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Education v. The Educationalist State*

by DRYDEN GILLING SMITH

(*continued*)

The way that the abnormal notion of the state, during the artificial conditions of war, has been harnessed to permanent civil legislation is notorious. H. C. Barnard in his *History of British Education* tells us that "It is not without significance that the Education Acts of 1870, 1902, 1918 and 1944 were passed in time of war . . . there are not wanting those who are interested in education primarily as a means of promoting military efficiency." The part played by a 'comprehensive' education system in the omnicompetent state did not pass unperceived by those Englishmen who observed with admiration the successful Hegelian model state of Prussia. Professor Barnard says earlier in his book that "The noteworthy advance which Prussia, for example, has made since the beginning of the century, and her recent successes in war against France, were attributed as much to her educational system as to her military organisation." Since the Hegelian conception of the state needs the unnatural conditions of war to give it the appearance of reality, and since all other countries tend to assume this artificial appearance under war conditions which, in addition, disrupt and unbalance the philosophical thinking of even the most stable individuals (as reference to most books on social problems written during the recent war years will illustrate), no civil legislation of a permanent character ought to take place during such periods.

Before dealing with the anchorage which the Hegelian idea of the state was able to sink more deeply into England with the 1944 Education Act, we must consider the fourth idea-clot I have mentioned—'learning for its own sake' as the justification for learning not of immediate practical use as opposed to the 'comprehension of universals.' If the opposition to a state-controlled monopolistic system of education allows itself to accept this maxim as the aim of an alternative policy it has allowed the ground to be cut from under its feet. The logical and water-tight case which is presented by the argument that those versed in traditional and classical knowledge, in the crystallised experience of countless generations, must supervise and limit the actions of temporal powers and not be part of a system subject to every wish of those temporal powers, is completely lost when the aim of the accumulation of knowledge is merely the accumulation of knowledge. If your aim is the indiscriminate accumulation of knowledge you may disagree with the *aims* expressed by the supporters of the omnicompetent state but you will find little to fight against in their system of education since any system is as good as any other system looked at from the viewpoint of the indiscriminate searcher for knowledge. The London School of Economics will give him all the facts and figures he could wish for.

It is interesting to note that the places where 'learning for its own sake' was most obviously the operative principle, the German Universities, that were the laughing stock of the world before 1914 as far as their accumulation of irrelevant knowledge was concerned, were those which worked inside the Hegelian Prussion State. Ezra Pound complained bitterly that American Universities were growing up on the German model. He attacked what he called the German-American conception of learning, which he saw spreading to many other countries, in an article for *The New Age* (1917). He said that the action of that German-American system in incorporating 'learning for learnings' sake' had been perfectly simple. "Every man of intelligence had that intelligence nicely switched on to some particular problem, some minute particular problem unconnected with life, *unconnected with main principles* . . ." The system says in effect that "Metaphorically you are to build up a damned and useless pyramid that will be no use to you or anyone else, but will serve as a 'monument'; to this end you are to sacrifice your mind and vitality. . . . The student has become accustomed first to receiving his main ideas without question; then to being indifferent about them . . . in most cases his experiments have been blind experiments . . . in accord with the main idea dictated by somebody else . . . in this state he has accepted the idea that he is an ant, not a human being. He has become impotent and quite pliable . . . his mind is prepared for all sorts of acts to be undertaken for their exterior reasons 'of state' *etc.*, without regard to their merit.

That such occupation is not the natural one for men who are not hard-pressed by the process of providing for their immediate livelihood is admitted indirectly by Veblen in his "Theory of the Leisure Class." "Knowledge for its own sake, the exercise of the faculty of comprehension without ulterior purposes, should, it might be expected, be sought by men whom no urgent material interest diverts from the quest." He identifies the most obvious field of knowledge for its own sake as that of "the sciences properly so called" and points out that the intellectual interests of the leisure class tend to seek expression "on the side of classical and formal erudition, rather than on the side of the sciences . . . The most frequent excursion into other than classical fields of knowledge on the parts of members

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Language

We have pointed out before the importance of resistance to the campaign, long conducted, for so degrading language that it becomes a tool which is useless for any honest purpose and valuable only as a means of spreading confusion and deceit. Therefore we welcome the following from an article, "Satirist in the Modern World," in *The Times Literary Supplement*:—

"Confucius was once asked what he would do first if it were left to him to administer a country. The Master said (in Professor Waley's scholarly translation of the *Analects*): 'It would certainly be to correct language.' His listeners were surprised. 'Surely,' they said, 'this has nothing to do with the matter. Why should language be corrected?' The Master's answer (more freely translated) was: 'If language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant; if what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done remains undone; if morals and arts deteriorate, justice will go astray, if justice goes astray the people will stand about in helpless confusion. Hence there must be no arbitrariness in what is said. This matters above everything.'"

—*The Social Crediter*, May 16, 1953.

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"Recent counsels to discard fine discriminations, to restrict language to simple and familiar instances of its use, to pare down the vocabulary of the people and to whittle away all that is unknown to children and forgotten by the aged, the forgetful and the lazy, are invitations to ambiguity among words, for since the particulars of life constantly multiply by the effect of inventions and complexities, fewer words have to serve more purposes. The offence is doubled by being from two sides at once: no sooner a new need arises than, in place of inventing a new term to express it, an old one is torn from its established roots and implanted in the new soil, for a need is a soil, fostering growth and bearing fruit; while by word-clipping the vandals denude an old plantation and give it over to weeds, which spread lustily in the vacant earth."

—The Editor, *Fig Tree*, September, 1954.

"If the meaning of words is distorted contact with reality is lost."

—Dr. Ivan Pavlov (Russian neuropsychiatrist).

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"Without language we should merely be hairless chimpanzees. Indeed, we should be something much worse. Possessed of a high IQ but no language, we should be like the Yahoos of *Gulliver's Travels*—creatures too clever to be guided by instinct, too self-centred to live in a state of animal grace and therefore condemned to remain forever, frustrated and malignant, between contented apehood and aspiring humanity. It was language that made possible the accumulation of knowledge and the broadcasting of information. It was language that permitted the expression of religious insight, the formulation of ethical ideals, the codification of laws. It was language, in a word, that turned us into human beings and gave birth to civilisation."

—Aldous Huxley, *Adonis and the Alphabet.*

Intelligence

"Intelligence is often confused with extent and range of knowledge; or it is supposed to be identical with interest in science, philosophy, letters, or other so-called intellectual pursuits. That is a misconception. Intelligence shows itself in apprehending the exact nature of the particular problems with which the individual is himself called upon to deal; in seeing through the fog of contemporary sophism and misunderstanding; in detecting underlying principles which to most men are lost in a mass of detail or are obscured by accepted catchwords; in noticing the connection of things usually confused; in apprehending the importance of what others overlook or the relative unimportance of what they regard as central. It may best perhaps be described as a kind of 'flair,' in virtue of which the discoverer, the artist, the true reformer—not to mention the man who really possesses that not too common quality known as 'common sense'—seize at once on what is relevant, and discard or subordinate what is not."—B. H. Streeter, *Reality*.

Unintelligence

"There has been," writes Mr. Douglas Jerrold, managing director of the famous publishing house of Eyre and Spottiswoode, "a steady decline in the sale of all works of serious scholarship. Books of the kind which used to sell from two to ten thousand copies before the war sell only a few hundreds to-day."

"Unintelligence is becoming more and more general," writes Alexis Carrel, "in spite of the excellence of the courses given in schools, colleges, and universities. Strange to say, it often exists with advanced scientific knowledge." *Man the Unknown*, Hamilton.

Quoted in *Within That City*, by Sir Arnold Lunn.

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(*continued from page* 1.)

of the leisure class are made into the discipline of law and the political, and more especially the administrative sciences." Though he may not approve of it he admits that the natural tendency of men released from immediate material pre-occupations is to try and learn something of universal principles (the laws of the universe) and to see how they apply to their own surroundings.

For this considerable knowledge may be required; but it is selected and ancillary to the main purpose. Where Mr. Jacks in the work quoted says that "Education can never be practised merely as a means to an end: it must be practised as an end in itself, and then it will be found to be both end and means," Remy de Gourmant gives us the wiser counsel (*Le Chemin de Velours,* 1900—authorised English translation by Willian Bradley): "Education is a means, and not an end . . . Considered as the precise instrument of future work, education may have a very great, even absolute importance. It may be the necessary condition of certain intellectual achievements. It will be the staff of the intelligence; but offered to the second-rate brain, directed simply and solely to the enlargement of the memory, it has no power to regenerate sick cells. It will rather serve to crush them. It will make them dull. It will divert from the natural needs of life the activities merely meant for daily exercise . . . it has an influence only upon an intelligence in action or capable of action. It does not determine, it inclines. Above all, it does not create intelligence."

The co-ordination of schools into a system designed to serve a temporal power operated by men who accept as axiomatic these four beliefs (whose correspondence with metaphysical reality I have shown to be non-existent. though I doubt if any of the 'main political parties' would even bother to dispute them) can only hasten the break-up of the society which these beliefs threaten. The 1944 Education Act can therefore be said to attack what remains of our society rather than to serve it. The more unpleasant and unnatural the form of association into which that society is being twisted, the more it requires physical sanctions to hold it together, and the less will be the confidence of the individual (upon which, as Mr. Hewlett Edwards has told us, "a stable society must ultimately depend") that it is worth while. The Education Act was a social dis-service—with the qualification that it ought not to be called an education act at all, because it has nothing to do with education.

It merely provides for the arrangement of an instrument of control which we may regard as being either for the benefit of the 'state' or to assist the carrying out of the policy of those who, for practical purposes, control the 'state.' The kind of policy it may assist is illustrated by Mr. Jacks (*op.cit.*) "But the teaching of facts is not enough. There is a conception of world citizenship *which we must inculcate.*" (my italics). ". . . there is no such thing to-day as world citizenship: the federal systems of the United States of America or the Soviet Union or the British Commonwealth of Nations are the nearest approaches to it, and we may look forward to the day when a complete world federation with a common citizenship will be created."

The so-called Education Act is merely an extension of conscription to most of the age-group below that of military service. Section 80. (1) of the Act requires that "The proprietor of every school . . . shall cause to be kept in accordance with regulations made by the Minister a register containing the prescribed particulars with respect to all persons of compulsory school age who are pupils at the school, and such regulations may make provision for enabling such registers to be inspected, for enabling extracts therefrom to be taken for the purposes of this Act by persons duly authorised in that behalf under regulations, and for requiring the persons by whom such register is required to be kept to make to the Minister, and to local education authorities, such periodical or other returns as to the contents thereof as may be prescribed."

Of what use would such a system of records be for educational purposes? It is merely, like the rationing system, identity cards, the state disease service (also with its excuse for Medical Record sheets), state insurance, the state control of banking which demands reports on private deposits, and the recruitment of civilians as soldiers, useful to a central plan of control. Between school and military service 'young persons' are kept under periodic observation by compulsory attendance at a County College for the equivalent of one day a week or eights weeks a year. Section 45. (1)—(a) adds that "every young person who is not exempt from compulsory attendance for further education shall at all times keep the local education authority in whose area he resides informed of his proper address." For children below school age, there are also similar provisions. For example Section 34—(1) allows that any local education officer "may by notice in writing served upon the parent of any child who has attained the age of two years require him to submit the child for examination by a medical officer . . . and if a parent upon whom such a notice is served fails without reasonable excuse to comply with the requirements thereof, he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding five pounds."

The connection of the latter with education may be obscure; but we are informed by Mr. Jacks (*op.cit.*) that "to whatever category a school may belong, it should be first and foremost a health centre" and he lists as one of the five questions that should be asked in deciding how a child should be 'educated' after the age of 11—"what is his physical condition?" Liverpool University has recently made a similar statement about selection of undergraduates. Mr. Jacks adds that the 1944 Act ". . . . provides the Minister with the necessary powers . . . with the aim will go the plan necessary for its accomplishment, and this will be a comprehensive plan assuring continuity from the cradle to the grave." Further measures would be purely administrative, measures likely to make the temporal government more sure in the possesion of powers conferred by this Act. The sort of thing we may expect is outlined by Mr. Jacks later on in the same work. "Total Education would see at the centre Ministry of Youth, in whose hands would be concentrated all the responsibilities for the welfare of young people up to the age of eighteen at present shared by the Ministry of Education with the Home Office, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and any other Government Departments which may be involved. Physical development, the treatment of young offenders, the choice

of employment, and the time to be spent in employment would thus be added to the more technically educational responsibilities of the present Ministry of Education and would fall under one authority." The strategical importance of putting 'youth' into a special compartment, controlling as much as possible of its environment, its varied contacts with older people, in ultimately getting it to perform what you want, has been recognised by many people, but its present day tactics have been analysed and explained most effectively by Mr. Wyndham Lewis in his suppressed work *The Doom of Youth* (1934). The reason for conditioning the environment is to provide the unreal surroundings necessary to stimulate in children the unreal ideas that will make them work for the unreal conditions (not in accord with the nature of things) that the Planners desire. Mr. Jacks (*op.cit.*) says that " . . . it is from whole situations that children learn, and through which they are almost infinitely suggestible. Plato was the first exponent of educational theory to draw attention to this suggestibility, and to base upon it a method of teaching which used the total environment of the child, but many writers since his time have emphasized and amplified this point. Thus Sir Joshua Reynolds wrote: 'The disposition, which is so strong in children, continues with us of catching the general air and manner of those with whom we are most conversant; with this difference only, that a young mind is naturally pliable and imitative; but in more advanced state it grows rigid, and must be warmed and softened before it will receive a deep impression.'"

It is an unnatural state of affairs for a government to presume to a super-human existence, and to usurp the rights and responsibilities of parents for their children. The question "Whose children are they anyway?" asked at a meeting during the fight for the independence of the village school at Lindsell in 1949 is perhaps the comment, most to the point, that has been made on the implications of the 1944 Act.

How even the pretext of state schooling for anything to do with learning has been dropped is evidenced in the substitution of the "3 A's" for the "3 R's"—Section 36—"It shall be the duty of the parent of every child of compulsory school age to cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise." Like the substitution of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" for "Life, liberty and property" in the American Declaration of Independence, this change to words that can be made to mean anything in the hands of those whose job it will be to interpret them in action, is but another example of a modern state pretending to offer something in the form of a slogan charter but in reality appropriating greater power to itself for undefined ends.

The most savage part of this Act is that which deals with independent schools. In the past they have been attacked by those equalitarians who complain that people who are prepared to pay for it should not be able to buy a better education for their children than that provided for nothing in the state schools. What is the state, to criticise or to have any say in the policy of schools that are better than itself can provide? The opposite argument—that parents need protecting from bad schools rests on equally absurd grounds. The parent has the financial sanction of being able to remove his child from one independent school to another or to a state school, a sanction which he does not possess when dealing with the shortcomings of a school run by an L.E.A. In assessing the standard of a school he is free to remember the old proverb that "bricks and mortar don't make a school," such an assessment being far-removed from that made by the state which is mainly concerned with the condition of the premises.

(*to be concluded.*)

The Pyramid of Power

"If any genuine attempt is made to extract a useful lesson from the history of human development, the conclusion is irresistible that the process is one long and, on the whole, continuously successful struggle to subdue environment to the end that individuality may have the utmost freedom. Now, by the operation, misunderstanding, and misuse of our financial and industrial system in its application to economics, we have created an economic position which is such a formidable threat to the material existence of the individual that he is obliged to subordinate every consideration to an effort to cope with it. Partly by education and partly by what may be called instinct, it is increasingly understood that misdirected effort and unsound distributing arrangements, while operating to minister to the will-to-power, are entirely responsible for the position in which we find ourselves.

"The practical issue at this time, therefore, is not at all whether this condition is to continue . . . it is simply one regardng the number of experiments, all very probably involving great general discomfort, which we are to endure until the inevitable rearrangement in alignment with the purpose of evolution is satisfactorily accomplished. And the suppression and perversion of the facts, on which alone sound constructive effort can be based, can have but one result—to increase the number of these experiments and the discomfort of the process.

—C. H. Douglas in "The Pryamid of Power" from *The English Review*, 1919.

Social Credit Library

The following have been added to the Social Credit Expansion Fund Library:—

M.5. Caseirer, Ernst, *An Essay on Man.*
M.6. Eeles, Francis C., *The Coronation Service.*
M.7. Fromm, Erich, *The Sane Society.*
M.8. von Hildebrand, Dietrich, *The New Tower of Babel.*
M.9. Huizinga, J., *The Waning of the Middle Ages.*
M.10. Parkin, Charles, *The Moral Basis of Burke's Political Thought.*
M.11. Pieper, Josef, *Justice.*
M.12. Pryce-Jones, Alan, *The New Outline of Modern Knowledge.*
M.13. Thibon, Gustave, and Daniel-Rops., *Christianity and Freedom, A Symposium.*
M.14. Tate, Allen, *The Man of Letters in the Modern World.*
M.15. Wilhelmsen, Frederick, *Hilaire Belloc: No Alienated Man.*
C.134. Mabbott, J. D., *The State and the Citizen.*
A.116. Johnson, Charles, *The De Moneta of Nicholas Oresme.*
Jungk, Robert, *Tomorrow is Already Here.*
Kuehnelt-Leddihn, Eric von, *Liberty or Equality.*
Sorokin, Pitirim A., *Fads and Foibles in Modern Sociology.*

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