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Education, the Strategy of Peace

by

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The Antidote to Teaching

Every group has natural tendencies which, if unchecked, will wreck both it and others, out of sheer inertia. Labor unions go on asking for shorter hours and higher wages, manufacturers for higher tariffs, parties for more political spoils, doctors for longer years of internship, lawyers for more quotations from precedent, ministers for more charity drives and peace meetings. Nothing can save them from themselves except regeneration by something bigger, which lifts them out of the rut of endless repetition.

The natural tendency of teachers and students is to live on borrowed life. To a certain extent this is right, because it is the business of teaching to represent all the earlier stages of the human spirit, and the purpose of learning to acquire vicariously what our own lives would bring us too late or not at all. But when teachers go on exploiting the past without responsibility to the future, and students go on anticipating the future without gratitude to the past, we get decadence and revolution.

The process which regenerates teaching is education: it checks the inertia of teacher and student. The syllable "e" means "out of" and implies movement forward, toward something beyond. The goal of education is to encourage the student to outgrow his little habitual self, to learn that man is the up-hill animal of creation

who does the impossible against all odds. An educator as distinguished from a teacher does more than impart facts from the past; he pleads with the living generation to work for the growth of a future humankind equal to any previous generation in faith, imagination, freedom, and creativeness.

The motto of education might be derived from a famous line of Horace: "Vis consilii expers mole ruit sua--a power that does not dance in rhythm with others falls by its own inertia." Since mind, doctrine, speech are forces to which this warning eminently applies, let us say in behalf of the energy that regenerates teaching: Vox exilii expers mole ruit sua--a voice that can only follow its routine, that cannot cut loose from its environment, from the pressure of vested interests, will fall dead and meaningless, and as a blind force it will repeat too late what should no longer be repeated. Our voice must taste withdrawal from repetition, must go into the wilderness and take us, teachers and students alike, outside classroom, marks and salaries, outside our background and foreground, into the exile of truth. Truth always is an exile from society. If we call on her in a true ecstasy, a jump outside ourselves, our spirits return purified. Otherwise we fall flat, by the self-centeredness of our professional routine. Vox exilii expers mole ruit sua, and such a voice will bury student with teacher under an avalanche of dead facts.

The mutual insurance company for capitalizing on the past called teaching, i. e., the company of experts unexperienced in exile, and the mutual exploitation company for getting all the heritage from the past as "1066 and all that," i. e., without the student's

own suffering, sympathy, despair, service, toil--both are detestable. The "too early" and "too cheap" of the student results in two types: the child prodigy, and the eternal playboy who has never met his teacher in the exile of truth and therefore, in his heart, treats all learning as a bit funny. The minds of these perennial children have been reached only by the inertia of that academic vox exilii expers. The fruit of such mechanical transmission in the case of the prodigy is a brain flooded with verbiage and definitions without the purification of a brainstorm.

Our colleges today are in the main the outcome of the Enlightenment of 1750, when men were so fascinated with light, telescopes, clarity--in short, the brave new world of scientific knowledge--that enlightenment seemed an absolute value. But we should know better today, when the era of Enlightenment is ending in brain corrosion, and youth is rebelling to protect its own inner darkness. Yet we go on enlightening at all costs. The students are cauterized before they have grown. And at forty-five they give out. The specific energies needed in the second half of their lives are not produced, because their educational diet has been overbalanced with mere facts.

The light of expectation pointing toward a great and miraculous future is the only enlightenment that is wholesome. Thinking thrives in the cone of dispersion around expectancy, and repetition, without which we cannot learn, is insupportable anywhere else. Great aspirations make us work and toil with an ease that the "objective" teacher fails to impart. The expectation of our youth must throw us over the hurdle of our fortieth year; it is then that we

may find pleasure in facts; facts are the reverse of the medal; on the upper side life is a fiendum.

An education that does not give promises is not education. Claiming to give facts, and facts only, is a declaration of bankruptcy. Present day teaching is a series of farewell parties to life. True education enables man to survive the limitations and follies of his age and to enter the next; therefore it endows him with resilience, vision, resources, dreams--and of course with forebodings and warnings as well.

This is not idealism. Is it not plain that a teacher has before him a person whose life has not yet been lived? We should respect the truth that boys must outgrow the boy, and the man, and the father, and the citizen, and the ruler and the teacher, in due course, and end as elders and priests. The age of universal priesthood cannot end in universal childishness without opening a gap for illegitimate elders, namely dictators and quacks.

Any society and any person should have as much future as past. The antidote to "facts" are "fienda." The cultural lag represented by teaching, through which society has to assimilate each newcomer, can be balanced by crediting our students with being ancestors of as many generations to come as have gone before. Then we look at teaching from the end of man, from the regeneration of the universal order, we shall treat the student as the founder of centuries.

### Social Regeneration

Not only teachers, our whole society has forgotten the secret of regeneration which enables the individual to survive the stages of life and the community to survive succeeding generations. Modern

civilization was built on the Reformation and its principle of universal priesthood, yet today we no longer recognize the supreme importance of this principle.

"Priest" means "elder," and the elder statesman, the great old man, is the naturally grown priest in any country. His role is superior to that of magistrates and comes later in the course of life. In Japan, for instance, the elder statesman is the spiritual authority that appoints the acting statesman.

The role of eldership is social regeneration. Its secret lies in the fact that an old man is through with his own life but not at all through with life. People know that he alone is free from personal or partisan aims. Like a grandfather, he stands above but not aloof from the strife of the younger generations, as the guardian of life's continuity. That is how he regenerates society: he takes care that the full cycle of life is begun again in the proper order. And it is the expectation of one day becoming an elder that should carry each individual through the full cycle of his own life.

It follows that the production of elders must take precedence over all other social activities. Our thinking is too much dominated by the simple contrast between youth and age, whereas in fact a healthy society requires three distinct functional groups: children, adults, elders. And since the latter embody the powers of survival, we give up the survival of the group as such if we produce rugged business men and artistic children only. No price is too high for the education of men who can teach and pacify, and accordingly early educational literature has always centered around the nurture of princes and priests and judges.

Our own blindness to these truths is vividly exposed by the fate which recently befell the Amish Men of Pennsylvania. This sect, dating back to the seventeenth century, adhered literally to the principle, "Every man a priest;" they had no professional ministry. Everybody had to be a dyed-in-the-wool farmer first, a ruler and judge later, and at the end the very best acted as preachers. The preacher alone revealed the full power of man's spirit; so the younger age-groups knew there was something to wait for, and were spared the precocious intellectual curiosity which leaves our youth blase.

There was deep wisdom in all this. The Amish Men knew that no mere system of instruction, no set of prescribed "courses," could make true elders, but only a slow growth through all the seasons of man's life on earth. An unquestionable relation of each member to the soil was the first step toward their highest spiritual office. After apprenticeship on a farm in his formative years from eight to twenty, a boy was ready for the next step, when a kind of adult education took him in hand.

But the State of Pennsylvania made a new law compelling children to stay in school until sixteen or seventeen years of age, thereby destroying the basis of the Amish lay ministry. Such high-school children might become successful commercial farmers, single-crop farmers, land speculators, etc., but they never could be farmers in the sense of a centennial yeomanry, in the sense of an unshakable foundation for universal priesthood. The frightened Amish Men sent a delegation to the Governor. And he told them: "You behave, or I will pull out your beards." This historic sentence was spoken in 1939 A.D. It signifies the witches' sabbath of scholastic self-adoration.

The Governor of Pennsylvania was unaware of his crime: by enforcing the statutory law he broke the laws of Human Society. And we, too, when we degrade the liberal arts college into a prep school for the professions, have nothing left for educating elders-- a task quite distinct from that of producing scientists, businessmen, mechanics, doctors, etc. In an organic society, the training factories for these "jobs" are mere makeshifts, which of course will always be needed, but which must take their cue from the laws of biology and mental growth outside themselves. Is it not strange that two thousand years after Christ, four hundred years after the Reformation, we should ignore this?

#### Why Teaching Must be Free

One reason why we have forgotten the role of eldership is that we have come to take the succession of generations in the history of mankind for granted, whereas it is really a perpetual achievement. The natural relationship between the generations is deadly warfare, which constantly threatens to put an end to history in any significant sense--a fact recently made patent in the clash between undergraduates and alumni over the war issue. The gulf which is forever opening between old and young, between past and future, must be bridged with a common present, a common peace, if civilization is to survive.

Hence the supreme function of education is to be the strategy of peace which links the generations into the history of the race. But this does not mean the abolition of all conflict, still less the ostrich-pacifism which tries to ignore it. The essence of this strategy of peace is "mental fight," in William Blake's famous phrase:

only by facing the conflict between the generations can we overcome it, only when teacher and student meet frankly as "distemporaries" can they hope to become "contemporaries" and create a common present. Why do we eliminate all heat, all worries, all mental suffering in education, and prefer lukewarm discussions of childish opinions to the tragic conflict between movement and inertia, zeal and laziness, life and death? We think of teachers as "facilities" whereas they should be great difficulties and obstacles and stumbling stones in the path of the student.

The relationship of the teacher to the generations in society gives the clue to the true meaning of academic freedom. We misconstrue it today. The usual formula is liberty to teach one's own "subject," but that involves the old departmentalized notion of education which is disintegrating life under our very eyes. To defend academic freedom as a Civil Liberty like freedom of speech and press, or religious tolerance, is equally mistaken. Teaching is not merely speaking, because it is an office to which youth is exposed by compulsion. It is not merely spreading the latest news or opinions, because it goes on in institutions which embody centuries of tradition.

Freedom of teaching is a gift of the Christian era, and did not exist in pagan times. It is based on the Christian assumption that both teacher and student struggle and suffer from a common destiny of mankind which is clearly distinguishable from its past. Whereas even the Greeks thought of the future only in terms of repeating what had gone before, Paul, John, Vincentius of Lerinum, and practically every Christian thinker, proclaim that our faith is in permanent progress with the help of our children and grandchildren.



The founder of our freedom was Paul the Apostle. The pagan "guru" or teacher was wholly subject to the traditions and rulers of his tribe or city; his office was simply to initiate the young into a pre-existing order. But Paul advocated the teacher's right to meet the needs of "new" times. His authority, Jesus, his administration, the Church, did not prevent him from altering his terms for the Gentiles, in order to bridge the chasm between past and future. As a teacher he was free because he stood between the generations.

So freedom was given to the teacher in our era that he might move between the ages, recalling each into the phylogenetic history of the race. He must call to order the aged, the adult, and the young with the strategy of peace which preserves the continuity of our march into the future. In doing this he has to defend each time of life against the others, depending on where the danger of abuse is greatest at any given moment.

Now the nature of academic freedom also reveals its limits. The teacher stands between the generations, not apart from them. Before he begins to teach he has bowed to a four-fold division of labor in society: teaching cannot go on without spiritual authority, material power, and youthful promise. The great dangers of our time are due to loss of belief in the unity of spirit that assigns different functions to different people, yet preserves unanimity. The whole freedom of teaching is given us only for the sake of making peace between different ages that are headed in the same direction. Therefore we lose our right to freedom unless we teach in unity of spirit with the right authority and right power and right future. This tri-une belief binds teaching to society. Paul expressed it when he said, "Scio cui credidi--I know in whom I have put my faith."

Today we teach in our colleges a mild form of Platonism without its necessary sequel: the Old and New Testament. No Greek teacher ever recognized, like Paul, that his thought could be under authority, protected by power, yet free. Greek philosophers broke away from the traditions of their native city and became heroes in their own right. They even proclaimed that philosophers themselves should become kings. That was blasphemy. Paul had a king; he taught within a city, the New City; yet he was sovereign as a teacher because he recalled each generation into the life of the whole human race.

A wrong Platonism is the peril of our educated classes, much as a wrong Aristotelianism led to the downfall of the Middle Ages. The people naturally turn against this abuse of liberty and refuse to become the philosopher's guinea pigs. We live in one City because we suffer and die for each other and because our Elders have done so for us. Philosophy does not found cities. It cannot overcome the crisis of our civilization unless we defeat academic uprootedness, with its intellectual arrogance, and restore reverence for the mysterious process by which the sequence of generations builds up one body of humankind.

#### America's Creed

The central theme of these pages is the need for restoring a right balance between future and past in our social life, and for knitting them together in a common present which preserves the continuity of man's growth through the ages. Let us ask in conclusion about America's past and future and present.

Our common past is immigration. Neither the Daughters of the Revolution nor the Pilgrim Fathers nor the frontiersman nor the Gentleman from Virginia are the whole past. Our common denominator is the fact that we were all immigrants. And those among us who try to forget it destroy the foundation of American life, for only as fellow-immigrants do we find access to every layer of our society, to its minorities of all descriptions.

Our common future is a continent without nationalism rampant, a New World for the Children of Noah. The very word "nation" is preposterous when used for America. Yet the nearer we come to the catastrophe of European nationalism in 1940, the more we find ourselves skidding into this usage. When the United States considers itself a mere nation, the Bolnazism of Hitler and Stalin, which has annihilated the nations from Finland to Belgium, may defeat us morally. As a nation, lying between Broadway and Hollywood, America may disintegrate. But everybody knows and feels that this reckoning of Hitler is false. America's destiny is hemispherical. She is a world, not a nation. She integrates when she stretches herself from the North Pole to the Straits of Magellan. "America must remain big."

During the last two hundred years our immigrants represented the unlimited future of the Americas. For every man pushing west towards the frontier, hundreds of newcomers entered New York Harbor. The thinly populated continent felt a giant's strength because an endless stream of immigrants backed up the older generations who had first occupied the land.

That is gone now. But the New World can regain its old unbounded courage if it implants re-immigration into the life of every child. This should become our common present activity, arising out of our past and pointing to our future. From naive membership in one minority, from being natives of one state, we all must re-immigrate into the New World that lies beyond nationalism. This process must shape our whole thinking and doing: it is our way of believing in man's soul, his power to grow and to change. When we let it go, the minorities cluster around their separate interests and the melting pot loses its magic.

The American Era will last, the United States of America will last, through all the inevitable changes in politics and economics, as long as we make Immigration Without End the guiding star in the American flag. As long as courageous re-immigration rediscovers America, this Hemisphere may feel safe.

But safety is not the last word in life. We must also know that we are making a real contribution to Europe and Asia. And so we can. For those two worlds have given up the faith in man's power to be transformed personally, to become a person in the process of taking responsibility.

The early Christians emigrated from this world, as martyrs and monks. Racists and nationalists, natural men who rest on their first birth, hush up their migrations and get stuck in an accidental environment and a particular nationality. We are not deserters of this world. We are not part of this world. We immigrate into this world. The boundless hope that man is neither a class product nor a race product, that he is not the slave of his environment

but creates a new one day by day, has led the millions of immigrants to these shores. This is the center of our creed, and it is an indispensable tenet in the creed of all mankind. In this sense we indeed defend the freedom of humanity. The words spoken in 1776 by a young college graduate remain true: "The worst that can happen, is to fall on the last bleak mountain of America, and he who dies there, in defense of the injured rights of mankind, is happier than his conqueror."

It has been and must ever be the privilege of educators and students to ensoul this American way of life, as a courageous act by which every young man is initiated into the Great American Society of the Future.