

**KANT ON EDUCATION (UEBER  
PÄDAGOGIK), TRANSLATED INTO  
ENGLISH BY ANNETTE CHURTON,  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
MRS. RHYS DAVIDS**

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Kant on Education (Ueber Pädagogik), Translated into English by Annette Churton, with an Introduction by Mrs. Rhys Davids by Immanuel Kant

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**IMMANUEL KANT**

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BY  
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WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
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MRS. RHYSDAVIDS, M.A.

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## INTRODUCTION

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NEARLY a century after its original publication in Germany *Immanuel Kant über Pädagogik* is now for the first time presented to English readers in the translation made by Miss Annette Churton. The little work, as is well known, was not compiled for publication by the master himself. In the last years of his long life he handed over to his younger friend and former pupil, Theodor Rink, the notes he had written for his professorial courses on Physical Geography and on Pædagogics, and commissioned the latter to select and compile from the loose leaflets as much as he thought might prove serviceable to the reading public. Rink set to work and brought out the notes on education in 1808, the year before Kant's death. The lectures, it seems, were not intended, nor *à fortiori* the notes, to give an exhaustive theory of education, nor do they

present any well-formulated body of philosophical doctrine based on either metaphysical or psychological or sociological data. Kant's chair at Königsberg University was that of logic and metaphysic, but his lecturing work—both as professor and, before that, as *Privat-docent*—included a number of subsidiary subjects. During the last quarter of the eighteenth century pædagogics was included as a subject of instruction in the university, certain professors taking it in turn to deliver a course of lectures thereon. When the course fell to Kant he conformed, as was his wont, to the not unusual custom of taking a standard text-book on his theme—in this connection it was that of his colleague, Prof. Bock, *Ueber die Erziehungskunst* (Königsberg, 1780)—as a nominal guide to procedure. But he did not allow the exposition of the book to hamper him in the original and constructive treatment of his subject. There is, indeed, no very apparent trace of Bock in these notes. The text-book, being in his hand and accessible to his hearers, probably required no memoranda for exposition and criticism of it. Whether he expounded and criticised or not, the legacy transmitted through

his pupil to posterity consists simply of a number of independent reflections, of criticisms not relating to Bock, of series of apophthegms, suggestive points, *aperçus*, with here and there digression and repetition.<sup>1</sup> Above all we feel that, according to his usual method, the master is addressing the average youth among his listeners. The toughest things of the *Critiques* are not drawn upon, nor is there any terminological paraphernalia to deter the listener. The Kantian ethic is *there*, right enough, but the teacher is feeling out after a theory of education. He is deeply interested in his theme, but his attitude towards it is inductive and experimental. He realised its importance and the magnitude of its issues, but also the imperfect and provisional nature of existing conclusions on the subject. There was his nine years' experience as a private tutor to correct any rash theorising—he used to say he had never been able to apply his own precepts in any specific case among his pupils! And his long academic career must have afforded him very

<sup>1</sup> Bink does not appear to have kept any notes made by himself while a pupil, or to have collected any from other former students.



Voltaire had gone to Locke *comme l'enfant prodigue qui retourne chez son père*, and had brought that father home to the adopted land of Rousseau. *Émile* saw the light in 1762, and the effect of its absorbing fascination on Kant when he opened the book is an old story. The next two decades witnessed the ideas therein put forth taking root and germinating in Kant's native land. Educational innovations were tried; educational reformers were maturing. The Philanthropist schools were founded in Germany in and after 1774, Kant taking a lively interest in the parent *Philanthropin* at Dessau. Bahrât, Basedow, Campe, were avowed Rousseauists. Pestalozzi was preparing his aphorisms. Oberlin, Herder, Lessing, were in their prime; Olivier yet a youth. Herbart was in the nursery; Fichte and Froebel in the cradle.

If these slight suggestions be worked out, the reader of these *Thoughts on Education* will get a more lifelike background to them than if he held in his hand the defunct text-book on which Kant embroidered his lectures. Rousseau far more than Bock—the pioneer and not the pedant—is the real inspirer, I do not say of

Kant's underlying principles, but of so much in these notes as indicates an inductive search for a fresh theory of education. This is patent throughout. Bock, as I have said, is never quoted. Apparently his colleague's views did not get woven up into the tissue of Kant's theorising. Rousseau, on the other hand, appears throughout, explicit and implicit, though the tender insight of the father is replaced by the relatively rigid and crude stand-points of one who had never gone in and out among infants of his own. It is Rousseau's Baby who sits enthroned in the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics of the elderly bachelor philosopher, and hears curious things said respecting his temperamento, a Spartan treatment prescribed for his many tears, an impossible reasonableness in expressing his wants required of him, but a glorious freedom in dress and limb declared essential to his happiness. It is Rousseau's Child for whom Kant claims that he be brought up independent of the stunting assistance of tools and apparatus generally; that his nature, devoid of original perversity, but depending for its moral growth on right nurture, be drawn out, not repressed—be

allowed the play of regulated freedom and not moulded into an automaton of habits, nor be worried by arguments appealing to faculties yet undeveloped. We do not catch distinctly in Kant's teaching the real *Leitmotif* of *Émile*, viz. education not by precepts but by 'things'—in other words by the laws of Nature. What, again, we find in Kant and not in the *Émile* I will outline presently. But through both works, while the ideals of liberty and equality are held up as supremely worthy, both the Stoic Prussian and the sympathetic Genevan submerge that of fraternity in the concept of the free *Weltbürger*, jealous of his own liberty so it encroach not on that of others, jealous for the dignity of humanity in himself and others. To the ideal of liberty Kant attained by a road peculiar to his own philosophy. As to that of equality, by his own admission it was Rousseau—*l'ami de l'égalité*—who had dragged him from his exclusive and aristocratic standpoint, and had made him sensible of the claims of all men on him in virtue of the common humanity in all. At times, offended by Rousseau's extreme and paradoxical conclusions couched in a style of great charm, Kant accused him, just as Rous-