

THE ART OF EDUCATION

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PREFACE

So many books have been written on the subject of education that one feels almost like apologizing for adding another to the list. But, of course, the apology, in any case, would involve the excuse that "no other book quite meets" a certain demand, or "quite supplies" a particular need; and perhaps this conviction, so naturally to be expected of an author, will receive charitable consideration by even the critical reader. The most that I will venture to say concerning this book is that it is meant to substitute a scientific for a sentimental conception of the social meaning and value of education, and that the ideas advanced have proved to be inspiring, and practically helpful, to many who have heard them expressed in the form of lectures.

It is obvious enough that the interest and enthusiasm of the teacher are dependent to some extent upon his ideas with respect to the importance and dignity of the work in which he is engaged. Public respect for education, too, and for the teacher, is affected more or less by the prevalent opinion concerning the relative standing of the art of education among the various other occupations. With the object of contributing to the

formation in the mind of teachers and the general public of a true estimate of the rank of education among the arts, and its relative dignity, I have devoted the first chapter to an attempt to construct a valid classification of the arts, in which the place and relation of education shall be revealed. I base this classification on potential social utility which, as the reader will see, is also the basis of complexity and relative difficulty of successful practice. So classified, the arts arrange themselves in an ascending scale, and education is shown to occupy a place subordinate only to those infinitely difficult arts the object of which is the transformation of social groups, and of society itself. It is the highest of the vital arts, outranking the mechanical arts, and even the so-called "fine arts."

With whatever additional respect for education the results of this classification may awaken in the mind of the reader, and with whatever inspiration they may furnish if he happen to be a teacher, the book proceeds to inquire into the essential nature of education considered as an art, to specify and analyze the motive forces involved in it, to determine which of these are most important, and to discuss some of the methods that may best be employed to direct the educational forces to approved individual and social ends.

Education being an art, it must share the characteristic common to all the arts, namely, the control of the forces of nature. It is distinguished, in part, from the

other arts by the particular set of forces with which it deals, namely, those that impel to action, the feelings. They are the true "educational forces." Chief among them is desire. Desire is the mainspring of action, the fundamental educational force. To educate is practically to control desire.

Desire, however, awakens toward anything that seems capable of satisfying it a peculiar feeling known as interest; and, likewise, interest, if sufficiently strong, invariably occasions desire and impels to action. Desire, then, and hence activity and development, may be controlled through interest; and education practically reduces itself to a process of controlling and directing interest.

Interest, of course, invariably attaches itself to an object. The objects of interest are material and spiritual or ideal. These are embraced by the term environment. They constitute the sole means of influencing desire and interest, and hence the sole means of education. We are led, therefore, to the consideration of education as the art of manipulating the objects of the environment so as to awaken interest and to induce the activities appropriate to physical, mental and moral development. The forms of manipulation are manifested in educational methods, and a chapter is devoted to the most approved methods of controlling interest.

The primary end to which the control of interest should be directed is, of course, individual development.

This is measured by the degree of the individual's adjustment to the various phases of his environment. Such adjustment the reader will find discussed in the chapter on "The Finished Product." But to avoid misapprehension, and to preserve the broader educational outlook, it seemed necessary to include a discussion of the ultimate end of education, which, as in the case of all the arts, is Life.

With the assignment of education to its proper place among the arts, the determination of its essential nature, the valuation of its methods, and a discussion of its immediate and remote ends the book is concluded by some more or less obvious remarks in regard to the personal elements necessary to the successful practice of the educational art. These are knowledge, skill and interest, knowledge being the foundation element. In education, as elsewhere, "knowledge is power."

This brief, and perhaps repellently technical, account of the substance of the book ought to be of assistance in the way of enabling the reader to begin its study with a comprehension of the discussion as a whole, and with some conception of its unity.

Whatever faults the book may contain, and no doubt they are many, the author will be pardoned for entertaining and expressing the conviction that it will be enlightening to the general reader who is interested in education, and particularly stimulating and inspiring to those who are teachers, actual or prospective, for whom

it is more especially designed. My friend Professor Paul Monroe, of Columbia University, has done me the kindness, which I here gratefully acknowledge, to read the manuscript and to offer a few suggestions in regard to possible improvements. My indebtedness to others is sufficiently acknowledged, I think, in foot-notes and references.

I. W. H.

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THE ART OF EDUCATION

CHAPTER I

THE PLACE OF EDUCATION AMONG THE ARTS

What nobler service can one render to the state than that of training and instructing the rising generation? — CICERO.

What artists do you think most worthy of admiration, those who form images destitute of sense and movement, or those who produce animated beings endowed with the faculty of thinking and acting?

— SOCRATES.

1. Purpose of the Chapter. — There can be nothing, I think, more inspiring and helpful to those who are engaged in the work of education, or more illuminating to those who are not, than a correct conception of its real dignity and importance. Sentimental ideas with respect to education — “education, the bulwark of our liberties,” “the schools, the hope of the country,” and the like — are not sufficient. A reasoned conclusion with regard to the place among the arts that belongs properly to education, should take the place of pious opinion.

It is sometimes said that education is the highest art. Colonel Parker used to say, “Education is the highest art in the world.” If that were really true, what an inspiring thought it would be! A proposition so significant should be capable of logical demonstration. We

listen in vain, however, to hear such a declaration coupled with convincing proof. It is uttered sometimes as a dogma, sometimes as a self-evident truth, and is usually addressed to teachers, by those who know little about education, with the generous purpose of impressing and inspiring them with a sense of the loftiness of their calling. Far better than sentimental laudation of teaching would be a demonstration, on purely logical grounds, of the place or rank to which education must necessarily be assigned among the arts. That alone will compel the recognition and respect properly due to the art of education. To present such a demonstration is the purpose of this chapter.

2. Meaning and Scope of Art.—The true place of education among the arts can be discovered only by analyzing the conception of art and classifying the arts upon the basis of some fundamental and accepted principle. The first thing, then, is to consider the meaning and scope of the word “art.”

Art, to most minds, signifies the fine arts — painting, sculpture, poetry, music, and the like. The word, however, has a much broader meaning. There are mechanical, industrial, or useful arts as well as the liberal, polite, or fine arts. But the industrial arts and the fine arts, broadly speaking, cover the whole range of human activities. Art, then, includes all the efforts of man to achieve results. It may be defined as the endeavor to realize an idea, ideal, or purpose through the conscious

employment of means. It is therefore identical and co-extensive with intelligent action. A classification of the arts, in which alone the true place of education can be revealed, must therefore be, in effect, a classification of the various human occupations.

3. **Popular Classification of the Arts Illogical.** — Elsewhere it has been pointed out that the familiar classification of the arts into the "Fine Arts" and the "Useful Arts" is illogical.¹ The fine arts are useful for exactly the same reason that anything is useful; they satisfy desire; and if the useful arts are not fine, more's the pity. They might be fine, should be so, and do become so in proportion to the degree in which intelligence and the element of beauty enter into them. In a world of right human relations, in which joy in work could become everywhere a reality, the most menial occupation might be lifted by intelligence, beauty, and pleasure to the level of a fine art. From the standpoint of social well-being no necessary occupation is menial. Its end is life, and the end dignifies both the work and the worker. This does not mean that all the arts are of equal rank. That cannot be. Ditch-digging and hod-carrying can never be raised to an equality with landscape gardening and architecture. They are not equally serviceable to human needs, and they do not offer equal opportunity for intelligence and the play of the creative

¹ See an article by the present author on "The Classification of the Arts," *Pop. Sci. Mo.*, Vol. LXX (May, 1907), pp. 429-436.

imagination. They are comparatively low forms of art. It is conceivable, however, that some elements of imagination and pleasure might be imparted to even the lowest occupations if the conditions of these occupations were made human, and if a true conception of their relation to the well-being of mankind prevailed. At any rate, the classification of the arts into "Fine" and "Useful" is merely conventional, and is of little scientific value. "Beauty," says Emerson, "must come back to the useful arts, and the distinction between the fine and the useful arts be forgotten. If history were truly told, if life were nobly spent, it would no longer be easy or possible to distinguish the one from the other. In nature, all is useful, all is beautiful."¹

4. Social Utility the Basis of a Logical Classification. — If, then, we reject this popular classification of the arts, we must find a basis or principle for another more significant and logical classification. This basis or principle is best deduced from a true conception of the end or object of the arts. The end of all the arts is the same; namely, the promotion of human well-being. Some, indeed, pretend that the so-called "Fine Arts" exist for Art's sake, and that they ought not to be subjected to so prosaic, some would say vulgar, a test as utility; but this is short-sighted. Art's "sake" is not final. "Man is the measure of all things," in more senses, perhaps, than Protagoras conceived. The

¹ Complete Works, Concord Edition, Vol. IV, pp. 367-368.

true test of any activity, individual or social, is its effect upon human life. The only sound and deeply significant principle of a classification of the arts is, therefore, the principle of potential social utility.

5. Art and Material Phenomena.—Accepting potential social utility, then, as the true basis of a classification of the arts, we may pass to the consideration of an important fact. That fact is that in the practice of an art, no matter of what kind, material phenomena are involved. As a rule some form of matter is consciously employed. Matter is the medium in which and through which the ideas, ideals, purposes, and effects of art are objectified. As embodied in material form these ideas, etc., are called art products. They include all the works of man's hands, from the simplest flint implement of the savage to the complex industrial machine; from the hut of the primitive man to the Parthenon; from the rude drawing of the cave dweller to the Sistine Madonna. No art can divorce itself entirely from matter. Painting is impossible without canvas, brush, and pigment. The sculptor cannot "body forth" his ideal conceptions without his chisel and his marble, nor the architect create his "poem in stone" without the material means of building. Even the poet, with his "eye in a fine frenzy rolling," is dumb without the material means of utterance. "Language is the marble in which the poet carves." Music, the most ideal of the arts, is no exception to the rule.

Song is impossible in a vacuum, and the musician, no matter how skillful, is powerless without his instrument. Even the intellectual arts have a physical basis. Art, therefore, and material phenomena are inseparable. A classification of the arts must be in effect a classification of the forms of matter.

6. Classification of the Forms of Matter and of the Arts.—Now, as to the forms of matter, we have a familiar classification. Matter is inorganic, organic, and, to use Mr. Spencer's expression, superorganic. The inorganic may be allowed for our present purposes to include all non-living substances, the organic all living things, and the superorganic all social groups. These three divisions of matter are based upon, and stated in, the order of their complexity. Organic matter is more complex than the inorganic because it involves the life principle; and the superorganic is still more complex because it involves the principle of association. As the inorganic, the organic, and the superorganic cover all forms of matter with which the arts must deal, there should be three corresponding divisions of the arts—those which are employed on non-living substances, those which realize their objects in living things, and those which seek to realize their ideas and ideals in social organisms. These three grand divisions of the arts I have called the Physical Arts, the Vital Arts, and the Social Arts. Thus we have a classification of the arts based upon the com-

plexity of the material with which they deal. What relation has this complexity to potential utility?

7. **The Relation of Complexity to Utility.** —As to the relation between the complexity of the matter employed by the arts and the potential utility of the arts themselves, I think it can be shown that they vary directly. Auguste Comte, the French philosopher, laid down these two principles: (1) "The practical applications of the sciences increase with their complexity"; and (2) "Phenomena grow more susceptible to artificial modification with the increasing complexity of the phenomena."¹ Comte's classification of the sciences, it will be remembered, was based on increasing complexity (and decreasing generality). It is as follows: Mathematics, Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry, Physiology (Biology), Social-physics (Sociology). A question might be raised as to whether mathematics is a science in the same sense as astronomy and the others, but, leaving that aside, the principle that the practical applications of the sciences increase with their complexity amounts, when considered with this classification, to an assertion that the vital and the social sciences have, through their corresponding arts, a wider range of application than the physical sciences. But application to what? Obviously to phenomena. But phenomena, according to Comte's second principle, are more susceptible to artificial modification the more complex they are; that is, more can be done

¹ See Ward's "Applied Sociology," pp. 8-9.