

PHILISTINE AND GENIUS

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X

THE power of breaking down or dissolving habits depends on the amount and strength of the *aqua fortis* of the intellect. The logical and critical activities of the individual should be cultivated with special care. The critical self, as we may put it, should have control over the automatic and the subconscious. For the subconscious has been shown to form the fertile soil for the breeding of the most dangerous germs of mental disease, epidemics, plagues and pestilences in their worst forms. We should try to develop the individual's critical abilities in early childhood, not permitting the suggestible subconsciousness to predominate, and to become overrun with noxious weeds and pests.

We should be very careful with the child's critical self, as it is weak and has little resistance. We should, therefore, avoid all dominating authority and categorical imperative commands. Autocratic authority cultivates in the child the predisposition to abnormal suggestibility, to hypnotic states, and leads towards the dominance of the subconscious with its train of pernicious tendencies and deleterious results.

There is a period in the child's life between the ages of five and ten when he is very inquisitive, asking all kinds of questions. *It is the age of discussion in the child.* This inquisitiveness and discussion should by all means be encouraged and fostered. We should aid the development of the spirit of inquisitiveness and curiosity in the child. For this is the acquisition of control over the stored-up, latent energies of man's genius.

We should not arrest the child's questioning spirit, as we are often apt to do, but should strongly encourage the apparently meddlesome and troublesome searching and prying and scrutinizing of *whatever interests the child*. Everything should be open to the child's searching interest; nothing should be suppressed and tabooed as too sacred for examination. The spirit of inquiry, the genius of man, is more sacred than any abstract belief, dogma and creed.

A rabbi came to ask my advice about the education of his little boy. My advice was: "Teach him not to be a Jew." The man of God departed and never came again. The rabbi did not care for education, but for faith. He did not wish his boy to become a man, but to be a Jew.

The most central, the most crucial part of the education of man's genius is *the knowledge, the recognition of evil* in all its protean forms and innumerable disguises, intellectual, æsthetic and moral, such as fallacies, sophisms, ugliness, deformity, prejudice, superstition, vice and depravity. Do not be afraid to discuss these matters with the child. For the knowledge, the recognition of evil does not only possess the virtue of immunization of the child's mind against all evil, but furnishes the main power for habit disintegration with consequent release and control of potential reserve energy, of manifestations of human genius. When a man becomes contented and ceases to notice the evils of life, as is done by some modern religious sects, he loses his hold on the powers of man's genius, he loses touch with the throbbing pulse of humanity, he loses hold on reality and falls into subhuman groups.

The purpose of education, of a *liberal* education, is not to live in a fool's paradise, or to go through the world in a post-hypnotic state of negative hallucinations. The true aim of a liberal education is, as the Scriptures put it, to have the *eyes opened*,—to be free from all delusions, illusions, from the *fata morgana* of life. We prize a liberal education, because it *liberates* us from subjection to superstitious fears, delivers us from the narrow bonds of prejudice, from the exalted or depressing delusions of moral paresis, intellectual dementia-praecox, and religious paranoia. A liberal education liberates us from the enslavement to the degrading influence of *all* idol-worship.

In the education of man do not play on his subconscious sense by deluding him by means of hypnotic and post-hypnotic suggestions of positive and negative hallucinations, with misty and mystic, beatific visions. Open his *eyes* to undisguised reality. Teach him, show him how to strip the real from its unessential wrappings and adornments and see things in their nakedness. *Open the eyes of your children so that*

they shall see, understand and face courageously the evils of life.

Then will you do your duty as parents, then will you give your children the proper education.

XI

I HAVE spoken of the fundamental law of early education. The question is "*how early?*" There are, of course, children who are backward in their development. This backwardness may either be congenital or may be due to some overlooked pathological condition that may be easily remedied by proper treatment. In the large majority of children, however, the beginning of education *is between the second and third year*. It is at that time that the child begins to form his interests. It is at that critical period that we have to seize the opportunity to guide the child's formative energies in the right channels. To delay is a mistake and a wrong to the child. We can at that early period awaken a love of knowledge which will persist through life. The child will as eagerly play in the game of knowledge as he now spends the most of his energies in meaningless games and objectless silly sports.

We claim we are afraid to force the child's mind. We claim we are afraid *to strain his brain prernaturely*. This is an error. In *directing* the course of the use of the child's energies we do not force the child. If *you* do not *direct* the energies in the right course, the child will *waste* them in the *wrong* direction. The same amount of mental energy used in those silly games, which we think are specially adapted for the childish mind, can be directed, with lasting benefit, to the development of his *interests in intellectual activity and love of knowledge*. *The child will learn to play at the game of knowledge-acquisition with the same ease, grace and interest as he is showing now in his nursery-games and physical exercises.*

XII

ARISTOTLE laid it down as a self-evident proposition that all Hellenes *love knowledge*. This was true of the national genius of the ancient Greeks. The love of wisdom is the pride of the ancient Greek in contradistinction to the barbarian, who does not prize knowledge. We still belong to the barbarians. Our children, our pupils, our students have no love of knowledge.

The ancient Greeks knew the value of a good education and understood its fundamental elements. They laid great stress on early education and they knew how to develop man's mental energies, without fear of injury to the brain and physical constitution. The Greeks were not afraid of thought, that it might injure the brain. 'They were strong men, great thinkers.

The love of knowledge, the love of truth for its own sake, is entirely neglected in our modern schemes of education. Instead of training men we train mechanics, artisans and shopkeepers. We turn our national schools, high schools and universities into trade-schools and machine-shops. The school, whether lower or higher, has now one purpose in view, and that is the training of the pupil in the art of money-making. Is it a wonder that the result is a low form of mediocrity, a dwarfed and crippled specimen of humanity?

Open the reports of our school superintendents and you find that the illustrations setting forth the prominent work performed by the school represent carpentry, shoemaking, blacksmithing, bookkeeping, typewriting, dressmaking, millinery and cookery. One wonders whether it is the report of a factory inspector, the "scientific" advertisement of some instrument-maker or machine-shop, a booklet of some popular hotel, or an extensive circular of some large department-store. Is this what our modern education consists in? Is the aim of the nation to form at its expense vast reserve armies of skilled mechanics, great numbers of well-trained cooks and well-behaved clerks? Is the purpose of the nation to form cheap skilled labor for the manufacturer, or is the aim of society to form intelligent, educated citizens?

The high-school and college courses advised by the professors and elected by the student are with reference to the vocation in life, to business and to trade. Our schools, our high schools, our colleges and universities are all animated with the same sordid aim of giving electives for early specialization in the art of money-getting. We may say with Mill that our schools and colleges give no true education, no true culture. We drift to the status of Egypt and India with their castes of early trained mechanics, professionals and shopkeepers. Truly educated men we shall have none. We shall become a nation of narrow-minded philistines, well contented with their mediocrity. The savage compresses the skull of the infant, while we flatten the brain and cramp the mind of our young generation.

XIII

THE great thinker, John Stuart Mill, insists that "the great business of every rational being is the strengthening and enlarging of his own intellect and character. The empirical knowledge which the world demands, which is the stock in trade of money-getting, we would leave the world to provide for itself." We must make our system of education such "that a great man may be formed by it, and there will be a manhood in your little men of which you do not dream. We must have a system of education capable of forming great minds." Education must aim at the bringing out of the genius in man. Do we achieve such aim by the formation of philistine-specialists and young petty-minded artisans?

"The very cornerstone of an education," Mill tells us, "intended to form great minds, must be the recognition of the principle, that the object is to call forth the greatest possible quantity of intellectual power, and to inspire the intensest *love of truth; and this without a particle of regard to the results to which the exercise of that power may lead.*" With us the only love of truth is the one that leads to the shop, the bank and the counting-house.

The home controls the school and the college. As long as the home is dominated by commercial ideals, the school will turn out mediocre tradesmen.

This, however, is one of the characteristic types of the American home: the mother thinks of dresses, fashions and parties. The daughter twangs and thrums on the piano, makes violent attempts at singing that sound as "the crackling of thorns under a pot," is passionately fond of shopping, dressing and visiting. Both mother and daughter, love society, show and gossip. The father works in some business or at some trade and loves sports and games. Not a spark of refinement and culture, not a redeeming ray of love of knowledge and of art, lighting up the commonplace and frivolous life of the family. What wonder that the children of ten and eleven can hardly read and write, are little brutes and waste away their precious life of childhood in the close, dusty, overheated rooms of the early grades of some elementary school? Commercial mediocrity is raised at home and cultivated in the school.

"As a means of educating the many, the universities are absolutely null," exclaims Mill. "The attainments of any kind required for taking all the degrees conferred by these bodies are, at Cambridge, utterly contemptible." Our American schools, with their ideals of money-earning capacities, our colleges glorying in their athletics, football teams and courses for professional and business specializations would have been regarded by Mill as below contempt.

What indeed is the worth of an education that does not create even as much as an ordinary respect for learning and love of truth, and that prizes knowledge in terms of hard cash? What is the educational worth of a college or of a university which suppresses its most gifted students by putting them under the ban of disorderly behavior, because of not conforming to commonplace mannerisms? What is the educational value of a university which is but a modern edition of a gladiatorial school with a smattering of the humanities? What is the educational value of an institution of learning that expels its best students because they "attract more attention than their professors"? What is the intellectual level of a college that expels from its courses the ablest of its students for some slight infringement, and that an involuntary one, under the pretext that it is done for the sake of class-discipline, "for the general good of the class" What travesty on education is a system that suppresses genius in the interest of mediocrity? What is the cultural, the humanistic value of an education that puts a prize on mediocrity?

XIV

DISCIPLINE, fixed habits approved by the pedagogue are specially enforced in our schools. To this may be added some "culture" in the art of money-getting in the case of the boys, while in the case of girls the æsthetic training of millinery and dressmaking may be included. The colleges, in addition to class-discipline looked after by the professors and college-authorities, are essentially an organization of hasty-pudding clubs, football associations and athletic corporations. What is the use of a college if not for its games? Many regard the college as useful for the formation of business acquaintances in later life. Others again consider the college a good place for learning fine manners. In other words, the college and the school are for athletics, good manners, business companionship, mechanical arts and money-getting. They are for anything but education.

We have become so used to college athletics that it appears strange and possibly absurd to demand of a college the cultivation of man's genius. Who expects to find an intellectual atmosphere among the great body of our college undergraduates? Who expects of our schools and colleges true culture and the cultivation of a taste for literature, art and science? A dean, an unusually able man, of one of the prominent Eastern colleges tells me that he and his friends are very pessimistic about his students and especially about the great body of undergraduate students. Literature, art, science have no interest for the student; games and athletics fill his mental

horizon.

In the training of our children, in the education of our young, we think that discipline, obedience to paternal and maternal commands, whether rational or absurd, are of the utmost importance. "We do not realize that in such a scheme of training we fail to cultivate the child's critical faculties, but only succeed in suppressing the child's individuality. We only break his will-power and originality. We also prepare the ground for future nervous and mental maladies characterized by their fears, indecisions, hesitations, diffidence, irritability, lack of individuality and absence of self-control.

We laugh at the Chinese, because they bandage the feet of their girls, we ridicule those who cripple their chest and mutilate their figure by the tight lacing of their corsets, but we fail to realize the baneful effects of submitting the young minds to the grindstone of our educational discipline. I have known good fathers and mothers who have unfortunately been so imbued with the necessity of disciplining the child that they have crushed the child's spirit in the narrow bonds of routine and custom. How can we expect to get great men and women when from infancy we train our children to conform to the philistine ways of Mrs. Grundy?

In our schools and colleges, habits, discipline and behavior are specially emphasized by our teachers, instructors and professors. Our deans and professors think more of reel tape, of "points," of discipline than of study; they think more of authoritative suggestion than of critical instruction. The pedagogue fashions the pupil after his own image. The professor, with his disciplinarian tactics, forces the student into the imbecile mummy-like mannerism of Egyptian pedantry and into the barrack-regulations of class-etiquette. Well may professors of our "war-schools" claim that the best education is given in military academies: They are right, if discipline is education. But why not the reformatory, the asylum and the prison?

We trust our unfortunate youth to the Procrustean bed of the mentally obtuse, hide-bound pedagogue. We desiccate, sterilize, petrify and embalm our youth in keeping with the rules of our Egyptian code and in accordance with the Confucian regulations of our school-clerks and college mandarins. Our children learn by rote and are guided by routine.

XV

BEING in a barbaric stage, we are afraid of thought. We are under the erroneous belief that thinking, study, causes nervousness and mental disorders. In my practice as physician in nervous and mental diseases, I can say without hesitation that I have not met a single case of nervous or mental trouble caused by too much thinking or over study. This is at present the opinion of the best psychopathologists. What produces nervousness is worry, emotional excitement and lack of interest in the work. But that is precisely what we do with our children. We do not take care to develop a love of knowledge in their early life for fear of brain injury, and then when it is late to acquire the interest, we force them to study, and we cram them and feed them and stuff them like geese. What you often get is fatty degeneration of the mental liver.

If, however, you do not neglect the child between the second and third year, and see to it that the brain should not be starved, should have its proper function, like the rest of the bodily organs, by developing an interest in intellectual activity and love of knowledge, no forcing of the child to study is afterwards requisite. The child will go on by himself,—he will derive intense enjoyment from his intellectual activity, as he does from his games and physical exercise. The child will be stronger, healthier, sturdier than the present average child, with its purely animal activities and total neglect of brain function. His physical and mental development will go a pace. He will not be a barbarian with animal proclivities and a strong distaste for knowledge and mental enjoyment, but he will be a strong, healthy, *thinking man*.

Besides, many a mental trouble will be prevented in adult-life. The child will acquire knowledge with the same ease as he learns to ride the bicycle or play ball. By the tenth year, without almost any effort, the child will acquire the knowledge which at present the best college-graduate obtains with infinite labor and pain. That this can be accomplished I can say with authority; I know it as a fact from my own experience with child-life.

From an economical standpoint alone, think of the saving it would ensure for society. Consider the fact that our children spend nearly eight years in the common school, studying spelling and arithmetic, and do not know them when they graduate! Think of the eight years of waste of school buildings and salaries for the teaching force. However, our real object is not economy, but the development of a strong, healthy, great race of genius.

As fathers and mothers it may interest you to learn of one of those boys who

were brought up in the love and enjoyment of knowledge for its own sake. At the age of twelve, when other children of his age are hardly able to read and spell, and drag a miserable mental existence at the apron strings of some antiquated school-dame, the boy is intensely enjoying courses in the highest branches of mathematics and astronomy at one of our foremost universities. The Iliad and the Odyssey are known to him by heart, and he is deeply interested in the advanced work of Classical Philology. He is able to read Herodotus, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Lucian and other Greek writers with the same zest and ease as our schoolboy reads his Robinson Crusoe or the productions of Cooper and Henty. The boy has a fair understanding of Comparative Philology and Mythology. He is well versed in Logic, Ancient History, American History and has a general insight into our politics and into the groundwork of our Constitution. At the same time he is of an extremely happy disposition, brimming over with humor and fun. His physical condition is splendid, his cheeks glow with health. Many a girl would envy his complexion. Being above five feet four he towers above the average boy of his age. His physical constitution, weight, form and hardihood of organs, far surpasses that of the ordinary schoolboy. He looks like a boy of sixteen. He is healthy, strong and sturdy.

The philistine-pseudogogues, the self-contented school-autocrats are so imbued with the fear of intellectual activity and with the superstitious dread of early mental education, they are so obsessed with the morbid phobia of human reflective powers, they are so deluded by the belief that study causes disease that they eagerly adhere to the delusion, to quote from a school-superintendent's letter, about the boy being "in a sanitarium, old and worn-out." No doubt, the cramming, the routine, the rote, the mental and moral tyranny of the principal and school-superintendent do tend to nervous degeneracy and mental break-down. Poor old college owls, academic barn-yard-fowls and worn-out sickly school-bats, you are panic-stricken by the power of sunlight, you are in agonizing, in mortal terror of critical, reflective thought, you dread and suppress the genius of the young.

We do not appreciate the genius harbored in the average child, and we let it lie fallow. We are mentally poor, not because we lack riches, but because we do not know how to use the wealth of mines, the hidden treasures, the now inaccessible mental powers which we possess.

In speaking of our mental capacities, Francis Galton, I think, says that we are in relation to the ancient Greeks what the Bushmen and Hottentots are in relation to us. Galton and many other learned men regard the modern European races as inferior to the Hellenic race. They are wrong, and I know from experience that they are wrong.

It rests in our hands either to remain inferior barbarians or to rival and even surpass in brilliancy the genius of the ancient Hellenes. We can develop into a great race by the proper education of man's genius.

XVI

ONE other important point claims our attention in the process of education of man's genius. We must immunize our children against mental microbes, as we vaccinate our babies against small-pox. *The cultivation of critical judgment and the knowledge of evil are two powerful constituents that form the antitoxin for the neutralization of the virulent toxins produced by mental microbes.* At the same time we should not neglect proper conditions of mental hygiene. "We should not people the child's mind with ghost-stories, with absurd beliefs in the supernatural, and with articles of creed charged with brimstone and pitch from the bowels of hell. *We must guard the child against all evil fears, superstitions, prejudices and credulity.*

We should counteract the baneful influences of the pathogenic, pestiferous, mental microbes which now infest our social air, since the child, not having yet formed the antitoxin of critical judgment and knowledge of evil, has not the power of resisting mental infection, and is thus very susceptible to mental contagion on account of his extreme suggestibility. The cultivation of credulity, the absence of critical judgment and of recognition of evil, with consequent increase of suggestibility, make man an easy prey to all kinds of social delusions, mental epidemics, religious crazes, financial manias, and political plagues, which have been the baleful pest of aggregate humanity in all ages.

The immunization of children, the development of resistance to mental germs whether moral, immoral or religious, can only be effected by the medical man with a psychological and psychopathological training. Just as science, philosophy and art have gradually passed out of the control of the priest, so now we find that the control of mental and moral life is gradually passing away from under the influence of the church into the hands of the medical psychopathologist.

As we look forward into the future we begin to see that the school is coming under the control of the medical man. The medical man free from superstitions and prejudices, possessed of the science of mind and body, is to assume in the future the supervision of the education of the nation.

The schoolmaster and the schoolma'am with their narrow-minded, pedantic

pseudogogics are gradually losing prestige and passing away, while the medical man alone is able to cope with the serious threatening danger of national mental degeneration. Just as the medical profession now saves the nation from physical degeneration and works for the physical regeneration of the body-politic, so will the medical profession of the future assume the duty of saving the nation from mental and moral decline, from degeneration into a people of fear-possessed, mind-racked psychopathies and neurotics, with broken wills and crushed individualities on the one hand, accompanied, on the other hand, by the still worse affliction and incurable malady of a self-contented mediocrity and a hopeless, Chinese philistinism.

There are in the United States about two hundred thousand insane, while the victims of psychopathic, mental maladies may be counted by the millions. Insanity can be greatly alleviated, but much, if not all, of that psychopathic mental misery known as functional mental disease is entirely preventable. It is the result of our pitiful, wretched, brain-starving, mind-crippling methods of education.

XVII

IN my work of mental and nervous diseases I become more and more convinced of the preponderant influence of early childhood in the causation of psychopathic mental maladies. *Most, in fact all, of those functional mental diseases originate in early childhood.* A couple of concrete cases will perhaps best illustrate my point:

The patient is a young man of 26. He suffers from intense melancholic depression, often amounting to agony. He is possessed by the fear of having committed the unpardonable sin. He thinks that he is damned to suffer tortures in hell for all eternity. I cannot go here into the details of the case, but an examination of dread of the unknown, from claustrophobia, fear of remaining alone, fear of darkness and numerous other fears and insistent ideas, into the details of which I cannot go here. By means of the hypnoidal state the symptoms were traced to impressions of early childhood; when at the age of five, the patient was suddenly confronted by a maniacal woman. The child was greatly frightened, and since that time she became possessed by the fear of insanity. When the patient gave birth to her child, she was afraid the child would become insane; many a time she even had a feeling that the child *was* insane. Thus the fear of insanity is traced to an experience of early childhood, an experience which, having become subconscious, is manifesting itself persistently in the patient's consciousness:

The patient's parents were very religious, and the child was brought up not only

in the fear of God, but also in the fear of hell and the devil. Being sensitive and imaginative, the devils of the gospel were to her stern realities. She had a firm belief in "diabolical possessions" and "unclean spirits"; the legend of Jesus exorcising in the country of the Gadarenes unclean spirits, whose name is Legion, was to her a tangible reality. She was brought up on brimstone and pitch, with everlasting fires of the "bottomless pit" for sinners and unbelievers. In the hypnoidal state she clearly remembered the preacher, who used every Sunday to give her the horrors by his picturesque descriptions of the tortures of the "bottomless pit." She was in anguish over the unsolved question: "Do little sinner-girls go to hell?" This fear of hell made the little girl feel depressed and miserable and poisoned many a cheerful moment of her life.

What a lasting effect and what a melancholy gloom this fear of ghosts and of unclean spirits of the bottomless pit produced on this young life may be judged from the following facts: When the patient was about eleven years old, a young girl, a friend of hers, having noticed the patient's fear of ghosts, played on her one of those silly, practical jokes, the effect of which on sensitive natures is often disastrous and lasting. The girl disguised herself as a ghost, in a white sheet, and appeared to the patient, who was just on the point of falling asleep. The child shrieked in terror and fainted. Since that time the patient suffered from nightmares and was mortally afraid to sleep alone; she passed many a night in a state of excitement, frenzied with the fear of apparitions and ghosts.

When about the age of seventeen, she apparently freed herself from the belief in ghosts and unclean powers. But the fear acquired in her childhood did not lapse; it persisted subconsciously and manifested itself in the form of uncontrollable fears. She was afraid to remain alone in a room, especially in the evening. Thus, once when she had to go upstairs alone to pack her trunks, a gauzy garment called forth the experience of her ghost-fright; she had the illusion of seeing a ghost, and fell fainting to the floor. Unless specially treated, fears acquired in childhood last through life.

"Every ugly thing," says Mosso, the great Italian physiologist, "told to the child, every shock, every fright given him, will remain like minute splinters in the flesh, to torture him all his life long.

"An old soldier whom I asked what greatest fears had been, answered thus: 'I have only had one, but it pursues me still. I am nearly seventy years old, I have looked death in the face I not know how many times; I have never lost heart in any danger, but when I pass a little old church in the shades of forest, or a deserted chapel in the mountains, I always remember a neglected oratory in my native village, and I

shiver and look around, as though seeking the corpse of a murdered man which I once saw carried into it when a child, and with which an old servant wanted to shut me up to make me good." Here, too, experiences of early childhood have persisted subconsciously throughout lifetime.

XVIII

I APPEAL to you, fathers and mothers, and to you, liberal-minded readers, asking you to turn your attention to the education of your children, to the training of the young generation of future citizens. I do not appeal to our official educators, to our scientific, psychological pseudogogues, to the clerks of our teaching shops,—for they are beyond all hope. From that quarter I expect nothing but attacks and abuse. We cannot possibly expect of the philistine-educator and mandarin pseudogogue the adoption of different views of education. We should not keep new wine in old goat-skins. The present school-system squanders the resources of the country and wastes the energies, the lives of our children. Like Cato our cry should be *Carthago delenda est*,—the school-system should be abolished and with it should go the present psychologizing educator, the schoolmaster and the schoolma'am.

Fathers and mothers, you keep in your hands the fate of the young generation. You are conscious of the great responsibility, of the vast, important task laid upon you by the education of your children. For, according to the character of the training and education given to the young, they may be made a sickly host of nervous wrecks and miserable wretches; or they may be formed into a narrow-minded, bigoted, mediocre crowd of self-contented "cultured" philistines, bat-blind to evil; or they may be made a *great race of genius* with powers of rational control of their latent, potential, reserve energy. The choice remains with you.

[Home](#) [Boris Archives Menu](#) [Table of Contents](#) [Appendix](#)