

OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CHILDREN

The Child-State

The pupil must regain the child-state he has lost ere the first sound can fall upon his ear.

The Voice of the Silence, p. 19

H.P. Blavatsky

Theosophy and Education

THEO. Just let us consider this question of education from a broad standpoint, and I will prove to you that you are doing harm not good, with many of your boasted improvements. The schools for the poorer children, though far less useful than they ought to be, are good in contrast with the vile surroundings to which they are doomed by your modern Society. The *infusion* of a little practical Theosophy would help a hundred times more in life the poor suffering masses than all this infusion of (useless) intelligence...

ENQ. But, really—

THEO. Let me finish, please. You have opened a subject on which we Theosophists feel deeply, and I must have my say. I quite agree there is a great advantage to a small child bred in the slums, having the gutter for playground, and living amid continued coarseness of gesture and word, in being placed daily in a bright, clean school-room hung with pictures, and often gay with flowers. There it is taught to be clean, gentle, orderly; there it learns to sing and to play; has toys that awaken its intelligence; learns to use its fingers deftly; is spoken to with a smile instead of a frown; is gently rebuked or coaxed instead of cursed. All this humanizes the children, arouses their brains, and renders them susceptible to intellectual and moral influences. The schools are not all they might be and ought to be; but, compared with the homes, they are paradises; and they slowly are re-acting on the homes. But while this is true of many of the Board schools, your system deserves the worst one can say of it.

Key to Theosophy, p. 264–265

H.P. Blavatsky

The Real Object of Modern Education

What is the *real* object of modern education? Is it to cultivate and develop the mind in the right direction; to teach the disinherited and hapless people to carry with fortitude the burden of life (allocated them by Karma); to strengthen their will; to inculcate in them the love of one's neighbor and the feeling of mutual interdependence and brotherhood; and thus to train and form the character for practical life? Not a bit of it. And yet, these are undeniably the objects of all true education. No one denies it; all your educationalists admit it, and talk very big indeed on the subject. But what is the practical result of their action? Every young man and boy, nay, every

one of the younger generation of schoolmasters will answer: “The object of modern education is to pass examinations,” a system not to develop right emulation, but to generate and breed jealously, envy, hatred almost, in young people for one another, and thus train them for a life of ferocious selfishness and struggle for honours and emoluments instead of kindly feeling. ...

Key to Theosophy, p. 265–266

H.P. Blavatsky

Mechanical Education

And what are these examinations—the terror of modern boyhood and youth? They are simply a method of classification by which the results of your school teaching are tabulated. In other words, they form the practical application of the modern science method to the *genus homo, qua* intellection. Now “science” teaches that intellect is a result of the mechanical interaction of the brain-stuff; therefore it is only logical that modern education should be almost entirely mechanical—a sort of automatic machine for the fabrication of intellect by the ton. Very little experience of examinations is enough to show that the education they produce is simply a training of the physical member, and, sooner or later, all your schools will sink to this level. As to any real, sound cultivation of the thinking and reasoning power, it is simply impossible while everything has to be judged by the results as tested by competitive examinations. Again, school training is of the very greatest importance in forming character, especially in its moral bearing. Now, from first to last, your modern system is based on the so-called scientific revelations: “The struggle for existence” and the “survival of the fittest.” All through his early life, every man has these driven into him by practical example and experience, as well as by direct teaching, till it is impossible to eradicate from his mind the idea that “self,” the lower, personal, animal self, is the end-all, and be-all, of life. Here you get the great source of all the after-misery, crime, and heartless selfishness, which you admit as much as I do. Selfishness, as said over and over again, is the curse of humanity, and the prolific parent of all the evils and crimes in this life; and it is your schools which are the hotbeds of such selfishness.

Key to Theosophy, p. 266–267

H.P. Blavatsky

What Should Children Be Taught?

THEO. A proper and sane system of education should produce the most vigorous and liberal mind, strictly trained in logical and accurate thought, and not in blind faith. How can you ever expect good results, while you pervert the reasoning faculty of your children by bidding them believe in the miracles of the Bible on Sunday, while for the six other days of the week you teach them that such things are scientifically impossible?

ENQ. What would you have, then?

THEO. If we had money, we would found schools which would turn out something else than reading and writing candidates for starvation. Children should above all be taught self-reliance,

love for all men, altruism, mutual charity, and more than anything else, to think and reason for themselves. We would reduce the purely mechanical work of the memory to an absolute minimum, and devote the time to the development and training of the inner senses, faculties and latent capacities. We would endeavour to deal with each child as a unit, and to educate it so as to produce the most harmonious and equal unfoldment of its powers, in order that its special aptitudes should find their full natural development. We should aim at creating *free* men and women, free intellectually, free morally, unprejudiced in all respects, and above all things, *unselfish*. And we believe that much if not all of this could be obtained by *proper and truly theosophical* education.

Key to Theosophy, p. 270–271

H.P. Blavatsky

The Power to Know

The power to know does not come from book-study nor from mere philosophy, but mostly from the actual practice of altruism in deed, word, and thought; for that practice purifies the covers of the soul and permits that light to shine down into the brain mind. As the brain-mind is the receiver in the waking state, it has to be purified from sense-perception, and the truest way to do this is by combining philosophy with the highest outward and inward virtue.

Excerpt from “The Power to Know”
Theosophical Articles, I, 432

W.Q. Judge

Universal Humanitarian Values

Such human qualities as morality, compassion, decency, wisdom, and so forth have been the foundations of all civilizations. These qualities must be cultivated and sustained through systematic moral education in a conducive social environment so that a more humane world may emerge. The qualities required to create such a world must be inculcated right from the beginning, from childhood. We cannot wait for the next generation to make this change; the present generation must attempt a renewal of basic human values. If there is any hope, it is in the future generations, but not unless we institute major change on a worldwide scale in our present educational system. We need a revolution in our commitment to and practice of universal humanitarian values.

It is not enough to make noisy calls to halt moral degeneration; we must do something about it. Since present-day governments do not shoulder such 'religious' responsibilities, humanitarian and religious leaders must strengthen the existing civic, social, cultural, educational, and religious organizations to revive human and spiritual values. Where necessary, we must create new organizations to achieve these goals. Only in so doing can we hope to create a more stable basis for world peace.

Living in society, we should share the sufferings of our fellow citizens and practise compassion and tolerance not only towards our loved ones but also towards our enemies. This is

the test of our moral strength. We must set an example by our own practice, for we cannot hope to convince others of the value of religion by mere words. We must live up to the same high standards of integrity and sacrifice that we ask of others. The ultimate purpose of all religions is to serve and benefit humanity. This is why it is so important that religion always be used to effect the happiness and peace of all beings and not merely to convert others.

Excerpt from “A Human Approach to World Peace”
www.dalailama.com

His Holiness, the XIVth Dalai Lama