

# **EDUCATION AND LIVING**

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Education and Living by Randolph Bourne

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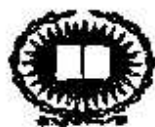
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BY

**RANDOLPH BOURNE**

AUTHOR OF "YOUTH AND LIFE," "THE  
GARY SCHOOLS"



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## PREFACE

These papers, reprinted with slight additions from the pages of the "New Republic," through the courtesy of the editors, do not pretend to be anything more than glimpses and paraphrases of new tendencies in the American school and college. The public school is the most interesting and the most hopeful of our American social enterprises during these days of sluggishness for us and dreary horror for the rest of the world. It is becoming one of the few rational and one of the few democratic things we have, and science and hope are laying a foundation upon which a really self-conscious society could build almost anything it chose. The school fascinates me because there is almost no sociological, administrative or psychological truth that cannot be drawn out of its manifold life. It is the laboratory for human nature, and the only one that is simple enough to study with any prospect of quick enlightenment. Experiment in education has come to

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stay, and this means that we have it in our hands to approach ever more closely our ideal of education as living. We can make the school ever more and more nearly that child-community life towards which our best endeavor points.

The point-of-view of these papers will be recognized as the product of an enthusiasm for the educational philosophy of John Dewey. But what is a good philosophy for except to paraphrase? The discovery of truisms means merely that my enthusiasms are being communicated to an unappreciative reader. Certainly the most recent educational sensation indicates that there are still crowds of professional educators and parents to whom such ideas are not truisms. To see education, not as a preparation for life or as a process segregated from other activities, but as identical with living, takes more imagination than most teachers have yet acquired. If the school is a place where children live intensively and expressively, it will be a place where they will learn. The ideal educational system would continue with the adult all through his or her active life, sharpening skill, interpreting experience, providing intellectual tools with which to express and enjoy. Just as education and play should

be scarcely separable for the little child, so education and work should be scarcely separable for the adult. By closing off the school and boxing up learning we have really smothered education. We are only just beginning to revive. We have first to make over the school into a real child-community, filled with activities which stimulate the child and focus his interest towards some constructive work, and then we have to teach the teacher how to expose the child to the various activities and guide his interest so that it will be purposeful. The school can thus become a sifter where children unconsciously as they live along from day to day are choosing the ways in which they can best serve both themselves and their community as workers and citizens in the great scheme.

The papers on the Gary schools are reprinted not because I wish to exploit the system or its superintendent, but because of the usefulness of a concrete example to hang wandering theory to. The schools of Mr. Wirt's conception, in spite of many inadequacies of realization, still seem to me the happiest framework I have yet found in the American public school for the fulfillment of the new educational ideals. No one can deny that in the actual schools much of the

old unconsciousness and regimentation still stick their unwelcome head through, but my somewhat naïve impressions do reflect, I am sure, a spirit which is there, and a possibility that is very near for the American community to catch. To praise one thing, however, is not to damn everything else, and it would be false to pretend that almost every city in our country has not latent within its system the embryo of the modern school. Some are simply more conscious than others. Some actually envisage education as living.