case of Great Britain. A democracy is possible only as democracy is developed in the minds and wills, in the habits and ideals of all the people. This is the task of education.

As a democracy develops the educational imperative is intensified. Social life develops intensively and extensively. In each civil unit democracy becomes more complete; it reaches out further into all forms of life. It widens the social duties and privileges of every person. It takes over wider reaches of life. The socialization of governmental functions which has developed so rapidly in the last decade is, wherever these functions are exercised by the people for the people, simply the more complete application of the democratic principle. Even a cursory comparison of the duties of citizenship in the United States a century ago with those duties to-day will suggest the greatly heightened need for the education of the citizen. This need is based on the fact that he has become more truly and more fully a part of the state. He projects more of himself into the life of the state; he not only pays taxes and votes for representatives; he must use his brain in thinking through grave problems; and, under the experience of the great war, he has learned that he must serve with all his powers as part of his identification with the state.

Democracy makes new demands on all. The development of democracy extensively may make even greater demands on the citizen. We look back over the growing art of democracy from the folk-meeting and the town-meeting to the state and nation, and now we believe we are within hailing distance of a world democracy. This

is not only an extension from one unit to many, from a few states to all states, it is an extension from small groups to an all-inclusive group. It is not only a political contagion, passing on to new groups; it is a new life which welds all the groups into one. Whatever the actual social organization of the world may be to-morrow we are facing the problem of living in a world of the closest social unity under democratic ideals. Our immediate task is that of learning to live in the common, close neighborhood of the whole world.

A world democracy is upon us almost irrespective of forms of civil government, at least the form of civil organization follows rather than precedes the democratic experience. The whole world has been drawn into a common neighboring by the bonds of transportation and commerce. To-day we are nearer to the remotest people than once we were to those in the next state, and we are more dependent on them than once we were on our near neighbors. Into every home the life of every land enters every day. The breakfast-table may carry contributions from every continent. Into the lives of all we each reach out, not only with ease but with tremendous potentiality. There are no longer any independent peoples. No nation can any longer carve out its career alone. The social obligations that come from propinquity are on all, together with the social duties that arise from mutual dependence. The welfare of the least cannot be a matter of indifference to the largest.

PROBLEMS OF WORLD DEMOCRACY

World living has become a problem in personality. This weaving together of the world life has been accompanied by the infusion of the blood of personality into the strands of the web. National living has been personalized. It is not governments that are thrown together but people. It is not China with whom we have to live

but the Chinese people. This is the case because the contacts are so largely personal. Our relations with other people are not matters of diplomatic arrangements; they are matters of our daily bread, our common, personal needs and our currency and food of thought and feeling. Further, the relations are personal because civil organization increasingly becomes personal. Our world-social experiences are determined not by some overhead mechanism created by the state but by our own wills, our own habits of life and thought. Our adjustments are not between the constitutions of states but between the characters of peoples. The blood of life is in the web that binds us together and so world-relations pass from organization to organism.

Whatever the external forms of civil life may be the fact is that all must learn to live together in a common world-life which is increasingly democratic in character. No one can be exempt from this world-life; none who have realized it in any degree desire to be exempt. But it is a new life which cannot be lived in the spirit and the mode of the old. It makes new demands. It establishes new standards. It is constantly revealing new requirements. Old ideals are inadequate in a new world. Old motives, based on individual or purely national concepts, will not be sufficient. We need a new morality for a new world life. And therefore we need a new education, or, rather, we need the full development of our educational ideals, conceived in democracy, to meet the needs of this fuller democracy of the race.

Democracy is essentially a personal process. Before attempting to state the characteristics of education for democracy, one must face a question that expresses a real difficulty to many. Says one, this reasoning moves in a circle for it regards democracy as both cause and effect in progress, it proposes that the world shall push itself up hill. How can democracy both purpose and

effect its own progress? Can it grow beyond itself? Is it not an attempt to elevate humanity by its own bootstraps? Such objections appear to acquire special force whenever we contrast the efficiency of a democratic state with that of an autocracy. In the latter the overlord, looking at his people objectively, can will their betterment overnight; in the former we must wait until the people, who must see themselves subjectively, all will their own betterment. But such comparisons lose sight of one essential feature of a true democracy; they overlook the most important difference between autocracy and democracy. That difference lies not so much in that there may be one governor or many, but in this, that one is a form of civil mechanism and the other is a mode of social living. Democracy is not a method of making people do things; it is a form of life under which people desire and will to do. It is not a method of pushing people up hill; it is the devotion of a people to a purpose which moves them forward. It is not a mechanism but an inner motive force. It does not expect to lift people but to develop them.

The hope of democracy is not that people will make laws regulating themselves into higher living but that by the devotion of all to the ends of social living there may be developed a common social will for better living. It depends, not on regulation or controls imposed but on ideals and motives that furnish an inner propulsion for progress. It is government having its seat in the wills of people and progress rising in the growing ideals and desires of people.

Is social organization for the ends of personality possible? The central problem of democracy then lies in the question whether people can develop their own ideals, motives, wills, and powers of life. This development must be in the active rather than in the passive mood; we must guard against speaking of "developing the

people," as by some overhead, benevolent and superior minority. Improvement has to rise in the common will or, if it does not rise there wholly, it must express itself in the common will. It is not necessary to discuss the question whether people ever do will their own development, for we know that there are not a few who persistently seek higher levels and greater strength of life, and we know that these individuals stimulate others to like endeavors. The question is whether we can have a social organism which, as a whole, directs itself toward its own development. Can a state be successfully organized for the dominant purpose of growing the lives of men and women?

Is social evolution wholly subject to blind forces lying outside our control, or is man, in the realm of personality, a creature capable of self-directed evolution? The purely naturalistic answer which subjects us entirely to outer forces loses sight of the factor of the human consciousness and will. This is just as real a fact as any other. A person is not only subject to forces; he is a force. He is the organizer of forces. He has the power of considering, recognizing and, to a large degree, of directing the very processes that determine what he shall be. This is the power that gives rise to education, for education is simply our attempt to direct social evolution. Education is democracy at work developing its own powers of progress. The whole question leaps out of the realm of speculation into that of demonstration. In the laboratory of life we are to-day scientifically working out an answer to the question. Democracy is proving that man can direct his own development. Every school is a laboratory in that field. Social life and industry are being directed and modified to an increasing degree by the recognition of their power to determine character. All life is being studied with reference to the educational opportunities it offers and the forces it creates. In a

democracy we tend steadily toward the determination of all the conditions of living by the study of their educational effects, by the manner in which they stimulate and modify our lives. We ask, what manner of people are being made by these things?

THE HOPE OF A BETTER WORLD

The realization of a truly democratic society depends very much on the development of a spirit of humanism, that is, on an acceptance of the happiness and well-being of all mankind as the supreme aim in human existence. Writing in days when the world is still in arms, when men confidently ascribe the success of their side to the force that sheds human blood, it is difficult to believe that such a spirit can dominate mankind. Yet if it cannot, if the good of all cannot be the aim of all, democracy is no more than a political dream. A writer¹ in one of the most thoughtful journals recently strongly urged the "Ground for Hope," as he expressed it; he finds many signs, traceable through the history of civilization, that we are coming to a common social aim of human well-being. He seeks for evidence in the question whether "men have in that period of modern history become more united, better able to use their combined forces to a common end of social good, and whether on the whole they have so used their powers. If this appears to be the case, then in a practical sense the ideal of humanity is brought nearer, and world relations on the mechanical side are favorable to the increase of the common elements in ethics and religion."² He also pertinently quotes: "Ethically, as well as physically, humanity is becoming one, one, not by the suppression of differences or the mechanical arrangement of lifeless parts, but by a widened consciousness of obligation, a more sensitive response to

¹ F. S. Marvin, in the *Hibbert Journal* for April, 1918, page 387.

² *Ibid.*, page 392.

the claims of justice, a greater forbearance toward differences of type, a more enlightened conception of human purpose."¹

The democratic ideal is being formed in all experience. A democratic society must always tend to conceive itself in educational terms. It will see all life — whether in the home, in social intercourse, in commerce, in shop and factory or school — as an experience in schooling, in the development of powers, in discipline in the art of living. So long as men are alive and so long as their lives touch one another they must continue to be educated. No man goes into a factory or a mill in the morning and comes out the same person at night; he has been changed by the experience of social contacts with other lives, by work and by thought. Now this is one of those very simple facts that needs no elaborate presentation. But it has been a fact which has not been recognized always as a basis for action. Democracy, because its main interest is in the changes that take place in men and women, in the question whether those changes are for the better or for the worse, democracy looks at that day in the factory from a new angle, from the educational point of view. A democracy says, We will determine the conditions of factory-life because these conditions determine so largely the lives of those who are the state, in fact the factory helps to make or mar the democracy. So that the interest in social welfare which the modern state exhibits is something more than an extension of its functions, it is the expression of its very purpose, it is the discharge of its function of developing the lives of its people. It is government not only of the people, as to conditions of living, but for the people, that these conditions may make the best kind of people. No democracy can ignore any conditions that affect the characters of persons.

¹ Quotation from L. H. Hobhouse, "Morals in Evolution" (1916).

The manifold concerns of the democracy with the details of the life of the people are exhibitions of educational activity. They reveal a social will organizing and directing the forces of life, determining the experiences of persons and groups, choosing the stimuli that shall come to their lives, presenting to them forms of activity, so that out of the whole of life there may develop a strong, wise, just and loving people, living together in common goodwill.

If education is democracy addressing itself to the duty of self-development, *how can we be sure that we are moving in the right direction?* How can we prepare for the future when it is unknown to us? But it is not necessary to predict the future nor to know the precise conditions under which our children will have to live. We have ground more sure than guesses about to-morrow. We have, first, before our eyes readily discernable social movements, the direction of which may be clearly seen even though the end is not in sight, and, second, we have this principle to proceed upon: that the best preparation for higher functions is the full discharge of existing and present ones. To meet fully the demands of the present hour is the best preparation for the coming one. We do know what our needs are to-day and we know what is called for by the present developments in our social order. If this is an orderly universe we can safely proceed on the assurance that the duty of the present fully met prepares for the demands of to-morrow.

What then are the outstanding needs of democracy at this hour? If the concept of democracy here stated is the true one then it is evident that the old answers to this question are totally inadequate. These answers have advocated a number of valuable additions to our educational program, some of which have proved highly useful. They are efficient but not sufficient. We have been urged to extend "education in citizenship," by which is meant,

usually, instruction in the mode of our form of government, in its local and state applications and in its constitutional basis and present ideals. This needs to be done; it is a constantly imperative duty in a nation absorbing thousands of citizens from lands alien in government and ideals. We must have a citizenship intelligent as to methods of procedure. And yet it takes more than civics to make a citizen anywhere, and in a democracy more than anywhere else.

We are told that one of the educational needs of a democracy is that the people shall be trained for practical usefulness. No one questions the value of vocational training provided it means a vocation and a training for all, that it does not mean the regimentation of the masses to be the earlier ready for drafting into the ranks of industry and that it does not mean depriving the young of their heritage of joy and culture in order that they may acquire the habits of wage-earning. But there is no assurance that industrial efficiency will be accompanied by competency to live the social life of a democracy. Learning to make a living is part of the art of life; but it is only part. A nation of expert mechanics, merchants and farmers would doubtless be better than a nation of untrained and shiftless people; competency in industry and commerce are amongst the foundations of national happiness and power; but those competencies may develop a people into the very opposite of a democracy, into a mere aggregation of groups each devoting its efficiencies to its own ends, each seeking its own advantages and thus developing, through unrestrained competition, only social anarchy.

So slight a dismissal of these important needs in education does not indicate an opinion that they are valueless. They are essential. They are parts of the program of education for democracy. But they have been so emphasized as to obscure certain other and yet more important

parts without which they are valueless. If democracy is social organization for the sake of the growth of people, for the development of their lives in a society, then the educational program must include more than learning the mechanics of government and more than training in habits of self-support. It must include all that is involved in the art of life in a society. The duty of a democracy is to train its people to live in a society devoted to the good of all.

Education for to-morrow's democracy will be education for the fullness of living in society as effective, contributing members, serving its ends, devoted to its ideals, habituated to its ways and trained to realize its purposes. Education for to-morrow's democracy means facing this problem: have we the vision, can we find the means and develop the agencies not only to teach all how a society of common goodwill should be organized, but also, through actual experience, to train ourselves and our children in its habits and activities, to grow in vision of its ideals and to develop motives sufficiently high and strong to sustain and inspire in all that may be involved in its realization?

CHAPTER II

DISCOVERING THE NEED

ARE our present educational plans and ideals adequate for democracy as it must be?

Education for democracy would be a simple matter under some conditions. It would be proper to assume that any system of education in a truly democratic society, when taken along with the experience of living in that society, would constitute adequate preparation for democracy. Many complacently assume that this is the happy condition prevailing in America. Popular orators have stimulated our pride in democratic institutions until we often dream that a democratic society was created by the Continental Congress and consummated by the fifteenth amendment to the Constitution. Then they point to our schools which, since they are ours, must be the best on earth; surely here children receive all training necessary for democracy for they have courses in American history and civics; they learn all about the theoretical machinery of our political life! What more could democracy need? Why should we assume that there is need for some new or special type of education in order to prepare for the future democracy?

If we have democracy to-day two results follow, First, the very experience of living in a democracy constitutes the best preparation for that form of social life; and, Second, any true democracy will be so conscious of its requirements as to make full and adequate provision for the training of the young. Both these propositions would be true if we were now living in a democracy. But we are not. We have at present only certain elements of