

# **EDUCATION FOR CIVILITY AND REFINEMENT**

## **Some Historico-social Consideration for Reinstating the Foremost Mission of Education**

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The present concern with education for the economic development of the country has in view the industrial ends the nation has assumed. Industry looks to education for the training of manpower necessary for its growth. But educators must ever bear in mind that education would lose its genuine finality, if it should become subservient to the needs of industry, to the extent that its foremost mission should occupy a second or third place in the hierarchy of educational objectives.

The proper purpose of education consists in preparing men to conduct themselves as human entities, to practise refinement and civility in society. All other areas of emphasis possess a purely secondary character, as education for democracy, education for national development, education for a new society, etc.

This paper discusses some historico-social factors affecting the essential task of education, specially the actual preoccupation with channeling the educational system of the country to the exigencies of industrialization. It intends to proffer some words of caution lest schools neglect, or refuse to restore, the basic orientation of education: to prepare men to live as gentlemen.

### **CONTEMPORARY EXPANSION OF EDUCATION**

Modern humanism has successfully propounded the sacred right of every man to a place in the sun. To this end it has with equal zeal advanced the title of every person to enlightenment. The phenomenon of mass education in contemporary society no doubt owes much to the inspiration of modern humanistic philosophers.

Education has become an article of faith both in the "free" world and in the communist world. Whatever its ideology, present society holds to education as to its salvation or as to its guaranty of continued prosperity.

Institutions for learning and training have increased in number and in kind never before witnessed in history. Highly industrialized nations understandably have to maintain a vast sophisticated system of education, in order to prepare their citizenries to man their ever expanding national and international operations, and thus to continue in their position of ascendancy.

On the other hand, countries that have just attained the status of political independence, as well as those of ancient civilization awakening to the age of technology, feel an even greater urgency to undertake mass education, in order to achieve economic sufficiency at home, and some measure of dignity in the international community.

In the new countries and also in awakened ancient nations, the need for education becomes more acute due to the demands on the part of industries, professions, business, and governmental offices for men trained in the modern knowledge and skill called for by the current situation.

For the individual, preparation at home for employment in adult years no longer suffices. The child must leave home for instruction and training in an institution preparing him for a useful life. The family has long ago come to the conclusion that schooling makes up a sound investment for the life of the child. This attitude contributes to the unprecedented increment of educational establishments throughout the country.

### **EDUCATION NO LONGER A PREREQUISITE OF RANK**

The possibility of every man to obtain education constitutes one of the great blessings of modern world. In the past only the privileged classes could benefit from the refinement and civility available through education.

If any child, at present in school, should inquire about the educational attainment of his forebears, he would discover that a grandfather or a grandmother did not enjoy the chance for

education that he now takes for granted. Or if his grandparents did have schooling, he would come to the conclusion easily that the education of his forebears depended upon their traditional social station and inherited wealth. Children without class and economic distinctions then did not have the access to education.

Humanism and contemporary world ideologies have made the opportunity for learning a right of every child, and the provision of education by the state a duty of every government. And every state has adopted the fundamental policy of providing free education to every member of its citizenry, on the one hand; and on the other, it has sought to insure the education of its populace by enacting laws effecting the compulsory schooling of every child.

The extension of education to every child leveled off the inequalities of hereditary classes observable even up to very recent time. It seems now within the reach of any man to work his way up in society by employing his native intelligence in the education available to all, and by exercising diligent application of the learning he acquired in schools.

No longer does low birth condemn him to a low station in the world. Scholars of society have observed in the advanced nations of the West the emergence of new classes not dependent upon inherited titles, but founded on personal achievements in business, politics, arts, and sciences.

On the other hand, the abrupt expansion of education in new nations and in old ones entering the age of technology has occasioned a decline in quality in favor of indiscriminate number.

### **OBSESSION WITH MATERIAL ADVANCEMENT**

Moreover, both in the developed nations and in the various categories of those aspiring after industrialization, there lurks the current danger of pervasive obsession with education for material advancement at the expense of integral cultivation in taste and finesse. At no time in history has man so distorted the concept of education, as to regard it only in terms of material returns, in place of moral development.

Time and again modern society has dwelt on the failure of education. And almost always the education that has failed

has reference not to the timeless and universal finality of education to render men noble, but to the transient, limited, and mundane success of the individual and of his country. Education has failed if it does not enable the individual to obtain a position in the economy of the country; and it has gone wrong on a nationwide scale, if it does not supply the required number of professionals and technicians needed by the country, on its way to modernization or amelioration of living standards.

Almost never will one hear from the bemoaners how education has stopped short of its overall goal, because it has not rendered man more human less brutish, more civilized less boorish. Yet, no educators dare deny that the cardinal priority of education covers not so much the material aspects of man and society, as the superior imports of the human entity and his kind, qualifying the human race as builders of civilizations. The present rush to comprehensively orient education to meet the temporal exigencies of the individual and of society could very well reduce the humanity of the individual and make society unbearably banal.

#### **EDUCATION CANNOT KEEP APACE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS**

Besides, the kind of education economic planners have in mind could not provide a decent solution to the industrial manpower dearth. It could not satisfy the immediate demands of industry for skilled workers, for the simple reason that the required men must still receive preparation for the jobs in view. And by the time they have finished their training, it happens more often than not, that the call for their skills has passed, for industry has moved to other areas of concentration.

Forecasts of future manpower requirements in number and in kind ironically exhibit the consistent property of reliability that diminishes with the advance of time; so that when the date arrives, they have reached zero validity. Projections made last year of industrial trends for the forthcoming decades, quinquennia, biennia, year, semester, and even quarter now seem certainly erroneous. The predictions made this year themselves will likewise lose credibility with the passage of time.

If therefore society should formulate its educational policies on the basis of prognoses pronounced by businessmen and economists, it would condemn the school population to recurrent

changes of emphasis in the school curriculum, with the result that students stay in school forever trying to catch up with latest trends in the nation's economy, or they leave school having acquired various superficial skills without any useful concentration in any one direction, or they possessed consistent specialized training in a trade no longer in demand.

Technological advances progress so fast that training for specific jobs becomes obsolete when the child leaves school. If we would relate education overwhelmingly to the material exigencies of the country, then it seems axiomatic to state that the more technological a society becomes, the less relevance to the times will the products of its educational system possess.

Countries lately entering the status of political independence thought that they needed at once a professional class to man their bureaucracies in the government and in the private sectors. They geared their educational system accordingly to produce professionals. And now they have an oversupply of professionals who find themselves no longer in demand—becoming restive elements in society. The trend now in these countries has shifted to education for vocational development.

### EDUCATION FOR HIGHER VALUES

Not only does such an education fail to provide a man and his society the suitable means to attain the material ends envisioned, but due to its lopsided emphasis on earthly values, it also falls short of uplifting crude human nature and uncouth society to higher visions. Maybe we should reserve the word "education" to mean exclusively the preparation of man to conduct himself in every situation as a perfect gentleman, both in his inner dispositions and in his outer actions.

Education should refer to the rearing of the child in all those aspects that differentiate him from creatures of the jungle. We could then employ the word "training" to signify all those processes whereby the child acquires professional or technical skills qualifying him for gainful employment in his earning years. Training will enable a man to provide for his material needs, but education will imbue him with fine manners, discriminating tastes, and good sense.

Training prepares a man for a specific level and area of operation, but education habituates him to behave himself in

public, at work or at play, alone or with others, in good fortune or in bad fortune, interiorly or exteriorly, and in whatever disposition, of soul or body: to conduct himself with balance, consideration, and property, as a superior being by virtue of his sublimer nature of manhood.

Thus education embraces the whole man, but training has in view only his livelihood. And whereas a man has to train himself again and again in different crafts according to the successive demands from the world of professions and industries — if he would keep in step with the progress of employment trends; he would receive education not for one or another transitory end, but for the universal and timeless finality of existing and acting as a polished person, regardless of his financial assets.

### PROFITIOUS TIMES FOR EDUCATION

At no time in the history of mankind do we possess such propitious and helpful situations for the education of each and every child. The world has grown smaller by virtue of the facilities for mass communications characterized by speed and precision. Peoples therefore enjoy the benefit of mutual dissemination of cultural heritage leading to the salutary exchange of ideas. Mass transportations make it quick, easy, and safe to obtain scholars from one country to spread their thoughts to the peoples of other regions. New ideas fan out instantly to all places.

The improvement in health and the control of natural disasters or their predictions allow man to pursue moral occupations without frequent and prolonged interruptions from the elements. Technological advances have afforded us so many aids in the propagation of culture and in the inculcation of wisdom. Our task consists in making them serve — instead of us serving them.

One of the most decisive conditions responsible for making education available to every child occurred with the official abolition of traditional elite classes in society. Humanistic philosophies and democratic ideologies, even that democracy tolerated in communist countries, have preached the egalitarian society with great fruit. Modern governments have all done away with social preferments founded upon heredity, removing from their holders all the privileges of birth.

Whereas before education belonged to the nobilities as an inherent right, in contemporary society it accrues to every child by birth regardless of family background. With the abolition of the privileged classes arose the conviction accepted as official by governments and put into practice, that every child harbors in his nature the potentials for education whatever the external milieu of his origin and whatever the condition of his forebears.

This idealism effectively counteracted past assumptions patronized by governments themselves linked to the upper classes, that people from the rank and file should not attempt schooling, because they had no innate capacity for learning and moral ennoblement.

### **CONDITIONS REPRESSIVE OF EDUCATIONAL RECEPTIVITY**

We must seek the reason why men from the lower classes in past history gave the impression, that they could not learn and assimilate the elements of refinement, in their lifelong containment by circumstances that obstructed education. When they had no other environment than that which brutalized their minds, or which restricted their visions to the planes of sub-human perspectives, they naturally could not but have stifled the intrinsic susceptibility of their souls to cultural upliftment.

And the privileged classes as well as the government, consciously or otherwise — but with equally devastating effect, fettered them to their sub-human lots by consigning them to occupations not different from tasks performed by beasts of burden. Intense and protracted corporal labor performed under pressure could not but render insensible the spiritual nature of man, making him callous to the sublime aspirations or his moral faculties.

Due to their harsh conditions, men from the lower strata of society became bedeviled with purely biological and temporal preoccupations. And consequently — perfecting the vicious circle — the ruling classes esteemed them inert to education and held them in contempt as inferior beings. Thus past governments had excellent and self-complacent justifications, of their own making, for not attending to the education of the common masses.

### INBORN APTITUDE FOR ERUDITION

Nowadays the intrinsic capacity of every child to learn the behavior peculiar to rational creature has merited universal recognition. Exceptional cases of mental deficiency due to untypical genetic causes that retard intellectual and emotional functions pose a challenge but not an insurmountable one to the best educators. Normally, however, every child could master the elements of education in civilized human existence.

Not so much the inborn traits of the child but the influences from outside his nature impose limitations on him for education, and often incapacitate him for elevation to the cultivated life. We can understand the maiming effect of the outside world upon the child's moral potentials when we observe that outside physical forces could cripple a child's bodily members, so that the human body destined by its inborn nature to move and to perform an infinite variety of motions becomes lame, bedridden, or otherwise disabled corporally; thus also in the moral sphere.

Obviously, not every man possesses the same kind of intelligence or the same degree of a peculiar mental competence. Some people have greater aptitude for certain forms of intellectual functions, while others excel in different ones. But however limited in number and restricted in degree the intellectual and moral endowments of each man, the possibility always exists in his nature for education to a level of human cultivation.

Some will attain through education a higher level of human breeding than others, but every man can and must assimilate whatever degree of refinement and civility he could obtain through education, instead of languishing in the substratum of ignorance and crudity.

### THE MYTH OF INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

Present society has great fixation with intelligence quotient. However, in scholarly circles intelligence quotient has gone under increasing qualifications, that have watered down to a conspicuous extent its importance as an index to the mental prowess of the individual. Intelligence quotient depends upon two postulates.

First, it relies upon a concept of intelligence that need not really correspond to the universal essence of human intelligen-



tial faculties. Second, it assumes that its tests actually measure the natural intelligence of the child. This cannot escape valid criticism to the contrary. The concept of intelligence underlying the intelligence quotient cannot possibly cover extensively the reality of human intelligence as it exists in every man. Besides, the expressions of innate intelligence represent not really raw intelligence as the mind conditioned by external forces and influence.

Society must exercise the greatest caution in condemning a child to a purely vocational training on the basis of intelligence quotient. Intelligence quotient however convincing still constitutes no sufficient motive to totally orient a child's education so that the integral scope of true education: preparation of the individual in refinement and civility, no longer forms the general finality of his schooling.

No reasons can enjoy validity, which would bar a child from that education which his human nature has marked him out to receive, in order to exist and act above the purely biological level and to take his place among cultivated men in society.

### **REPRESSED INTELLIGENCE**

Intelligence quotient actually represents the portion of a child's genetic capacity activated by external stimuli. This manifested intelligence of the child reaches a shallow depth of the total inborn mind. The rest remains dormant, or tragically repressed by outside inhibiting forces and agencies.

The phenomenon of cultural gap between the young and the old, between the rich and the poor, between nationalities, and between races points out the dissimilarity and inequality of intelligence as a result of external conditioning processes. Certain things done by one people or one group of the same people escape the comprehension of others; not because of an intelligence in these latter radically different in quality and in quantity, but because of outside influences which long ago walled up their intellectual stirrings along a few channels, eliminating thereby all other horizons.

### **ESSENTIALS OF REFINEMENT AND CIVILITY**

On the other hand, the kind of education that pretends to animate each and every inherent ability of the human mind

for knowledge, skill, taste, and refinement cannot but face failure. Available time and extant facilities do not permit society and the child himself to give their attention to this ambitious project. Society and the child have to spend time and energy for the pressing occupations of life in other vital fields than education. But society could impart to the child the basics of good sense and civility. Both society and the child devote time and effort for the development and conversation of life on the physical level. They must set apart time and means for evolving and elevating the child's moral vitality.

Society could instill in the child the habit of universal understanding, an attitude of open-mindedness, and the virtues of civilized bearing. Instead of indoctrinating the child to a set of values held by his society as the exclusive ones acceptable and admirable; genuine education should inure his mind to its natural endowment for comprehension and accommodation in regard to ideas and ways foreign to his own environment.

This approach consists in the fundamental inculcation of the child's mental faculties in the habit of withstanding any and every future narrowing of his mind to certain views to the exclusion and censure of others.

### THE NEW SOCIAL CLASS

Education has always catered to the ideological, economic, and social positions of the society sponsoring it. For this reason the educational system of the country has always produced graduates such as the nation itself has specified. And the graduates themselves in order to succeed in the world have to mold their minds to its accepted views and ways. Not so much creative genius as adaptation to the system determines their climb in wealth and distinction.

Such an education may serve a pragmatic purpose: the continuance of the status quo in society — on the assumption that current conditions leave nothing more to desire. Thus, if a country establishes material advance as its overriding concern, its educational system will accordingly pursue this solicitude, with the result that the products of its schools will crave after physical goods to the neglect and abandonment of spiritual values.

Since inevitably by luck, drive, and shrewdness, some members of society will garner more material wealth than the ex-

ceeding majority, difference in classes will appear again on the basis of economic influence: the opulent class.

The new aristocracy will acquire expensive tastes and exhibit appreciation for the arts and humanities; but their basic philosophy will not extend beyond the limits of materialism. The scions of this new class will enter government and will take charge of the educational system.

### **DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION**

Since they see everything from the standpoint of a materialistic life philosophy and regard the sublimer destinies of man with mere superficial attachment, they will tend to establish two general levels of education. Neither of these levels aims at the primacy of moral values; but both intend to procure the material benefits of the individual and society. The superior level accepts candidates for training as professionals and high grade technicians. These students will join the new aristocracy in later years.

The inferior level receives rejects from the schools of the superior level. Students of the inferior level take up training that will enable them to earn a living as common laborers in various capacity, more corporally employed than mentally occupied.

We observe such a policy in the administration of entrance examinations to prestigious schools, whereby those applicants who score below the pre-set number of points must content themselves with vocational courses, instead of studies designed for professional careers. The graduates of vocational schools will never make us much money as the products of white-collar establishments. And with their economic disadvantage, the blue-collar graduates will not have the means to acquire so much as the trappings of culture and taste.

### **EDUCATION FOR REFINEMENT AND CIVILITY**

The educational system of a country must therefore seek before all other considerations the formation of the child into a person of refinement and civility. His training in some specific skill for employment will at most take a secondary place in the educational hierarchy of priorities.

Although in the abstract chronological order biological survival must precede cultural ennoblement; nonetheless, in the order of human schooling for integrated existence in society as an accomplished person, the shaping of man into a civilized entity of wisdom and judgment must come before everything else in education. Otherwise the child might become irremediably conditioned to materialistic actuations and perspectives, with his mind warped to function in terms of mundane profits and brutish competitions.

Once this Pavlovian conditioning has taken hold of the child, the intrinsic possibility of the human soul to break the shackles thereof and rise to the plane of gentile consciousness — although still present — will most rarely materialize. The child will remain hardened in his base conditions, oblivious of truly human standards. And the rehabilitation of a drug addict would seem an easier undertaking than the restoration of the obdurate mind to its pristine receptivity to good breeding.

The school cannot alter the attitude of life dominant in society, unless society itself first has entrusted to educational institutions its own redemption from gross values and its own conservation as well as progress in the properly human existence of good sense and polish.

### THE RIGHT MENTALITY FOR SCHOOLS

On the assumption that society itself has geared its educational system to maintain it in the right order of values: moral refinement before worldly advancement, or to restore it to this proper hierarchy of priorities if it should deviate and become materialistic, the school itself must rectify its mentality first in order to carry out this program in behalf of the society sponsoring it.

The school must before anything else conceive its fundamental and all-embracing goal to teach man to conduct himself as a human entity endowed with moral faculties for universal understanding and civilized existence. This mission must pervade all the activities and special fields of educational establishments. This essential scope of schooling will overcome all those influences outside school, that tend to seduce man to all forms of senseless materialism.

Then the school must accept the fact that every child has the capacity for refinement and civilization. This approach will counteract the assumption already traditional that children from bad homes or less privileged backgrounds possess no receptive talents for gentile rearing.

The reason why children from the lower strata of society used to exhibit an apathy toward good breeding arises from their position of cultural disadvantage on the one hand, and the past orientation (surviving generally up to the present) of school toward children from the upper sections of society, on the other. The environment of the school and its personnel tended to represent the milieu of the middle class; and it proceeded as though every child came from the respectable neighborhood.

In such circumstances, the student from better homes fitted without effort into the school society, while the child from the slums or from the non-affluent sectors experienced a crippling trauma in the abrupt change of social setting. The school personnel similarly felt some involuntary repugnance if not outright repulsion for them.

This event breeds mutual miscomprehension and even hostility, with the baneful result that the children from culturally deprived families continue to exhibit indifference or even antagonism to the higher ideals of society — confirming thereby the prejudice of the school.

### **SCHOOL ACCOMMODATING TO CHILDREN**

The educational system of the country must design the school, its personnel and its activities in such ways that children from the lower strata of society meet with no alienating crisis in the first days of classes. In broad outline, the method for achieving this end consists in first studying the home milieu of the socially underprivileged children, in order to create in the school the necessary means to introduce these children gradually to the ideals of civilized existence: order, cleanliness, industry, personal health habits, and all those elements of refinement and civility.

The school personnel must exercise the utmost understanding toward these children. In the first place, they should not give the least appearance of blaming the children for the back-

grounds they came from. In the second place, they should teach them the elements of taste and propriety, that depend not upon the pretensions of wealth, but upon the basic nobility of every human person, rich or poor alike. Economical inequality does not excuse them from assimilating good manners and a sensible mind. While their youthful minds still retain the receptive faculty for change and improvement, they will acquire the moral and intellectual attitudes of perfect gentlemen.

With regard to the children of well-off homes, the school must take special care to imbue in them one of the most important traits of civilized people, namely: regard for one's neighbors notwithstanding their financial inferiority. The school must perform this task before their tender minds become poisoned by arrogance and insolence in their dealing with their inferiors in wealth.

### COLLABORATION OF SOCIETY

Outside school, society must collaborate in the education of its citizenry for ennoblement by moderating the influence of the mass media. A moment's reflection will convince any intelligent person how much the mass media can and do cancel the best efforts of the school to genuinely educate people. The exaggerated accounts of evil deeds or less edifying acts committed by some individuals in society could not but effect the minds of the general public in every strata of society, by virtue of their extensive and protracted coverage. In this way, the mass media wittingly or unwittingly bring people to adopt attitudes directly opposed to the ideals of refinement and civility.

Basically, however, it does not suffice for society to entrust to schools the task of keeping society civilized, or to collaborate in this task by moderating the influence of mass media. Society itself must behave in a civilized manner. It should enforce law and order, effectively curb wrong-doers and extol men of exceptionally good lives. In this wise, the citizenry will abstain from crimes and imitate the virtuous.

But above all, society itself must disown any philosophy which views man and the world exclusively in terms of material advancement: more wealth, greater bodily comforts, extravagant new products, and more enticing means to occupy free hours with passive entertainments.

The education that society must implement has for its basic and all-embracing finality to produce civilized people nurtured in refinement and civility. But unless society itself exhibits the traits of superior humanity in its mores and actuations, in its outlooks and priorities, man will have one set of values in the school, sublime and ennobling of man, and another outside, base and unworthy of man, but which will rule his life — to the inevitable degradation of humanity.

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