

# NOTES ON EDUCATION: (1968)

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## INTRODUCTION

The subject of Education is of such fundamental importance, of such vital interest to everyone of us, and covers such a vast field with all of its varied aspects, that we feel it opportune to devote this study to it (even though it is merely a partial one) and to train ourselves in reflective meditation on such a subject, and to indicate, in particular, the lines of development and objectives along which we must concentrate our *creative* action.

It is difficult to assess the outer results of our meditation, especially with regard to their wider and more long-term effects, but we may trust, or even better, we can have a strong faith that such results are assured and inevitable, because "energy follows thought," and thought, directed by the will, and animated by feeling, is *creative*.

In the midst of the world events that are rapidly unfolding, and of the whirl and pressure of outer activity, we must remember that all visible, material events have *inner* causes stemming from the *imagination*, from *thought*, and from the *will*. Hold this firmly in your awareness and live accordingly; spread its acceptance; apply it with persistence in promoting the new forms that will be taking the place of the old ones.

## I. THE MEANING OF EDUCATION (SEMANTICS)

The first thing we must do, in order to approach our subject (as must be done in dealing with any topic) is to define its true nature and meaning in clear terms; i.e. to make a terminological (semantic) specification. It is particularly necessary to do this in the case of education so that we may become aware of the existence of a basic misunderstanding, or confusion that must be eliminated.

Education has often been considered as synonymous to "instruction," i.e., the imparting of knowledge and information. Up until a short time ago (and even now) the majority of schools of all levels has aimed, more or less openly, at such a goal, and has intended to carry out such a function. But education, in the true meaning of the word, is something quite different, something that is much more inclusive, and that in a certain sense, even has the opposite meaning!

Instruction means to infuse, to put something in that is lacking, to fill a vacuum. The etymological meaning of the word "education", however, means to "draw out" (from the Latin "e-ducere")... to lead, to draw out that which is within; i.e., to bring to light what is hidden, to render actual what is only potential, to develop.

It also means to draw out of conditions that limit; in other words, it is the favoring of a process of growth. Of course, education also *includes* the imparting of ideas, but this must be seen only as a first step or stage, as an instrument or necessary means, and not as an end in itself.

Both aspects and concepts are included in the common usage of the word "education", and this easily creates confusion and misunderstandings. It would, therefore, be useful to distinguish between them and to always specify, for example, by using the terms: "informative education" and "formative education".

## II. THE EDUCATIONAL CRISIS

The distinction between the two concepts offers us the key to understanding the crisis now existing in the field of education.

The concept of "imparting something from the outside", along with the corresponding traits of authority and control on the teacher's side and the imposition of programs, is in direct contrast to the tendencies now rapidly coming to the fore.

The above-mentioned contrast has produced a revolution against traditional educational methods. New methods shifting the "center of gravity" from the teacher to the pupil, have been proposed and put into practice.

Psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the harmful effects of repression and censure, has also substantially contributed to this radical change. Thus, great progress has been made; children and young people are now treated with more understanding and are given greater opportunities to develop more freely.

But the revolution in the field of education (as what almost always happens with revolutions) has gone too far, arriving at the opposite extreme in some cases. The elimination of all discipline, every rule, all help on the teacher's part has produced results that are undesirable and at times, even disastrous, both within the family and at school; disorder, anarchy, lack of self-discipline, and violent behavior have been its effects. Furthermore, the fact that has most astounded the "reformers" has been that this regime of freedom without limits has proven unnatural; they have come to realize that even the children themselves do not want it and often ask for guidance, precise rules, a certain amount of discipline and order, and that they most of all want "models" and living examples. But this fact should not be surprising. It has been found that even adults find it difficult to bear freedom, and while they often fight to obtain it, they basically do not really want it; they are ready to give it up and even seek to run away from it. This paradoxical behavior helps us understand many recent events and has been pointed out in Erich Fromm's book: *Escape From Freedom* (amongst others).

The poor results caused by exaggerated applications of the new educational methods have given rise to a counter-reaction, but this has not solved the problem. All attempts to return to the "good old methods of the past" are in vain and are destined to fail, both due to the fact that those methods were not really "good", and because their imposition has been rendered impossible given the profound changes that have occurred in the psychology of the new generation and in the environmental conditions. In the meantime, the rapid increase in the number of students, the tumultuous extension of "mass education" in the form of compulsory education (something which is both desirable and necessary), and the resulting scarcity of

competent teachers and adequate schools, have created new and serious difficulties and complications. All this explains the current crisis in the field of education, where the old and the new are found in different proportions, side by side, and often, in sharp contrast with one another.

The more enlightened educators have recently recognized the need of finding a "middle road" and have been carrying out experiments in this direction. This is constructive and promising progress. But to arrive at truly satisfactory methods, one must take into full consideration the new tendencies emerging today—tendencies that continue to characterize, more and more, the future direction.

What has been said until now indicates how important it is to discern and to establish the main lines along which an education adequate to the new conditions and needs, must be developed. But first let us specifically deal with the defect considered most serious in present-day education, that is, the excessive importance given to scholastic education and the consequent relative lack of education in the family, thus giving rise to serious deficiencies. In part, this is due to the already mentioned confusion between "instruction" and *true* education, and in part to the real difficulties which exist in carrying out an adequate family education. These are made worse by the present conditions which often deprive children of the attention and cooperation that is their due. This is particularly true for the father because his time and energies are very often absorbed by the pressing demands of supporting his family. But the deep conviction that children *cannot do without* an adequate education within the heart of the family, and that it is their *right* to receive it, should induce all parents to face those difficulties and to seek seriously to overcome them.

The great and often decisive importance attributed by psychoanalysts to the first years of life and to their imprint on the future personality, has been acknowledged by many educators. Not only do traumatic experiences, brought to light by psychoanalytic research, seriously hinder all future development and the formation of the personality, but so does the lack of certain indispensable *positive* elements, such as love, understanding, training, guidance, and a sense of security as well.

### **III. THE NEW TRENDS AND EDUCATION.**

#### **1. Dynamism and a Positive Viewpoint**

The close interrelationship between these two trends permits us to deal with them together. Both are the incentives of the "active methods" of the new education and are evident in it. These include:

- (a) Direct contact with nature and with living beings:  
earth, water, plants, animals, and related activities...to sow, cultivate and raise domestic animals.
- (b) Specific material for didactic purposes (Frobel, Montessori, Decroly, etc.), or objects, tools and machines for general use.

(c) Cooperation in family activities and the carrying out of domestic chores.

(d) The execution of set projects (for example, a school building was constructed by a group of teachers and students in a mountainous region of the USA, using tree trunks. Work makes them use their intelligence and acquire a vast field of concepts and many manual capabilities.)

(e) Group activities of various kinds—experiments and training in self-government of the school community, etc. All this can be put into the general formula: LEARN BY DOING — EDUCATION THROUGH ACTIVE TRAINING.

These methods constitute real progress and improvement in education, and we can predict that their techniques will be perfected and used more and more widely as time goes on. They are in harmony with the other trends of unification and synthesis, mental development, extraversion, and can always be combined and integrated to an ever greater extent.

*Dynamism* also has another effect. A change is now occurring in education and is one that will continue to be stressed: the traditional, unrealistic ideal of a static "model" is being replaced by the concept of life as a *process* of development and of maturation. The goal of a theoretical "normality" accepted up to now, along with its resulting "conformism", will give way to the appreciation of *creativity*, and education will be considered a continuous and limitless process. This means that the education of a young person, rather than ending with high school, or even with university courses, must continue in the form of self-education for the rest of his life.

The active methods, permeated and rendered more alive by dynamism, also offer (in addition to their generally-acknowledged effectiveness) a specific advantage of even greater value: they aid in the development of the *will* and of its right use.

The recognition-that the *will* is of utmost importance, that it is the most direct expression of the Self in the personality, that its power is wonderful, but that its misuse is responsible for many dangers, will enable the *will* to be given a central place in education.

We find in the above one of the main points of contrast between the past educational methods and those that are new. In the past, educators have aimed at dominating the child's will and at making him obedient. Obedience was the fundamental virtue impressed upon the child. It is merely redundant to point out the poor results of such an "education", all the more because it has now been made impossible by the absolute refusal of today's youth to accept it! They may seek guidance, help and cooperation, and they often ask for it (and educators should be ready to give it with competence); they can be persuaded to change their attitude, but many refuse (and rightly so) a blind obedience.

The education of the Will implies a clear concept of what the will is and of its various stages:

1. *Evocation* of the will
2. Its *right* orientation

3. Its wise and effective *application* through use of appropriate techniques.

Special importance will be given to the development of the *Will-to-Good* and of the *Will-to-Serve*.

## 2. Mental Development

This does not only consist of a quantitative increase in mental activity, but refers to different ways of using the mind, bringing about a change in *quality*. Up until a short while ago, these ways were the privilege of a few—philosophers and scientists—but now that they are beginning to be diffused to the general public it is necessary that they be adequately acknowledged, more widely adopted and applied in the field of education. The various activities and applications of the mind may be briefly described as follows:

(a) The first function of the mind is to synthesize the sensorial impressions so that the individual may acquire an intelligent experience of the so-called outer world. In this regard the mind can be considered as a sixth sense, a "common sense", that coordinates and interprets the messages transmitted by the other five.

(b) The second function is to collect information, to render the fruits of the experience of humanity one's own, and thus to avail oneself of the cultural inheritance of the past. This goal is reached through study, and the imparting of this kind of knowledge was the principal task of the teachers of the past.

(c) The third, and higher type of mental activity is that which elaborates the material gathered during the preceding phases, coordinates it, draws conclusions and applies them; this may be called *to think* or *to reflect*.

(d) The fourth function of the mind is to be receptive to intuitions, to understand and interpret them with accuracy, and then to formulate them with precision.

(e) The fifth is the *creative* function. The dynamic and creative power of thought discovered recently (it would be more exact to say "rediscovered") is being more and more acknowledged and put to use, but it is being used especially for the attainment of personal goals (the achievement of wealth, success etc). One of the tasks of the new education will be to train the individual in the use of techniques that harness this power for constructive goals and for the service of humanity.

The relationships between the mind and the other psychological functions, impulses, emotions, feelings and imagination, are all but satisfactory, and pose problems of fundamental importance to education.

In the majority of humanity, the mind is subordinate to the impulses and the emotions and is used to justify them and to aid in achieving *their* ends. One can say in such a case that the mind is the servant of *desire*. But sooner or later, the unsatisfactory and often disastrous results of this erroneous relationship provoke a crisis which is then followed by either gradual or sudden

changes. The mind reawakens in the individual the understanding of the nature and effects of his/her emotions and impulses. He/she becomes conscious of the distortions of reality of the illusions thus created, and of the errors of judgment, evaluation and behavior caused by them.

It is probable that two results come from this recognition: the first which is "good", leads to the development of objectivity and of the intellectual capacity that characterize the scientific spirit. Along this line, one of the most recent advances made is in the refinement of the scientific method, due to the work of the new science of semantics.

The second result, which is not a desirable one, is an undervaluing of the emotions, feelings and imagination, leading to mental pride, to one-sidedness and to the regressions that characterize the "arrogant intellectual" type. Education must have two major goals with relation to the mind: to promote its development and active use, and to establish the right proportions as well as a constructive cooperation between the mind and the other aspects of man. What is most necessary in this regard is the harmonious combination of intelligence and love, leading to loving understanding and to the development of wisdom.

### 3. EXTRAVERSION

It is not surprising that this tendency, favored as it is above all other characteristics of our epoch, is pre-eminent—so much so that it has become exaggerated and has taken on excessive forms in some cases. The intensity of the force aimed at gaining personal success, wealth, social position, the exaggerated importance given to the creation of things, excessive noises of every kind, the mania of speed without any real purpose—these are facts that produce serious imbalances, and are the causes of the physical, nervous and psychic disturbances so widespread at this time, and of the social conflicts and decline in the areas of morality and spirituality. This can be considered one of the most serious problems at this moment.

It is especially in this field that education must carry out an equalizing and constructive work. All suitable means must be used to educate young people toward a simple life, one that conforms to the various rhythms of nature and of life itself, and to their own harmonious alternation of activity and rest. The recognition and appreciation of inner realities will be promoted with equal persistence, thus helping young people to explore and to conquer the psychological, as well as the spiritual world, by teaching them the appropriate techniques and training them in their use.

The first step (a comparatively easy one) consists in teaching the inner make-up of man, thus enabling young people to know themselves first as *human beings* and then, each one, as a unique individual with specific characteristics and particular gifts and potentialities. This teaching can be facilitated by two important additions to the present programs:

(a) Psychology, the science that studies man in his totality, should occupy the place that is its due -- that of a *major subject* of study in every type and grade of school. This teaching can be started from the earliest years if presented in a suitable form.

The normal interest that every individual has for himself makes him willingly accept the opportunity to learn how to know himself. In addition, the obvious usefulness of the techniques

which aim to eliminate frustrations and to resolve conflicts within oneself and with others will make students all the more willing to accept the training and then to make use of the techniques.

(b) No less interesting and attractive for young people is the learning of methods that enable them to use their psychological capabilities in a creative way and to discover and give value to their own latent gifts.

Many of these techniques can be taught and practiced as psychological exercises in the schools. Among the most important are those concerning the various stages and types of meditation: concentration, visualization, reflective meditation, etc.

#### **4. UNIFICATION AND SYNTHESIS**

There is now an often sharp conflict between these tendencies and those of individualism, separativity, aggressiveness. The situation is complicated by the fact that certain characteristics, especially the *Positive Attitude*, favor individualistic self-assertion. This helps to explain some contrasts existing in the present period of transition and confusion. Two opposite tendencies alternate and conflict with one another in many individuals: self-assertion as opposed to conformism by which one gains appreciation and success in the world. Even the so-called "anti-social" types form groups (gangs of youth, criminal associations); groups of various types are formed within every nation, and nations themselves unite in blocks; but these groups are often separative and in conflict among themselves. All this contributes to the present state of agitation, to the lack of security and to the conflicts to be found in every area. In spite of this the ideal of synthesis, world unification and the aspiration toward this ideal have been so strong as to inspire numerous activities which have as their goal, the attainment of peace, mutual understanding and world cooperation.

In this world situation, education must take up a decisive role and carry out three great tasks:

- (a) Eliminate, or at least lessen the separativity, the combatitive and aggressive impulses and all that rouses and intensifies them;
- (b) Actively favor the tendency toward synthesis: among young people, in families, schools and in communities;
- (c) To call attention to and counter-balance excessive and erroneous manifestations of this tendency.

#### **IV. PSYCHOSYNTHESIS IN EDUCATION**

The above-named characteristics, particularly the trend toward unification and synthesis, favor *psychosynthesis in education*. It has two aspects and fields of action:

1. Synthesis *in the individual* (intra-personal psychosynthesis)
2. Synthesis between individuals (interpersonal Psychosynthesis); and synthesis between the individual and various groups (group or social psychosynthesis).

1. *Individual psychosynthesis* combines two main principles and objectives:

1) The integration of the individual, that is:

(a) the development, in well-balanced proportions, of all his/her psychological functions (sensation, feeling, thought, imagination, intuition, will, etc.). This requires an activation and training of what is underdeveloped, and the control of that which is overdeveloped. It should be noted that control does not mean repression, but rather, *wise regulation and use*.

(b) the organization of these functions into a coordinated and harmonious activity. Care and special attention will be given to the re-awakening of the existing qualities and energies of the superconscious level, and to their proper assimilation and use by the Self. This is in agreement with the broad, inclusive concept of what is "spiritual"; it is unnecessary to point out the value of this aspect of the human being. Furthermore, its development and use will be particularly necessary for several reasons: first, to fill in the void caused by the widespread departure from institutional religions and from their doctrines; second, to demonstrate the existence of an inspirational source available to all, and of a common ground upon which all may meet and finally, to offer the justification and scientific interpretation of religious, esthetic and illuminative experiences.

2) To, discover and to attain consciousness of an inner center of self identity and the active use of its powers, particularly of the principal one: the *WILL*, in order to affect inner integration and to promote effective outer action. This Center is first experienced as a personal, conscious self, but then, this is later on recognized as a reflection or projection of a Higher Spiritual Self, always present, even if not acknowledged, at the apex of the superconscious level.

## **2. INTER-PERSONAL PSYCHOSYNTHESIS**

Individuals are not isolated beings, they are related to other individuals, groups and to all of humanity through many vital links. This is true even if these links fail to be recognized or are denied by egocentric and separative attitudes; this gives a great and permanent importance that is strengthened by the fact that such relationships are developing so rapidly.

One distinctive characteristic of our society is the enormous increase in communications



and the subsequent development of collaborations between individuals and groups. This is creating forms of cooperation, but also produces, at the same time, greater occasions for conflict. These developments, in addition to the new types of community being formed, indicate the need for a new science—*the science of relationships*—with its new, specific techniques.

If it were our intention to write a treatise on education, the limited preceding outline would require extensive development, but we have only wished to offer it as an introduction to the sections that will follow, in which some specific applications of education are examined, some of which are already in use.

## V. EDUCATION IN THE FAMILY

The need for education within the family and its decisive importance in conditioning and in influencing the whole life of the child was previously cited. This is an extremely difficult task and all parents—as well as future parents—should take this fact clearly into consideration and prepare themselves seriously to face the duties and responsibilities that such a task entails.

The most obvious difficulties are those due to the crisis that the family, considered the basic human group or social unit is now passing through, a crisis that is part of the general, critical situation of humanity as a whole.

In the past the family was closely-knit and ruled by the principle of authority. Its positive qualities were the love existing among its members, and the spirit of sacrifice that inspired the parents. But this love was often not an enlightened one; it was possessive and jealous, and relations with others were generally characterized by group selfishness and were therefore separative. Modern conditions, however, are producing profound changes in the structure and functioning of the family unit and have loosened the ties that bind its members, sometimes to the point of dissolving them.

The causes, both external and psychological, are varied. Dynamism and extraversion are creating a strong centrifugal force which is pushing family members out of the house. The father is often absorbed in his work and in other outside activities, often to the point of exhaustion; the interests and jobs outside the family are on the increase for the mother while the children are involved in school and in extracurricular activities and in their own personal, group relationships. It has been said that the home is becoming little more than a garage!

Even the man-woman relationship has been undergoing a crisis stemming from the emancipation of women from their traditional, submissive role and from their total absorption in their feminine duties. All this has its positive side, but it can also create exaggerations that give rise to difficult problems of adjustment.

No less serious is the crisis between the older and the younger generations. Tensions and conflicts between the elderly and young people have not been lacking in the past. Turgenev, for example, makes this situation the theme of his novel *Fathers and Sons*, but the current trend tends to bring them to the point of an acute and sometimes dramatic hostility.

Apart from all that, in the education imparted (or that should be imparted) in the family, there is another fundamental difficulty, independent of time and place. Children are deeply influenced by the psychological life of their parents and especially by their attitudes, complexes, and *unconscious* conflicts. Many psychologists and psychoanalysts have indicated the harmful and even disastrous consequences that children suffer. A particularly convincing description of this has been made by Frances G. Wickes in the chapter "Influence of Parents' Difficulties on the Child's Unconscious" from her excellent book: *The Inner World of Childhood*.

Naturally, one cannot ask parents to be fault-free nor can parents ask it of themselves. But a sincere acknowledging of these faults, along with the awareness of the dangers that they bring to their children should spur parents on to recognize their own responsibility, and to do all that is within their power to reduce them to a minimum, if not to eliminate the consequences entirely.

There is much that they can do. Deeper knowledge of man's nature, brought in by dynamic psychology is now available to the public, and this should encourage far-sighted parents to acquire basic concepts concerning the laws governing the life of the psyche, child psychology, and methods for constructively influencing human behavior. There are many good, non-technical books on such subjects, and one can seek advice from an expert when necessary.

But much more should be done, and on a more long-term scale. *Education for parenthood* should hold an important place in all schools serving adolescents. There are already some beginnings in this direction, and one may expect that their full development will be seen in the future. At the same time, its very importance demands that it be given priority among the urgent, educational tasks in the present period of transition. Only a few of the main points may be cited here:

## **1. PRE-NATAL EDUCATION**

It has been shown that the psychological condition of the mother during pregnancy strongly influences the future child. For example, it has been observed that undesired children often manifest suicidal tendencies later on in life. Therefore, the mother's psychological attitude and the atmosphere of the family surrounding her, should be as positive and as constructive as possible.

## **2. UNDERSTAND THE TRUE NATURE OF THE BABY**

The belief that a baby is a simple, "transparent" being tends to make one feel that it is easy to understand him/her. In reality, this is *not* so, as shown by the diverse and contrasting concepts put forth regarding the nature of the baby. One of these which originated primarily with Rousseau, considers the baby as intrinsically "good", a natural, healthy being who would develop normally and harmoniously if he/she were not subjected to the warping influences of "civilization". Other educators, such as Maria Montessori, have also stressed in a less exaggerated way, the positive qualities and the great potentialities existing in every child.

A completely opposite position is taken by Freud and other psychoanalysts who, in describing the powerful instinctive impulses, conflicts and complexes existing in the child, have

gone as far as to define him as "a creature, who is perverse in many different ways".

There are many books and magazines that deal with child psychology from different points of view. Their value varies a great deal, and it is not easy to find one's way in this field. These books are often concerned with the most obvious characteristics and forms of behavior, ignoring the depths and the heights of human nature in spite of the fact that these are also present in children and in adolescents. For example, in one of these books that is good in certain aspects, the authors (three eminent scholars) do not even mention the unconscious, the imagination, creativity, the will and spiritual experiences.

But we can recommend two books that can both be of great help in gaining a new understanding of youth. The first is *The Inner World of Childhood* by Frances Wickes, and the second is *The Recreation of the Individual* by Dr. Hinkle (Harcourt, Brace - New York, 1923) in which a long chapter entitled "The Child" is particularly instructive.

### **3. INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES**

These are very important and should be given full attention and consideration. There are three types:

- (a) *Psycho-sexual differences*. These are greater than are generally acknowledged and can be noted already from early childhood.
- (b) *Different Psychological Types*. (Both of these subjects are dealt with very well in Dr. Hinkle's book.)
- (c) *The Psycho-spiritual Constitution*, the vocations, the specific and unique attitudes of each individual.

### **4. The Influence of the Characteristics of the Future**

The reaction of children and youth to these increasing influences make them very different from the way today's adults were as children. This new, important fact should be taken into account constantly.

Many of the "active methods" now used in the best progressive schools must be suitably applied by parents, both before their children reach school age, and then, later on, in combination and in harmony with the scholastic educational methods.

The specific and essential elements of family education are:

#### **1. LOVE**

It can seem obvious and natural to love ones own children, but in reality, to love in the *right* way is something that is extremely difficult. We must free ourselves from the widespread illusion that it is enough to "love", and must sincerely face up to the fact that there

are many kinds of "love", some of which may be harmful and even destructive. Possessive love, jealous love, anxious love have had, and still have, disastrous effects. The main duty of parents, therefore, is to acknowledge the necessity of learning the difficult art of loving *wisely*.

## 2. INDIRECT EDUCATION

There is a paradox in family education that parents should be aware of and always keep in mind. The most effective education does not consist in the direct and deliberate action on the child, but is accomplished by the constant influence of the "psychological atmosphere" that pervades the house and through the powerful suggestion of the "living example" of the parents. This has often been emphasized and does not require explanation. But it is necessary to point out that the acceptance of this principle and its coherent application would create a real revolution in family education, shifting the emphasis from the children's behavior to that of the parents. This is the logical consequence of the fact that the inner attitude and the behavior of the parents create the "psychological atmosphere" and make them "examples" or "models" that inevitably condition the children.

This indirect education asks parents to:

- (a) Avoid all expressions of irritation, depression, fear and other negative thoughts and emotions in the presence of children. Above all, every bitter discussion caused by conflicts between the parents' points of views should be eliminated.
- (b) Abstain from "projecting" onto children one's own negative states of mind and aggressive impulses.

These requests require much from parents, but a sincere and never-ending attempt to satisfy them is an expression of real love—a love that provides the necessary motive and strength. One further incentive is the recognition of the great benefit that this self-discipline gives to those who subject themselves to it. The paradoxical, but very real consequence to all of this, is that from this point of view, children oblige their parents to educate themselves!

One may add that where the atmosphere of the house is one of wise love, the family relationships will be regulated by *understanding, patience, cheerfulness, and ordered activity*. One of the things that parents must realize is that the so-called "naughtiness" of children is often the product of the unfavorable and unnatural conditions existing particularly in the large cities. They deprive the child of direct contact with nature and an adequate freedom of movement and muscular activity that are essential for his/her normal life and development. As this need becomes more and more recognized, new concepts of city planning and changes in our way of life will be chosen with the aim of satisfying this need. The parents who seek to penetrate into the inner life of their child have an even more difficult problem of *understanding*. In this case, one may always rely upon the help made available by the progress in the field of psychology and by those advances expected in the future.

Frequent and varied are those occasions which require the exercise of *patience*. Aside from the most obvious, the spontaneous expressions of children should be listened to with special attention, without the interruption of criticism. Their questions also merit adequate and

precise answers; they constitute precious opportunities to give appropriate instructions to the specific and immediate need of the questioner.

*Cheerfulness* needs little comment, other than the observation that it does not mean excitement or uncontrolled gaiety. It is a combination of harmony and good humor, qualities that this present period lacks; but one may expect them to be increasingly in evidence if there is truth to the assertion that "joy will be the fundamental note of the future".

The value of *ordered activity* is obvious if we realize that in order to be trained for action and self-expression, children need and even ask to be active. The acquisition of skill in action, and the sense of doing something useful, have great educational value and are essential to the whole development process. One should therefore ask children to carry out appropriate tasks: these include helping mother with domestic chores, thus permitting the child to feel "important" and training him/her for harmonious cooperation.

Even these activities offer the wise parent countless opportunities to teach many subjects. Such cooperation, on the part of the child, should receive proper appreciation and even a tangible reward.

## VI. DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATION

A misunderstanding with regard to the meaning of democracy exists which is creating unfavorable conditions in the field of education, and which must therefore be pointed out and eliminated. It has its origins in an erroneous concept of "equality" that forms the basis of the democratic ideal. The true equality that democracy should foster is that of offering *equal opportunities* to all, independent of differences in social and financial position, sex, race and religion, and not the obviously erroneous ideas about the identicalness of all human beings. This *equality of opportunity* constitute the essence of social justice and fully complies with the recognition of the varied and profound differences among human beings. The reality of these differences is evident and undeniable for any impartial observer, and an important branch of psychology (differential psychology) is dedicated to their scientific investigation.

There are two main kinds of differences:

1. Differences of type and of psychological attitudes;
2. Differences of psychological and spiritual levels, and of "gifts".

These differences tend to be on the increase now, but *mental development* and the *positive attitude* are revealed, at first, only in an advanced minority. Education should fully take into account both of these kinds of differences, because they offer a foundation for vocational guidance and indicate the need for suitable educational materials and methods geared for individual differences.

We will consider only the second type of differences here, due to the greater difficulties which they present. First, it is not easy to assess the true level of development of a child or adolescent; and second, it is not easy to offer the appropriate educational aids to the gifted, or to

the highly-gifted in the form of special schools or classes, because these often stir opposition among parents, school authorities and political groups who deem them "anti-democratic". On the contrary, one should clearly recognize that it is in the *general interest* of every community or nation to discover and to offer all the help possible to those who (because of their superior qualities) will become the future leaders of humanity: its scientists, political figures, economists, artists, educators, creators of the new culture and civilization.

## VII. EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL

The great changes produced by the trends and characteristics being manifested with growing impetus in all areas of human life are the causes of the acute crisis in the present school systems that are the object of extensive discussions and strong criticism. The breadth and complexity of the problems concerning them stretch from the basic principles and goals of education to the many technical questions, organizational programs, buildings and financial means.

We will limit ourselves to the examination of some of the basic problems: One of the main ones is how to resolve the conflict between mental development and the positive attitude (favoring individual self observation and anti-social behavior) on one hand, and the trend towards unification which, with its exaggerations and faulty applications, is creating excessive standardization, and in some cases, even forced regimentation, on the other. The goal of a wise school system should therefore be the harmonization of these contrasting tendencies and the constructive use of their higher aspects.

The growing mental development and positive attitude demand the adoption of the best methods of the "new education" in order to encourage and give direction to the independent activity and initiative of the student. At the same time, the opposite trend toward unification can be used to further independent *group* initiatives and activities and cooperation in joint projects.

But much more can be done, as the success of experiments carried out in a number of schools with regard to *civic education* has demonstrated. This has been accomplished through *self-government*; the school is modeled as a small town community, in miniature, with a mayor, a community council, a judge and various committees functioning under the discreet and tactful guidance of the instructors. One such school, the "SCHOOL CITY PESTALOZZI" in Florence, whose students are drawn from poor sections, has applied this self-government with success for a number of years. The great value of this method as preparation for the social life of the adult is evident with the countless opportunities it creates for practical application of the required program of study being taught in the regular classes. The choices, decisions and responsibility inherent in the self-government exercise develop some of the essential qualities of the will and constitute the best type of education towards freedom and democracy.

Another important aspect of education is the creation of a *cheerful atmosphere* in the classes and the use of humor as much as is possible—and it often is. What is taught must reach the unconscious and be clearly recorded there in order for it to make a strong impression and be easily recalled. All boring or uninteresting things are rejected by the unconscious which refuses to record them, while all that is entertaining and that stimulates the curiosity is well-accepted and

makes a long-lasting impression.

A further innovation in the program of schools having students of adolescent age, or older, is the introduction of *psychology*, which, as the science of the *human being*, should, and will become, the main science of the future. The internal conflicts, uncertainties and confusions of adolescence, caused by the reawakening of new biological and psychological energies, stir up a lively interest in young people about their own personality and that of others. Therefore, psychology will be very well accepted if presented, not in a dry, academic manner, but rather in a *humanistic* way. Active methods are particularly appropriate for the teaching of the various psychological functions. Exercises in observation, visualization, mental concentration and creative expression can be amply practiced in class. They constitute a good preparation for *spiritual education*.

## VIII. SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

The first thing that must be understood very well is the real meaning of "spiritual", particularly in its wider and more inclusive meaning. In addition to its intrinsic importance and value that must be underlined, an education based on spiritual values offers a constructive solution for the contrasting viewpoints of the supporters of humanistic education and of those favoring technical instruction. The former is accused of being too rooted in the past and of being interested in ideas and terminology that arouse little interest (and sometimes, even active resistance) among today's youth due to their irrelevance to the present world situation. The opponents of the latter (i.e., technical instruction) maintain that it is concerned only with the capacity to produce, with the acquisition of practical abilities and with the pursuit of materialistic goals.

There is a great deal of truth to both these criticisms. Therefore, two things must be done: The first is to distinguish well the essential, eternal values—human and spiritual: kindness, truth, beauty, love, wisdom—from their historical conditioning, from the traditional ways in which they have been presented and imposed. New presentations can be given to these same truths and values which are appropriate to present and future conditions, and which are attractive to youth because they are readily understood and adapted to their mentality. The second is to understand that technical education is not an end unto itself and should not be given an intrinsic value, but must be seen as a means to ends that transcend them; they are means to humanitarian and spiritual goals. In such a way, humanistic knowledge and technical instruction may be integrated harmoniously to establish a synthetic education of the total human being.

Spiritual education has two main aspects. The first concerns the meaning of life, its evolutionary development and its aims. These are far wider and higher than is ordinarily assumed. A number of scientists have recently affirmed the reality of evolutionary progress and have correctly noted that it cannot stop at the "not-too-lofty" stage currently reached by humanity, but must continue toward new and higher levels.

The meaning and purpose of existence, and the wonderful potential achievements of humanity can be presented in school, using words suitable to the different ages of the students.

The second aspect of spiritual education makes use of the tendency toward unification and synthesis in order to widen the outlooks of the young people and to shift their interest from their own egocentric personality to cooperation, solidarity and to union with ever more extensive groups, until all of humanity is included.

With such an aim in mind, students should be amply informed of the evils, sufferings and misfortunes that torment much of humanity, not only in the Third World countries, but even in the large cities; they should be brought into direct contact with these conditions whenever possible. With their sympathy and compassion thus aroused, they will recognize the urgency of correcting these social ills, of eliminating the causes of so much distress, and of thus cooperating in the laying down of the foundations of a new world order in which these misfortunes will either be eliminated, or greatly reduced. There are many ways of doing this: for example, they can be informed of the activities of the different organizations of the United Nations, and in particular, those of the FAO (Food Administration Organization) that has made humanity aware of the existence of hundreds of millions of half-starved persons in the world. Other ways are: visits to hospitals, slums and to underdeveloped areas in every country.

## **IX. METHODS OF SPIRITUAL EDUCATION**

*Spontaneous* spiritual experiences occur in children far more frequently than adults would generally realize. Their consciousness is open to all impressions and those "from above" do not meet with obstacles that they often find in the minds of adults. But these experiences are generally fleeting and become easily submerged in the child's consciousness by the continuous current of other countless impressions.

Therefore, one of the principal duties of parents is to pay attention to these spontaneous experiences, to appreciate their value, and to encourage their manifestation. When adults do not take them into consideration, when they criticize or ridicule them (as they often do, in ignorance) the natural reaction of the child is to repress those experiences and to thus "close the door" to higher realities.

Adolescence offers to the adult a new opportunity to be of help. The adolescent becomes aware of new physical and emotional impulses and undergoes, at the same time, an idealistic, and sometimes, even a "mystical" re-awakening that he feels in contrast with the other impulses. This gives him/her a sense of bewilderment and creates conflicts that are difficult to face. Even here, indifference or a critical attitude on the part of parents or educators cause the adolescent to withdraw into him or herself, while an attitude of understanding and encouragement can create that "communication" and intimacy that will enable him/her to successfully pass through this period of often tense relations, and will encourage a future development and spiritual blooming.

Other opportunities come to the fore each time children ask "metaphysical" questions concerning the origin of the world, Heaven, God, death, etc. If parents are ready to prepare themselves adequately, they will find it relatively easy to use these opportunities to their advantage by giving appropriate answers, and by encouraging the spirit of inquiry about these subjects which will become ever stronger with the spreading of mental development.



In addition, various active methods can be used, for example:

1. Cultivate the sense of beauty in young people, mainly the esthetic appreciation of the various aspects of nature: the sky, the sea, mountains, flowers, etc.
2. Cultivate the sense of wonder and admiration.
3. Present young people with human examples of a spiritual life in its various aspects: the great religious figures, geniuses, heroes—not only as warriors and conquerors—but as philosophers, poets, artists, scientists, benefactors and as workers in the humanitarian field.
4. Place the emphasis in all specific, religious institutions, on the inner, vital, spiritual aspects and meaning of the doctrines, forms and symbols.
5. Wisely adapt all other methods, such as concentration and meditation for use by young people in order to promote a spiritual life. For adolescents, the teaching of spiritual psychology that favors an understanding of their inner make-up, puts emphasis on their essential spiritual nature and on their higher possibilities.

## **X. MEDITATION IN EDUCATION**

A serious deficiency in modern education is the lack of use of meditation; we therefore seek to indicate applications of Meditation in various phases and conditions of the educational process.

### *Concentration*

Children, when observed superficially, seem to lack the capacity of concentration. But a more careful study of their spontaneous behavior reveals that when they observe something, or carry out some task that has roused their interest, they demonstrate a concentration that sometimes lasts a long time. The persistence with which a child observes, for example, the behavior of ants or the movements of clouds, is well-known. In modern-type schools, one may note how children use the teaching materials placed at their disposal with intense concentration, often repeating the required action many times.

Thus, it is clear that children possess an innate power of concentration which can be further developed and used constructively. Given the fact that their minds are more open and free of worries and personal problems, they often succeed better than the adults.

### *Observation*

Exercises of *careful observation* must be adopted in education, both as preliminary training to meditation and for their general usefulness in studying and in all activities. A simple exercise consists of showing a group of objects for a short time and then asking the students to give an accurate description of them, of their dimensions, forms and colors. Kipling offers an amusing

example in his delightful novel, *Kim* (which contains other psychological points of interest as well, including an experience of spiritual realization). In another similar exercise, a picture is shown to the students for a minute and they are then asked to describe it. The picture is re-shown again for half a minute so that they may see what they failed to observe the first time and note their possible errors. This type of exercise should be done in school where the children can *write* their descriptions to save time, thus gaining practice, at the same time, in written expression.

Another exercise, a more difficult one, is *self-observation*, but adolescents have the capacity to carry it out and are readily interested in it. It consists of assuming the position of the observer of one's own inner world, making note of and describing (as they occur) impulses, feelings, images and thoughts that spontaneously emerge from the unconscious into the illuminated field of consciousness.

### *Visualization*

Another group of exercises are those of *visualization*. The first and most simple is that of imagining (with eyes closed) to "see" a number as if it were written on a blackboard. Beginning with a single number, the student develops his/her ability—through practice—until he/she becomes able to "see" numbers of many digits. Other subjects suitable for further visualization exercises are: colored geometric forms (squares, triangles, circles), then three-dimensional forms (cubes, pyramids, spheres), eventually more and more complex human figures and landscapes. These exercises are also useful in offering to students proof of the results of the training. A further step, in the case of adolescents, is that of visualizing their ideal model—the model of what they wish to become.

### *Reflective Meditation*

The observation and visualization exercises prepare the way for the practice of various types of meditation. The first is *reflective meditation*, and this, without being acknowledged as such, is used in all school occasions that require reflective thinking, such as the solution of a mathematical problem, or the draft of a composition. But deliberate systematic meditation is something more that yields greater results.

The teacher chooses as the theme of meditation, at first, some simple, tangible object: for example—a stone, a flower, a pencil. The pupil is asked to look at it with attention, and then to reflect on its origins, its nature and on its qualities, the uses it can serve—and to say whatever else comes to mind about it.

Even here, for the reasons stated above, written answers are preferable. One can suggest writing, both as ideas present themselves during the meditation, and immediately afterward, recording the results and conclusions. Every subject can be used for reflective meditation. Adolescents, for example, can use with benefit the rules concerning Right Relations, Good Will, and Group Activity which are especially suitable, thanks to their simplicity and practicalness. Young people are able to understand their meaning and aims, and can try to apply them in daily life. They are closely related to the emerging characteristics of Unification and Synthesis. The practice of reflective meditation is truly a training in the *art of thinking*—a way of thinking

independently and with originality, and should be encouraged in the family and in the school.

Reflective thinking can be stimulated and directed with a series of questions of the type usually used in psychology. It would be necessary to stimulate questions from the student's side, thus encouraging their mental activity, and often revealing their doubts and problems.

Prayer has been indicated as the "way of the heart". But this is generally considered as being pertinent to religion, and we will speak of it here only to note that it is associated with the law of Spiritual Approach and that it can be used in education, in group, both in the family as well as in school. In countries where religious prayer is not permitted in the schools because of a clear division between education and religion, it has been suggested that it be replaced by meditation.

### *Receptive Meditation*

Education has many phases in which *receptive* meditation can be widely applied and used. The first stage of *receptive* meditation is *silence*. This, in addition to its inherent, general value, also has a specific one - that of antidote to the excessive noise and lack of inner silence produced by the emerging tendencies of extraversion, dynamism and mental activity. The situation has reached the point where today's young people not only do not value silence, but seem to fear it, and are sometimes even incapable of bearing it. To the already general uproar of modern life, they (as well as many adults!) add their personal contribution with their radio blasting at full volume.

Nevertheless one can teach them to appreciate silence. This is shown by the results obtained in Montessori schools where "the exercise of silence" is regularly practiced. Here is a meaningful testimony to this fact by Mrs. E. Herman, from her book *Creative Prayer* (pp. 57-58):

"...a state of balance (equilibrium) and of harmony should be obtained by means of a natural, progressive discipline that begins from early childhood. We must still accept and apply the axiom that to cultivate the habit of silence is an integral part of all true education; and that children, far from considering a request for silence as an unnatural and intolerable imposition, have an innate bent for quiet. In order to recognize this, it is enough to take part in a period of silence in a Montessori school; the curtains are drawn, the signal is given and every little face is lowered while a serene calm descends on the children. It is truly silence and not drowsiness. No attempt is made to suggest a meditation theme, and yet something very similar to meditation takes place, because, when the voice of the teacher calls the children by name, one by one, into the adjoining room, they come as beings who have learned a wonderful and blissful secret. There is something deep in their joyous eyes, something more than just health and physical peace in all their behavior. A strange beauty, a freshness similar to the morning dew, seems to have enriched the natural, child-like vitality and charm, already so delightful in and of themselves. (See also: M. Montessori: *The Secret: of Childhood*, Garzanti, editor).

"Whatever one may think about the Montessori system, few would doubt the wisdom of that moment of calm in the midst of the morning activity."

Receptive meditation can be practiced, both in family as well as at school, as a form of *Group Activity*. When the family finds itself in front of a problem, a difference of opinion or a conflict, a request for light and inspiration made together during a receptive group meditation often proves to be very effective. This method eliminates the personal element from the difficulty, raising it to higher levels of inner reality, from where, through the super-conscious level, the desired intuition may arrive. Receptive meditation could be used in classes with adolescent students, after suitable preparation. It can help in the re-awakening of intuition, inspiration and spiritual realization.

The highest theme of meditation is the Self and the teaching of spiritual psychology is the preparation for it. Parents and teachers will find practical value in the *Self-Identification* exercise towards achieving this goal.

There is, at last, *creative meditation*. This "inner action" produces great results and is, in addition, necessary to counter-balance the current exaggerated tendencies toward extraversion and outer activity. Adolescents can be instructed in its use, in an elementary form, while its more advanced techniques can be practiced at the university level.

Furthermore, the application to everyday life of these indications concerning meditation in education can lead to:

A) Establishing of *Right Relations* in the family context, particularly between parents and children, and among the children themselves. These relationships are especially tense at the present time, for reasons already stated. A serious scholastic problem is the establishment of right harmonious and constructive relationships between teachers and pupils. The relationships among the students themselves, though generally smoother, offer frequent occasions for individual and group conflicts, and the training towards cooperation, by means of group work, is therefore particularly useful. The secondary school programs should include instruction in the practice of right relations outside the school and in all areas of social life.

B) *Good Will* is an essential element in fostering right motivation, and is particularly necessary for counter-balancing the separative and egoistic use of the will. One must give it the greatest importance in education; first, in its aspect of a courteous and kind disposition towards others, and second, even more in the active and dynamic quality of *the will itself*.

C) *Group Activity* is at the root of cooperation, in the family, as in school. Social service offers, for example, a wider field of action, and the opportunities for such service must be offered during the school years.