

p. 45 May not the opposition be right? Or are the guardians of Mr. Meiklejohn's state, like those of Plato's, guaranteed to be creatures of golden virtue?

This is monstrously false, and its falsity is not in the least mitigated by the proposition which he adds to conciliate the fears of liberals. "The test of any government is found in the dignity and freedom, the equality and independence of its citizens. It exists through and for them, just as they exist through and for it."

p. 46 To say that human beings "exist through and for the state" is mystical nonsense whose vicious effects are not likely to be lessened by pious phrases about the state existing "through and for them."

p. 47 The pressure of group interests in one form of participation in democratic government. Instead of deploring it, it should be encouraged to be open, pluralistic and reasonable.

p. 48 The ends of education are not only guides to teaching activity, they are also criteria by which the direction of social institutions may be evaluated. If they are taken seriously,

what do they commit us to in the way of social responsibilities at the present juncture of affairs? Some historical considerations are relevant in order to provide a perspective upon these questions.

p. 49 In the early centuries of the American experience the new world imposed a manner of life upon the settlers which was far different from anything they had known in Europe. But their ideas about the world, including their ideas about education, were European. In everyday affairs they lived forward; in affairs of the "mind" they thought backwards. They remained colonists of Europe in cultural matters long after they achieved their political independence and began the unique historical career of the American republic. Their schooling was formal, meager and unrelated to their life problems. Learning, beyond the bare minimum of literacy, was primarily for adornment and polite communication except for those who ultimately went in the professions. It was the home, the farm, the town meeting and community affairs which bred the habits, attitudes and values necessary to master the major social experience.

Gradually, and then at an accelerated pace, the pattern of American economy changed. A largely agricultural community became industrialized and urbanized. By the

twentieth Century it had been transformed into the foremost capitalist nation on earth. Education now became something that "paid off," if not immediately, then in the "long run." It tied into rapidly multiplying vocational opportunities. The school took the place of the disappearing frontier as an open door to opportunity. The cults of quantity, narrow utility, quick returns and go-getting, competitive individualism were taken over by the schools from commerce and industry. "Taken" is too strong a word. They were breathed in from an untroubled atmosphere of cumulative material prosperity.

p. 50 The founders of the American republic were acutely aware of the twofold danger that beset their new venture – tyrannical usurpation and mob rule. They put their hope in an enlightened citizenry, eternally vigilant against abuses of government. Only education could produce this enlightenment and vigilance. Later, the process of education was conceived as the primary agency of Americanizing the heterogeneous national groups which flocked to these shores from all corners of Europe. The successive waves of immigrants were not completely assimilated – partly because of their own resistance, partly because of the snobbery of the native groups which erected lines of social differentiation along the lines of origin. But all embraced the American faith in education.

p. 52 After 1929 all this changed. The permanent crisis of American economy began. The very sanctity of the capitalist order itself came under attack. In a few years, the theme songs of rugged individualism both in business and education sounded hopelessly out of key in relation to the problems of continuous employment, adequate living standards and equality of educational opportunity. The ferment of new hopes and ideas spread throughout society. America was drawn more closely into the orbit of international, economic and political affairs. In the name of capitalism and in its defense, a series of governmental measures were introduced to counteract the excesses of unplanned free enterprise which profoundly modified the legal structure of society. The necessities of government intervention, subvention and control, as an expression of a tendency towards state capitalism, were greatly intensified by measures taken to prepare for war and to resist fascist aggression. The psychological mind-set of the country altered in consequence of these changes. Exaggerated fears of dictatorship blossomed in some quarters, exaggerated hopes for a revolution by consent in others. Traditional political labels no longer signified what they once did. The composite picture was one of confusion unframed by any clear lines of policy.

p. 54 But for many reasons, the progressive schoolroom practices made their greatest strides in private experimental schools. It was in these schools, supported by intelligent

middle class groups anxious to see the best in their children developed, that progressive education evolved its most distinctive techniques and projects. Yet it was precisely among these groups that the social implications of progressive education were disregarded, or treated as phraseological pieties. Progressive education became a kind of luxury for the intelligent well-to-do parents looking for better schools. These schools took the democratic philosophy of progressive education for granted. They introduced it only in the political contexts of their curriculum, and wherever class activities were entrusted to students themselves. But as a social philosophy with a pressing relevance to questions of social organization it was largely ignored.

p. 56 The fundamental social problem of our culture – fundamental in the sense that it conditions a satisfactory solution of all other important social problems – is to defend and extend our democratic heritage or rights and freedoms in an industrial economy that can provide security for all. That security, on a plane commensurate with standards of human dignity, has nowhere in the world been achieved in an unplanned economy. Nor has it ever been achieved by a planned economy under a political dictatorship. For if political freedom without economic security is defective and precarious, economic security without political

democracy is impossible. Slaves have no security when their masters possess absolute power over them.

p. 58 The argument against control of our corporate economy in the interest of private profit rather than of public welfare have filled volumes. But they can be synoptically classified under fine heads. I cite them not so much to prove a case as to indicate the variety of considerations which enter into the evaluation of the problem and the rich curricular material they suggested for exploration.

- (a) The argument from utility and efficiency. A profit economy fails to use natural and social resources efficiently. It is a wasteful social system – wasteful through its pillaging of the nation's natural resources, through enforced idleness of men and machines, often from failure to employ the best known technology. This waste is as irretrievable as it is socially unwise. Yet Most of it is unavoidable in a profit economy.
- (b) The argument from security – economic, psychological and political. Periodic crisis of mounting intensity are indigenous to our existing economy. The resulting distress and unemployment, even when mitigated by social

welfare legislation, generate deep emotional disturbances and maladjustments. Chronic fears, worries and resentments seek unhealthy outlets. A mass base is prepared for totalitarian movements. Those who suffer tend to dismiss the ideals of freedom as empty; those who enjoy comfort and power tend to abridge them out of fear.

- (c) The argument from morality. In our existing economy, service to the community is instrumental – often only incidental – to profit which recognizes no essential social responsibility. Competitive attitudes are built up which regard human beings in industrial and other social relations as tools, not as fellow-members in a community of shared interests. “The relationship between person and person,” Felix Adler rightly says, “is mankind’s supreme concern.” Where a profit economy does not systematically deteriorate the quality of this relationship, it operates in independence of it.
- (d) The argument from culture. The arts and sciences, and in a more literal sense their practitioners, are often compelled to serve as handmaids to business and corporate wealth. The quality of public taste, particularly in the fields of the Popular arts and communication, is degraded by standards of commercialism.

- (e) The argument from democracy. Because capital means not only power over things but power over men, concentrations of economic power in the hands of a few result in great social inequalities and in disproportionate political influence of different social groups in the community. The cumulative consequences of the functioning of an unplanned economy make a mockery of the ideal of equal opportunity.

These considerations, even if their validity is apparent to all citizens, by themselves are not sufficient to establish the desirability of a planned welfare economy. For if the present state of affairs is bad, it does not follow that what is proposed to succeed it will be better. It may be worse. But, before stating the other side of the case, there are some further observations, bound up with the professional activity of educators, that strengthen the argument for a welfare economy.

p. 61 All available evidence points to the fact that, so far as the performance of the country’s work is concerned, many of those who have received a liberal education will be “overeducated.” There will be no room for them. As the compulsory school age increases, as ambitious scholarship plans and government subsidies go into effect, as successive spins

of the economic cycle make school a more attractive alternative than idling on the streets, the number of college-trained men and women will vastly increase even if they do not include all who should go to college. There are not enough positions in industry and the professions to absorb them in work commensurate with their talents. The sober truth is that most vocations in industry can be filled readily enough by men and women whose education does not go beyond the elementary and early high-school years.

p. 62 If the school is to serve society, society should serve the school. Educators cannot with good conscience remain indifferent to a spectacle in which eager and capable youths, on whom they have lavished years of careful teaching, are turned adrift to find what places they can in an economy that may not need them. The school should help find the opportunities in which they can prove themselves. It should become an integral part of the planning agencies of the future. Educators must move into the forefront of social and economic planning to represent an interest which is a pre-eminent public interest.

p. 63 The arguments against planned social control of our economy are not many. But they make up in power for what they lack in number. They reduce themselves to one central contention. Planned control of society in the nature of the case must lead to such

monopolistic concentrations of power – economic, legal and educational – in the hands of a few planners that political freedom and all other freedoms enshrined in our Bill of Rights will disappear. It is not the state that will wither away but democracy. An unplanned economy may end up in totalitarianism; a planned economy must.

p. 63 De Maistre said that the foundation of all society stands the executioner; Hayek says in a planned society he inhabits its every room. The second line of evidence is historical. It points out that nations like Germany and Russia, in which economic planning has been introduced on a large scale, are absolute dictatorships – in effect, gigantic concentration camps ruled by a secret police. If either forms of the argument is valid, it would constitute more than a sufficient reply to all proposals for a planned society, especially in the eyes of educators. For education in such a system is nothing but an elaborate apparatus for conditioning slaves to the efficient performance of their rounds and duties.

p. 64 In all totalitarian cultures, democratic liberties were first destroyed and only then was a planned economy introduced under the aegis of a dictatorship. Where a planned economy is introduced into a country with strong democratic traditions, the historical comparisons, although instructive, are not decisive. It is the analytical argument which has the strongest

force. There is what Lewis Corey has aptly called a "totalitarian potential" in the structure of a planned economy which, if realized, would mean the rule of an iron-clad dictatorship. But a planned economy, as we have seen, has a libertarian potential too, because it can liberate productive forces for a more abundant life for all. Which one becomes actual is not a question of historical destiny or inevitable law, but of human decision which will fall one way or the other depending upon what scientific knowledge and moral courage those who are pledged to democracy bring to bear on it. A planned economy need not be total, and it may operate under plural forms of participation and control.

p. 64 To the historical warning that a planned economy has hitherto functioned only within a totalitarian framework can be counterposed the historical reminder that it was out of the consequences of an unplanned economy that this totalitarian framework arose. To the analysis that planning cannot function without political dictatorship can be counterposed the analysis that an unplanned economy cannot function without breeding want, unemployment and war. How can the issue be resolved without leaving it to the chances of drift or tragic civil upheaval? Is there any common ground?

p. 67 The answers to these questions today are varied and conflicting. But discussion and experiment can show that some are better than others. Where answers express world-views independently of our existing educational problems, it is unlikely that a consensus can be established. But insofar as we take as our starting point democratic ideals, irrespective of their different philosophical underpinnings, we can fruitfully explore their curricular consequences. In their light, we may even broaden the area of philosophical agreement.

p.69 Nothing can be learned which is not continuous with something already known. Instead of an honest confrontation of the issue: What should be the relative place of study of the past and present in our education? The issue is lost in the rhetorical flourishes and overtones of what in Aristotle's day was already recognized as a commonplace.

p. 70 Nor is the issue fairly stated by those who, like Mr. Hutchins and M. Maritain, charge modern educators with the fallacy of "presentism." According to the former, those who would include a study of modern industrial processes in the education of the American student are adherents of "the cult of immediacy." In this view the way to comprehend the world is to grapple with the reality you find about you.....There is no past." One would imagine that grappling with the realities that surround us is precisely the way to begin to

understand the world. One would imagine that through such an effort we would discover not only that there is a past, but that it has an inescapable bearing and importance upon the realities surrounding us. To identify the view that the present world is a legitimate object of study for those who are going to live in it, with the view that the present is nothing but a specious bloom of immediacy with no roots in the past and no fruits in the future, is intellectually cheap. It evades considered argument by caricature, and blocks fruitful discussion of the place of the present and past in a desirable educational experience.

p. 71 "Do not be deceived by the pedantry of dates. The ages of Shakespeare and of Molière are no less past than are the ages of Sophocles and of Virgil. The communion of saints is a great and inspiring assemblage, but it has only one possible hall of meeting, and that is, the present; and the mere lapse of time through which any particular group of saints must travel to reach that meeting-place, makes very little difference."

p. 72 To demand that the content of instruction be relevant to the present emphatically does not preclude a study of the past. It only prevents us from getting lost in the past. It enables us to make some intelligent selection out of the limitless materials inherited from the past.

p. 73 The reason this approach enriches the course of study is two-fold. First, the past world and the present are so continuous that there are few problems which can be intelligently understood without transcending the immediate context in which they are discovered. Second, the nature of present-day problems is such that they require the mastery of certain subject matters and techniques which are themselves not problematic, and which have no direct relation to these problems. The first reason explains why the study of the past must be included in the education of modern man. For it provides the key to what to include and exclude from the past. The second reason explains why the mastery of certain skills and areas of knowledge must precede others in the organization of a curriculum: why, for example, an ability to read critically is more important than an ability to typewrite; why knowledge of the essential elements of statistics should be more generally required than knowledge of the history of astronomy. Together, these reasons explain, as we shall see, what elements in education should be constant and what not; how curriculums may be intelligently changed in content and emphasis; how they may be different and yet equally good at different times.

p. 75 Let us examine some concrete illustrations of contemporary problems and issues, so despised by traditionalists, in order to see what would be involved in their adequate



understanding. Nothing is more contemporary than present-day totalitarianism in its various forms. Can its nature be understood without a social and economic analysis of capitalism and its periodic cycles? Can we come to grips with its rationalizations, and understand our own minds in relation to it, without some study of the ideas of men like Chamberlain, Nietasche, Hegel, Rousseau, Locke, Hobbes, Aquinas, Aristotle and Plato? Can its theories of race and racial supremacy be exposed without a sound knowledge of biology and some familiarity with the elements of scientific method? What better texts can be found for an analysis of propaganda, loose writing and thinking, than key pages from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*—or, for that matter, the writings of Russian apologists who argue that the U.S. is not a “true” democracy and that Russia, with a minority one-party dictatorship, and absolutely no civil rights for those who disagree with it, is a democracy in a “higher” sense?

p. 76 Those who scoff at concern with unemployment and with the devices of ballyhoo by which modern dictators come to power, claim that there is a great lesson to be learned from the role of “bread and circuses” in Roman history. Study of the First and Second World Wars need not be part of a liberal education: the study of the Peloponnesian and Punic Wars must be. The “proper” subject matter of a liberal education, on this view, is not the Russian

Revolution but the conspiracy of Cataline; not the state papers of Woodrow Wilson, of Clemenceau, of Lenin, but the orations of Demosthenes and Cicero.

p. 81 It teaches us not to be impatient with what is struggling to be born, to respond to the new and inchoate in the light of its own potentialities of greatness. It helps us to accept the responsibility of making our judgment of greatness here and now, and not timidly playing it safe by deferring to the judgment of the next hundred or thousand years. Absorption in study of the greatness of the past which does not quicken our sense for greatness in the present is a preparation for a life of intellectual snobbery. In face of the emergence of the new, it often leads to a kind of cultural philistinism. “To have spent one’s youth at college,” writes William James, “in contract with the choice and rare and precious, and yet still to be a blind prig or vulgarian, unable to scent out human excellence or to divine it amid its accidents, to know it only when ticketed and labeled and forced on us by others, this indeed should be accounted the very calamity and shipwreck or a higher education.”

p. 82 Grant for the moment all of Mr. Hutchins’ dubious premises. Grant that there are eternal problems and eternal truths. Why cannot they emerge from a consideration of the important issue of our age? What is eternally true must be true at any time, including the



present. The half-unconscious identification of the eternal with the ancient, of the permanent with the past, has continuously been drawn in history. It is not for nothing that governments are always on the side of the eternal. But metaphysical and political issues, aside, a program like the one Mr. Hutchins advocates is educationally unsound. For whatever the alleged advantages of a curriculum organized around the materials of the past – and all curriculums have some advantages – they can also be won by an intelligent analysis of modern culture. The enormous differential gain in the modern approach is that the knowledge and values which emerge from inquiries into the massive and dramatic problems of our times have a definite relevance to the perennial task of making life better here and now. On the other hand, if we assume that we already are in possession of eternal truths that need only be applied to the present, we are likely to overlook what is distinctive in our own times. There is a natural bias to discount the evidence showing that propositions believed eternally true are actually false or have only a *limited historical validity*. The creative sterility of modern adherents of great systems of past thought is in part due to their failure to dip into the fresh seas of contemporary experience in order to test and amplify their stock of “eternal truths.”

p. 83 It is often alleged that a modern curriculum sins against tradition, and thus violates one of the deepest hungers of man, - continuity with the past. But as important as tradition is, reflection makes clear that by itself it cannot determine the content of instruction. No matter what turning in the road we take, it is continuous with the road by which we have come. And there are few things we can do today for which some warrant in past traditions cannot be found. Those who defend tradition in education would be the first to deny that the traditional is synonymous with the dead or obsolete. How, then, do we distinguish between obsolete and living traditions? When traditions are invoked to settle issues, they are always selections from the heritage of the past – judgments of comparative worth or value testifying to needs in the present – and are justified by their consequences.

p. 84 The deepest traditions of a community are those that are so completely taken for granted that they rarely emerge on the level of critical awareness, and still more rarely become subjects of debate - like our language and folkways. But let an issue once force itself on the attention of a community to the point of arousing discussion, then it becomes obvious that what the tradition has been, of itself does not decide. It is we who decide what our tradition *should* be. The past is so rich that we can always find an historical paternity to legitimize our current offspring.

p. 86 The liberally educated person should be intellectually at home in the world of physical nature. He should know something about the earth he inhabits and its place in the solar system, about the solar system and its relation to the cosmos. He should know something about mechanics, heat, light, electricity and magnetism as the universal forces that condition anything he is or may become. He should be just as intimately acquainted with the nature of man as a biological species, his evolution, and the discoveries of experimental genetics. He should know something about the structure of his own body and mind, and the cycle of birth, growth, learning and decline. To have even a glimmer of understanding of these things, he must go beyond the level of primary description and acquire some grasp of the principles that explain what he observes. Where an intelligent grasp of principles requires a knowledge of mathematics, its fundamental ideas should be presented in such a way that students carry away not only the sense of mathematics as a tool for the solution of problems but as a study of types of order, system and language.

p. 87 These are some of the reasons why the study of the natural sciences, and the elementary mathematical notions they involve, should be required of everyone. Making such study required imposes a heavy obligation and a difficult task of pedagogical discovery

upon those who teach it. It is commonly recognized that the sciences today are taught as if all students enrolled in science course were preparing to be professional scientists. The best experience seems to show that one science should not be taken as the exemplar of all, but that the basic subject matter of astronomy, physics, chemistry, geology, in one group, and biology and psychology in another, should be covered. For when only one science is taught it tends to be treated professionally. Similarly, the best experience indicates that instruction should be interdepartmental – any competent teacher from one of these fields in either group should be able to teach all of them in the group, instead of having a succession of different teachers each representing his own field. This usually destroys both the continuity and the cumulative effect of the teaching as a whole.

p. 197 No enterprise in the history of American education has provoked more interest and attention than the new curriculum of St. John's College at Annapolis, Maryland. In books and radio broadcasts, in editorials and news stories, in effusions of columnists and in articles of academic journals, the St. John's program has been acclaimed as a sure cure for our major educational ills. Leading spokesmen of its philosophy have gone even further. They have contended that the cultural and social crisis of our times is a direct consequence of our faulty educational system and that only its radical transformation along the lines of the St. John's

program can assure us of a good society. For all of their love of the classical tradition and the medieval synthesis, the organizing spirits behind this new program have not hesitated to use every device of publicity and salesmanship – so characteristic of the modern world they deplore – to put their ideas across. And they have largely succeeded. Their indisputable merit is to have shocked many educators and intelligent laymen into an awareness of the acute importance of educational issues.

p. 198 The few critics of the St. John's program – whose voices have hardly reached the public – have contented themselves with a criticism of the metaphysics of its founders. No detailed analysis has been made of the actual program and its relation to the declared objectives of the new curriculum. Discussion has taken the form of outright total acceptance or outright total rejection. Part of the reason for this is that the proponents of the plan have insisted that it be taken as a whole or rejected as a whole. Although this may be good strategy for purposes of propaganda and conversion, it does not make for clarification.

p. 200 Under the circumstances one would have expected a certain diffidence and modesty in advancing claims on what has been achieved. Nonetheless, the President of St. John's, Mr. Stringfellow Barr, the most vocal representative of the institution, maintained in

November 1943 that six years of experience with its curriculum "have convinced us that St. John's may serve as a model for the reorganization of liberal education in the United States." Mr. Mark van Doren, whose book, *Liberal Education*, is recommended by St. John's educators as an authoritative statement of their purposes, proposes that its curriculum be planted in every college of the country. "It will take time to get the proposal accepted. Until it is accepted everywhere in America, we shall lack the right to say that liberal education exists among us." Mr. Mortimer J. Adler, one of the philosophical godfathers of the curriculum, broadcasts to the nation that "St. John's is the only college in the country which is making a proportionate effort to adapt means that may succeed in achieving the ends of a liberal education."