

Education for Freedom¹

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When Nietzsche spoke about a time to come "when education would be talked about and nothing but education," he might, with a prophetic look into the future, have visualized present efforts to stress education and its purposes.

Of all the problems involved in this question, who would do the educating and who would be the recipients of it, the questions of methodology, pedagogy, means and tools, one problem certainly is the most important: Education for what? What goal is to be achieved? Education as a common good, more or less the right of the individual, must serve a purpose in common to all.

Knowledge might be considered such a purpose. With knowledge, people might make better lives for themselves and others. Education might contribute to or bring about *Peace*, if everyone had knowledge: knowledge of facts of a scientific, sociological, psychological nature; of the humanities, the technical sciences,—anything which is knowable. If this were true the saying would be valid that "He is the most educated who has most to forget." But, assuming that knowledge as such were the goal of education, it would not dispel the fear that in the hands of the educated might lie the power to use this knowledge to the detriment of others; that it could be used for evil purposes rather than for good, as a knife in the hands of a certain person might lead to criminal, not useful actions. Knowledge, it seems, cannot constitute a goal of education; it is just one of the tools.

Maybe the goal should be "leading a successful life." Education for success! This raises the question: success at what? Certainly people with skills, practical, "well adjusted" people who can sell somebody's product or themselves, the so-called good personalities, the good mixers, the individuals who "fit" into society, will be able to make a success of their living, to be successful at making a living, somehow fitting into the category of being good at "how to win friends and influence people."

As a goal of education, however, this seems too much an orientation to individualism, to a "catch-as-catch-can" game, or even to a

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"dog-eat-dog" situation. "Fitting" into a given situation might lead to a dangerous lack of responsibility, to a "follow-the-leader" attitude in which by pleasing others one might be safe. It also might lead some individual with little or undeveloped social consciousness to a rugged self-centeredness, endangering his fellowmen and distorting, at times to a devastating degree, the conception of human dignity of others in order to enhance his own personal value.

Considering the imperfection of human beings, this self-centered stress on one's own position in life could turn out to be so dangerous to the individual's own mental and physical health and to the rest of society, that success in itself could not be regarded as a desirable goal of education.

Let us start anew: The individual as part of the world contributes by his way of living, directly or indirectly, to the state of the world. On the other hand, the turmoil of the whole world is contrary to the desirable state of Peace, be this peace of mind or peace among individuals and peoples. The individuals with their actions must be in some way responsible for this state of affairs; therefore, education should provide a means to achieve a goal of constructive living together.

From the cradle of wisdom, India, came the idea that three trouble-makers are bedeviling the world: ignorance, greed, and fear. Maybe here is where education could find its goal: to rid the world of these evils.

Education for knowledge could certainly do away with ignorance. Educate everyone and ignorance would not have a place on the face of this earth. But would this check greed and fear? Might not the possession of knowledge in a person apt to abuse anything for his private purposes lead to an increase of greed? The demand: I know more, therefore I should have more,—more power, more material goods, more prestige,—a very neurotic request—would unfortunately not only increase greed but also the fear of failing, of being outdone, of losing. In the same way, the "successful" and more personable individuals might claim greater privileges over others who in many cases might even have greater knowledge.

Greed and fear seem to be solidly tied together; a need for "having" something and anxiety over losing it, or lacking it, of losing whatever value the individual may have attached to the coveted thing.

In this dilemma in which one finds oneself searching for a true goal of education which could encompass these three problems with-

out creating a new one, one idea emerges with great clarity: the goal must be to educate an individual to be free of entanglement in the net of ignorance, greed, and fear. The free person is the truly educated person. The question: education for what? has found its answer: *education for freedom.*

At this point a little excursion into the realm of semantics may be permissible to avoid some confusion about the use of terms which might lead to misunderstandings. Quite some time ago I attempted to differentiate between terms customarily accepted as synonyms, yet different as to meaning. To have liberty is not the same as to be free. The former is a possession, the latter a process, a function. The one can be given or taken away, the other is an *inner* situation created by the individual, his own achievement, and as such, not bound to external situations. Freedom is a matter of conviction, of attitude towards oneself within the world, of projection of oneself into the world. The experience of essentiality is not subjected to liberty; it cannot be destroyed by prison walls.

This leads to more semantics: The person who *has* liberty might consider himself as also *having* independence; that he can do what he likes, go where he pleases. This is true, but does it mean that he *is* independent? Does anyone *have* greater independence than a stray dog which does not belong anywhere? Yet is there anything that *is* less independent than just such a stray dog which must depend on anyone who might throw it a bone? The dependent individual looks for a support to hang on to. He is the socially ill adjusted, the neurotic, who depends upon the social interest of society but is unwilling to contribute his share to it. The isolationist belongs here, the hermit, the recluse, who shun society for fear that they might not "get" enough, not enough goods, not enough prestige, not enough love. And what is enough?

The dependent and the one who seeks to have independence are in a grotesque way like two drunks who lean on each other, wavering back and forth, trying to get somewhere but unable to do so because letting go means falling. Somehow these people are static in motion, hindered and hindering in this leaning process.

Thus, another concept creeps into the idea of freedom: not only independence is necessary, but a dynamism that allows movement between oneself and the other fellow: interdependence. One only can be free in interdependence. Man is born a social being, the preservation of his own self is indivisibly tied to the preservation of mankind;

the interdependence of human beings makes survival of the race possible. This togetherness of all, the social consciousness that is the inborn potentiality of experiencing oneself as an integral part of the whole, gives the individual the impetus to function creatively, to become full-valued, and thus fulfill the meaning of his life.

Going back to education for knowledge, one would have to say at this point: the most worth-while knowledge anyone could acquire would be to know that only in togetherness and interdependence can the individual accomplish his self-realization; the value-creating function of the single entity within the community of man lifts the person from the purely biological plane of self-preservation and existentiality to the level of essentiality.

A full picture cannot be given here of all the difficulties in the early life of every individual which eventually might lead him to sad misconceptions of his position and function in life. Only two of the problems will be discussed because of the inevitability of their occurrence and their all too frequent effect on the psychical life of the individual.

The first problem is the complete lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of the infant of the dynamics of life. He experiences life as static and lives it "as if" above were always above and below always below. One looks up to the ceiling and when picked up one can look down on the floor. This vertical plane of life is experienced in a static antithesis, and in the same way the infant would consider left and right also as in an unchangeable relation to his body. This false belief in constancy of direction, one of the many misapprehensions in our early experience, the idea of the Jacob's ladder in the Old Testament, is responsible for the feeling of inferiority engendered by the above-below relationship.

While we slowly come to realize, in our childhood development, that the change in our own standpoint, our own turning around 180° , converts right into left, our incapability to turn around our horizontal axis does not allow us to recognize as readily the fallacy of a static above-below conception and to experience it, too, as a momentary phase in a dynamic situation.

The idea of living on a vertical plane is in its acceptance by individuals perhaps the most neuroticizing element of all. Yet so much of the training of children is based on it: Hitch your wagon to the stars! The sky is the limit! Don't let anyone keep you down! You have to be better, more, than the next. Slogans, all of them, that show

the wrong orientation of the educators called upon to give direction and to guide the formation of the educator-to-be.

Substituting the horizontal plane for the vertical plane of life changes the aspect completely. Here the ideas of superior and inferior have no place; here is no one on a rung of a ladder in fear of being pushed off by the ambitious climber below who wants to take his place. Here is room for everybody. Side by side, each with his own start, his own road, his own goal, individuals can walk together, work together, independently and interdependently, contributing their share to life. Roads will cross or run parallel, but here one has freedom of choice: choice of the road, of the goal, of the partner with whom one wants to walk; here also social consciousness leads to acceptance of the responsibility for one's own actions and co-responsibility for the welfare of others. On this plane, too, courage and self-confidence, the two main principles in freedom, allow for improvement and progress; perhaps some people might be more advanced because they started earlier or walked faster or made fewer detours; but as every one has his own road, they are no longer competitors to be outdone. The measuring stick is the distance from one's own point of departure. The goal might never be reached, but self-realization is a process, movement, not the goal achieved, but the goal aimed at. That Christopher Columbus did not find the Indies as he had set out to do does not make his voyages wasted efforts. Or would anyone today wish to say that it would have been better if he had stayed at home, because he failed to reach his goal? The horizontal plane affords the possibility of developing one's best potentialities within the world of one's fellow men; it alone allows for the dynamic forging ahead of one and all.

The image which represents the situation on the vertical plane is a forest of pedestals of various heights. Standing on each one is a person busily engaged in chiseling chips off other pedestals and pushing them under his own in a frustrated attempt to raise himself higher while frozen in a static form. It is the world of fictitious glories; in its extreme, the world of the stylite, who may feel very holy and superior standing on his stone with his withered arm held up to the sky from whence he expects reward for his useless effort. The only dynamism in this sad misconception of value is contributed by the birds, which are invited to build a nest in the palm of the hand of this statue of flesh and bone, yet as dead as if it were a structure in bronze or stone.

The chipping movement of the pedestal dwellers reveals their goal: to enhance their own prestige at the expense of their fellow chippers.

The same idea that keeps people tied to their dependency, their ineffectuality, has yet another aspect adverse to the conception of freedom. It is due to the second unavoidable misconception in infancy that the relation between the world of the child and that of the grown-ups is static, too, as the child needs time to experience growth and with it the changeability of time and space. One *is* a child, one *is* a grownup and it must seem as if these worlds would never melt into each other. The desire to *be* and the striving to *become* are evaluated as opposites. This conflict shows at times spectacularly in cases where the former precludes the latter completely. The fear of failing on the road to one's goal, the risk of being found out as not *being* wise and great or accomplished keeps many individuals from progressing, driving them into neurotic symptoms as a means of saving face and reaching a fictitious security. The craving for *being* misleads them to look for security in unchangeability, though this goal will be reached only when the individual in his coffin becomes static. But the sentence: I am dead, has lost its subject.

Going back to the idea of freedom for which mankind should be educated, it is evident that this education would have to start at the earliest time in life. The child will have to be guided to experience himself as a member of a group, in which and through which he can learn to choose between constructive, centrifugal values of self-realization and the destructive, centripetal pseudo-values of self-elevation.

For the advocate of freedom the problem is individuation; for the advocate of liberty it is individualism. This, however, leads to the separatistic, isolationistic craving of the non-integrated person to retain, unredeemed, the self-centeredness of the infant, resulting, in the grown-up, in a lack of social consciousness, lack of social integration, as experienced in neurosis and psychosis and other deviations.

Individuation requires exercise of responsibility for oneself and, as a functioning entity within the extrapersonal entity of the world, co-responsibility for the welfare of others. Freedom is an ethical outlook on life. The free person knows that he is his brother Abel's keeper; the person at liberty proves—in most cases, at least—that he has not violated moral laws of *his* society though he may not have kept the ethical laws inherent in the community of man.

Life in its enormous complexity is simple if viewed from the standpoint of togetherness. The complications carried into it by the psychical somersaults of people could be avoided if social consciousness, this precious inborn bud, were handled with the same loving care as the

physical being of the infant. The first step in the education for freedom is to guide the child away from his insistence on the sovereignty of his ego to a willingness for cooperation, helping him to be free from greed, from fear, and from ignorance; stimulating his use of his creative power to develop himself optimally.

While education of the child means formation of his world of values, the re-education of the grownup who has lost himself on the way means transformation, an inner change, a different way of experiencing life and oneself in it; a process of freeing oneself from safeguarding the ego, thus enabling it to grow, to mature.

There are many who might consider such ideas as idealistic, unrealizable. Yet there is no doubt that Individual Psychology has the most realistic approach not only to the individual as a single entity but to the needs of the world which today especially, urgently requires people who can withstand the allurements of the "isms," be they from the left or from the right. No "free" person ever could adhere to any of these doctrines, because no "free" person would ever be willing to sacrifice cooperative ideals to collectivistic ones which reduce him to a cog in the wheel and deprive him of his right to maximum development for the sake of maximum usefulness for the whole. The individuated individual is the prototype of democratic living, the individualistic one the pawn at the mercy of any "ism" in fashion.

Lillian Smith, a fearless fighter for the brotherhood of man, has expressed in poetic form what is the content of this paper:

This is the sin of you and me and all of us:
To have more power than love;
More knowledge than understanding;
More information about this earth than of
 The people who live upon it;
More skill to fly to far-off places than
 To stop and look within the secret
 spots in our own hearts;
For freedom is a dreadful word unless it
 goes hand in hand with responsibility;
And democracy may yet become a spectre
 on this earth unless the hearts of
 men are mature.