THE PRINCIPLES OF INTELLECTUAL EDUCATION, PP. 4-137

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character we are studying: but to probe them to the bottom, to judge their comparative strength, is beyond our powers of insight, especially during the period which is devoted to education—the period of development and a constantly shifting balance: hence it is impossible to judge with security what will be the effect on an inherent characteristic of some new influence we may bring to bear: we must always allow for our ignorance of essentials, knowing neither with certainty what real powers a child possesses, nor the exact nature of such as we are able to divine. From which considerations two important results follow. One is that we cannot hope to do more than modify the original characteristics—a radical change is beyond our grasp, so that we should set ourselves to foster growth here and check it there without often attempting to implant fresh shoots or graft on any new powers: the other is that in considering education in the abstract we shall be dealing with the form and not with the substance of the mind—with shapes, not with chemical change—laying down in fact broad rules, requiring in individual cases constant modification. If chemical change can be effected at all, it can only be wrought with individuals: we cannot discuss it in the abstract. In beginning education we must be guided by broad principles and broad ideals: experience and knowledge of special cases may perhaps give us hope of going deeper, but such cases are too individual and concrete to make their treatment in the abstract anything but futile.

Hence can be drawn the justification for ideals in education and general rules. It is vain to decry the theorist on the ground that his principles do not produce the effect he desires. We are all of us theorists in our own way—one man with deeper insight, one with less deep: we all of us too are willing to acknowledge that we fail really to attain our ends: but few would admit that without definite aims they would have achieved even the slight results to which they have attained. In many cases theory lays itself open to the depreciation which

is so willingly accorded precisely because it neglects the distinction between a chemical and a mechanical change, or between the slight mechanical changes to which old elements, all originally present, may give rise when recombined, and the greater and more fundamental chemical changes which result from the introduction of ingredients quite new: in the former case theory may help us to effect something; can it do anything in the latter? Even in dealing with mechanical changes rules may not work out exactly as we wish, but experience long gathered will strengthen the rules, showing how much of truth they contain, how far they require modification: that any rule should hold exactly in any given case is, with the complexity of the material we are handling, not a thing to be expected, however greatly to be desired. Hence in laying down a theory of education we have to consider not particular combinations but general types—the way in which minds most readily respond as a general rule to a stimulus applied. Moreover we have to take into consideration the practical aims of education—for what purpose it is needful in life: and from this consideration springs at once an important point, not always sufficiently borne in mind—that the type of education which befits one time will not necessarily suit another—that what is well adapted for one class of society may not be so well adapted for a second. From which it follows that the theory of education can never be absolutely fixed: it must have relation to the circumstances and aims of the time: though general features based on psychology may be common to all theories alike, yet details may differ, and this difference in detail result in a final difference of great moment in the general effect. And here we see at once that the trammels binding the individual are not to be limited to those personal to himself: we are slaves to past systems of education which, through the conservatism natural to man, will retain great power when their usefulness is past, and instead of helping forward the younger generations be a distinct barrier to their progress.

Complex then, most complex, must be any theory of education which aims at completeness, even in dealing with the mass: no single treatise could hope to cover the ground. But if it be fully grasped that the theory of education is only a sub-science, working out its own conclusions, and meant, when these are worked out, to be brought into correlation with the various other social sciences all of which aim at the consideration of the question how best to live, and being so brought into correlation to undergo the needful modifications which the theory by itself cannot supply, because it is dealing with only one branch of life, not with life as a whole—just as, for instance, political economy must to be really of working value have its conclusions modified by the conclusions of other social sciences, or as abstract geometry must, when applied in practice, have its results modified by considerations of the properties of matter—then there will be but little danger of the theorist in education being supposed to stretch his claim beyond its proper sphere—the establishment of certain general principles which must be understood and taken into account, but not applied in practice without modification. These general rules will be of value in dealing with even an isolated child, much more with children congregated into masses—masses often unwieldy—at school: but in every case we have to bear in mind that there may be general considerations arising from facts outside the purview of education proper, which may lead us to neglect the rules we have reached, as it were *in vacuo*: especially will there always be a particular modification of the material to be dealt with in each special child, where indeed, though we shall not readily throw aside all regard to abstract considerations, we may yet find it needful to modify them largely. Bearing then in mind the complexity of the material and also the complexity of that material's surroundings, we shall be in no danger of going astray and imparting to the rules of education an infallibility of application to which it would be absurd for them even to pretend.

CHAPTER II.

THE AIM OF EDUCATION.

WHAT then is the aim of education? Only one answer in general terms is possible—it is to prepare for life. But when we begin to work out in detail all that is involved in this apparently simple formula, we begin to be conscious of the difficulties before us. Even setting aside the question of the formation of character, which does not fall directly within the scope of this treatise, and limiting ourselves strictly to the training of the intellect, it is clear that the same qualities do not suit all walks of life, and that the possibility of developing adequately both the special qualities required for special pursuits and the general qualities common to all, if any such there be, will depend in both cases alike on the natural quickness and adaptability of the mind to be trained and the length of time during which the child can be kept at school. Hence four questions arise: (1) What are the general qualities of mind which education is able to develop, if any? (2) What special qualities fit special walks? (3) What is the natural character and adaptability of the mind under training? (4) How long can that training be continued?

Now two of these questions, the second and the fourth, cannot be handled effectively in a general disquisition upon education. They require special treatment to be of any great value. At the same time they cannot be put aside altogether,

the second question even less than the fourth. It may not be possible to detail in full the peculiar training required to form, say, a good scholar or a good business man, a good investigator in science or a good man of his hands: but we cannot pass by such questions altogether, and to a certain extent it may be needful to give more than an incidental remark to the changes that such considerations introduce into a general scheme. This will appear as we progress. But the length of the training is in itself hardly so important. It may necessitate indeed separate schemes of education for those who leave school at thirteen or fourteen from the schemes devised for those who will proceed to a University: but it is closely bound up with the second question, and will perhaps best be handled incidentally, when we come to the separation of different curricula. The third question, again, though of vast importance, is an exceedingly difficult one to answer in general, if indeed it is possible to do so at all: it may be within our powers to classify types roughly, but the special qualities of individuals must in the main be left to the particular trainers, subject only to such guidance as a few generalities may supply, and the broad rules of education at large.

The chief object then of our enquiry must be to find an adequate answer to the first question propounded—What are the general qualities of mind which education is able to develop, if any?—followed later by the natural sequel—What is the best means of doing so? And the answer to this question must obviously be connected with the answer we gave to the broadest question of all—What is the aim of education at large?—when we said it was to prepare for life. Hence we may start by shaping the question thus: What are the qualities which are most useful, no matter what walk in life we pursue? They may perhaps be summed in two words—flexibility and exactness. The former involves all those powers which enable us to pursue any line with success—activity, quickness, insight, breadth of outlook, originality, comparison, differentiation and

the like,—the latter those qualities which secure not merely that we have some chance of success in a given line, but also that we lose as little effort as possible, always following the safest course to our goal—the correct interpretation of facts laid before us, the drawing of valid conclusions, the separation of the true from the false, the proper adaptation of means to ends. Without the former we fall into a groove, without the latter are led by will-o'-the-wisps. Flexibility is concerned with the growth of mental content, exactness deals with questions of method. Both qualities, though strictly intellectual, have a strong moral element intermixed: this element in part depends upon them, they in part depend upon it: for morality is impossible without intellect, sound intellect without morality. But the moral side is not the consideration here: all we need say is that in training the intellect we must keep the results upon morality in view, and again that we cannot train morals to the full unless we build upon a foundation of intellectual power and insight. Though for convenience we separate the two, intellectual and moral training are closely intertwined. Indeed at bottom it is only the consideration of the effect of the training of the intellect upon morality that can save education, as ordinarily understood, from the reproach of being merely a worship of mammon, a grovelling pursuit of success—an ideal which is degrading alike to the individual and to the nation which sets it in the first place.

The aim then of education being flexibility and exactness, we have to consider by what means these two ends can best be reached. Partly they are concurrent, but by no means altogether: and certainly they can easily be discussed apart. The tendency of the mind is to stiffen quickly in the mould into which it is at first poured: our business is to modify the shape of that mould where needful, and to prevent its content solidifying into an unalterable mass. Not an easy task—in some cases very difficult: custom throws its iron chain around