

THE PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION

by

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The principles of education are based on the concept of life and the aim of existence directed by the nature of its structure and the prevailing conditions of the environment in which we live. It is taken for granted, usually, on the basis of observation and experiment conducted through the methods of empirical science, that the universe is formed of physical, biological and psychological units, called things, entities and persons, in which, when selected and studied in their isolated capacity are known as individuals, and, when taken in groups with kindred characters, go by the name of society. The educational process has normally been a series of techniques in studying and gathering information on the objects of sensory perception and mental cognition, which are supposed to constitute the environment of man.

On the supposition that the units forming the human environment are outside the subject of perception and cognition, educational institutions have been including in the curriculum of studies such subjects as mathematics, astronomy and physics; chemistry, biology and psychology; sociology, civics and economics; geography, history, and politics. To these primary subjects of study were dovetailed certain accepted doctrines of ethics, philosophy, religion and aesthetics, founded on the assumption that persons and

things are independent units contained in the cup of the universe, almost like pebbles filled in a bottle, heaped together in mechanical contacts with one another but individually enjoying absolute independence, each for itself. This vision of the universe is practically the basis of modern educational philosophy and psychology and its implementation in the teaching field of institutions. We, thus, hear students being asked to choose a group of subjects among the several enumerated above, and they obtain a pass or a degree after a course of learning how to add, subtract, multiply or divide factors of computation in arithmetic, algebra and geometry, how things behave on observation of their bodies, how they act and react among one another—in short, what is the result on an empirical investigation of the visible structure and behaviour of perceived objects.

The whole system of present day education may be called mechanistic in the sense that it takes the relationship of things among themselves as one of physical contact or of permutation and combination of essentially dissimilar characters brought together into action by changing movements of things or by a pressure exerted by factors which are wholly external to their individual wake of constitution. All this naturally implies that we do not live in a world of any inner bond of friendly relationships but are basically formed of elements, characters and aims foreign to one another, which cannot ultimately be united into a real, vital fraternity of mutual relationship. We seem to be living in a billiard ball universe where things are scattered at random in space and they appear to be working in reciprocal contact, collaboration or cooperation either by mere accident or due to sheer selfishness which needs a certain kind of assistance from others for the fulfillment of their objectives. Whether the world is ruled by chance or by the selfishness of its essential nature, it does not, on this supposition, appear to be anything more than a medley of soulless activities of ultimately purposeless motions of mindless forces with an unintelligible intention that seems to be lurking and struggling behind the deepest core of each individual unit,

whether inorganic or organic, physical, biological or psychological.

This would naturally be the picture of the universe with which modern science provides us, and an educational system rooted in the perspective of such a scientific analysis and deduction would obviously be mechanistic, soulless, non-purposive, and an altruistic camouflage of a basically selfish intention of every individual. To put it more plainly, this form of educational career can carry with it no other purpose in the end than to perpetuate a physically and egoistically comfortable existence—to wit, the acquisition of food, clothing and shelter, physically; of sex-satisfaction, vitally; gain of name, fame and power, psychologically; these being the manifest pattern of the psychophysical organism—and where the purpose of education has been recognised to cover such fields as the welfare and protection of other persons than one's own self, it could be easily discovered that it is only a tactful extension of these aims of the psychophysical individual, for an interest in others is seen to be conducive to an intensification of the satisfaction of these urges as well as to furnish better chances of their fulfilment, as they cannot be fulfilled adequately if there is no cooperation from others and from external factors of various kinds, which fact the personal ego knows well by a subtle insight blatant futility, at best a perpetual self-deception, heading towards deeper than sensory or intellectual apprehension.

This is really the unpleasant secret that comes to the surface of one's observation behind the so-called noble efforts of man, based on this educational wisdom, born of this view of the universe. This should also explain why man has always been feeling insecure in an unfriendly environment, irrespective of a love for others and a sense of brotherhood which he has been demonstrating and apparently working for externally, for these otherwise noble virtues are based on false values and cannot hold water for long. An outward form of cooperation and friendly relationship founded on an essentially self-assertive and

unfriendly attitude cannot be regarded as having any meaning, ultimately. The truth, when it is bluntly put, would appear to be that we live in a world of love and cooperation which arise from an internal dislike for and irreconcilability with others! Such is the world, such is life, and such is man's fate, when such is the structure and aim of our general attitude and our education, one cannot expect students and teachers to behave in a way which is not demanded by the essential nature of things. This is modern education in its plain colour.

As genuine interest, love and cooperation are characteristics of the soul, these qualities cannot be expected from any soulless system of education based merely on the mechanics of a physical observation and study of inorganic matter, even if it be the study of the solar and stellar system and the electromagnetic core of atoms, which, science tells us, are the building bricks of the cosmos. If science is right in its proclamation of such results as the ultimate fact of creation, man can never hope for peace, or gain freedom worth the name.

But is this true? The untiring hopes and aspirations of man are a standing refutation of these deductions devolving from a reliance on materialistic science and behaviourist psychology. Human longing has always been for the achievement of absolute freedom and perpetual peace, with a consciousness of this achievement which implies that consciousness must be capable of reaching a state of absoluteness, which must at once be one of immortality and non-exclusive universality. Minus these profounder implications of the aims of life, which are amply manifested by every man in his everyday life, human endeavour would be a blatant futility, at best a perpetual self-deception, heading towards one's own doom. That a unitive, non-mechanistic, universal purpose is at work behind the mechanized urges and relations of men and things is proved by the very existence and irrepressibility of aspiration. And, that the educational process has to be reoriented and transformed into a process of the vital evolution of a soulful

subjective aim of every individual comes naturally to high relief. There is in life a divine core of a basically spiritual reality, hiddenly present in all things.

That the universe is primarily a 'kingdom of ends', wherein every individual or unit is an essence of selfhood rather than a means of exploitation by other individuals; that this aim of a collective organization of 'ends' and 'selves' is the basic ideal of all pursuit of knowledge; that education is a systematized process of unfolding gradually this eternal fact of all life; that it calls for a parallel advancement along the lines of greater and greater unselfishness and inclusive consciousness of existence tending towards the realization of a universal Selfhood; that the material amenities and economic needs (Artha) and the satisfaction of one's emotional side (Kama) are permissible only so long as this law (Dharma) of this eternal truth of the liberation of the self in universality of being (Moksha) regulates its fulfillment, and that, thus, the whole of the life of an individual is one of studentship and learning in the light of broader and broader outlooks of life which lie ahead of oneself at every stage, are to constitute the vitality and meaning of the educational process. Education is the creative evolution of the total man towards the realization of his cosmic significance, passing through his personality, the society and the world.