

NOTES ON EDUCATION

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1. introduction

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

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

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

2. the meaning of education (semantics)

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

may become aware of the existence of a basic misunderstanding or confusion that must be eliminated.

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

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

It also means to draw out of conditions that limit; in other words, it is the favouring of a process of growth. Of course, education also includes the imparting of ideas, but this must be seen only as a first step or stage, as an instrument or necessary means, and not as an end in itself. Both aspects and concepts are included in the common usage of the word 'education', and this easily creates confusion and misunderstandings. It would, therefore, be useful to distinguish between them and to always specify, for example, by using the terms 'informative education' and 'formative education'.

3. the educational crisis

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

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

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

Psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the harmful effects of repression and censure, has also substantially contributed to this radical change. Thus, great progress has been made. Children and young people are now treated with more understanding and are given greater opportunities to develop more freely. But the revolution in the field of education (as almost always happens with revolutions) has gone too far, arriving at the opposite extreme in some cases. The elimination of all discipline, every rule, all help on the teacher's part has produced results that are undesirable and at times even disastrous, both within the family and at school. Disorder, anarchy, lack of self-discipline, and violent behaviour have been its effects. Furthermore, the fact that has most astounded the 'reformers' has been that this regime of freedom without limits has proven unnatural; they have come to realise that even the children themselves do not want it and often ask for guidance, precise rules, a certain amount of discipline and order, and that they most of all want 'models' and living examples. 1

1. This fact should not be surprising. It has been found that even adults find it difficult to bear freedom, and while they often fight to obtain it, they basically do not really want it; they are ready to give it up and even seek to run away from it. This paradoxical behaviour helps us understand many recent events and has been pointed out in Erich Fromm's books *Escape from freedom* (amongst others).

The poor results caused by exaggerated applications of the new educational methods have given rise to a counter-reaction, but this has not solved the problem. All attempts to return to the 'good old methods of the past' are in vain and are destined to fail, both due to the fact that those methods were not really 'good', and because their imposition has been rendered impossible given the profound changes that have occurred in the psychology of the new generation and in the environmental conditions. In the meantime, the rapid increase in the number of students, the tumultuous extension of 'mass education' in the form of compulsory education (something which is both desirable and necessary), and the resulting scarcity of competent teachers and adequate schools, have created new and serious difficulties and complications. All this explains the current crisis in the field of education, where the old and the new are found in different proportions, side by side, and often in sharp contrast with one another. The more enlightened educators have recently recognised the need of finding a 'middle road' and have been carrying out experiments in this direction. This is constructive and promising progress. But to arrive at truly satisfactory methods, one must take into full consideration the new tendencies emerging today - tendencies that continue to characterise, more and more, the future direction.

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

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

4. the new trends in education

Dynamism and a positive viewpoint

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

Direct contact with nature and with living beings: earth, water, plants, animals, and related activities: to sow, cultivate and raise domestic animals.

Specific material for didactic purposes (Frobel, Montessori, Decroly, etc.), or objects, tools and machines for general use.

Co-operation in family activities and the carrying out of domestic chores.

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

Group activities of various kinds experiments and training in self-government of the school community, etc.

All this can be put into the general formula: learning by doing - education through active training.

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

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

The active methods, permeated and rendered more alive by dynamism, also offer (in addition to their generally-acknowledged effectiveness) a specific advantage of even greater value: they aid in the development of the will and of its right use. The recognition that the will is of utmost importance, that it is the most direct expression of the Self in the personality, that its power is wonderful, but that its misuse is responsible for many dangers, will enable the will to be given a central place in education.

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

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

evocation of the will

it right orientation

its wise and effective application through use of appropriate techniques.

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

Mental development

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the majority of humanity, the mind is subordinate to the impulses and the emotions and is used to justify them and to aid in achieving their ends. One can say in such a case that the mind is the servant of desire. But sooner or later the unsatisfactory and often disastrous results of this erroneous relationship provoke a crisis which is then followed by either gradual or sudden changes. The mind reawakens in the individual the understanding of the nature and effects of his/her emotions and impulses. He/she becomes conscious of the distortions of reality of the illusions thus created, and of the errors of judgement, evaluation and behaviour caused by them.

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

The second result, which is not a desirable one, is an undervaluing of the emotions, feelings and imagination, leading to mental pride, to one-sidedness and to the repressions that characterise the 'arrogant intellectual' type.

Education must have two major goals with relation to the mind: to promote its development and active use, and to establish the right proportions as well as a constructive co-operation between the mind and the other aspects of man. What is most necessary in this regard is the harmonious combination of intelligence and love, leading to loving understanding and to the development of wisdom.

Extraversion

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

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

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

psychology, the science that studies man in his totality, should occupy the place that is its due - that of a major subject of study in every type and grade of school. This teaching can be started from the earliest years if presented in a suitable form. The normal interest that every individual has for himself makes him willingly accept the opportunity to learn how to know himself. In addition, the obvious usefulness of the techniques that aim to eliminate frustrations and to resolve conflicts within oneself and with others will make students all the more willing to accept the training and then to make use of the techniques.

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

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

Unification and synthesis

There is now an often sharp conflict between these tendencies and those of individualism, separateness and aggressiveness. The situation is complicated by the fact that certain characteristics, especially the positive attitude, favour individualistic self-assertion. This helps to explain some contrasts existing in the present period of transition and confusion. Two opposite tendencies alternate and conflict with one another in many individuals: self-assertion as opposed to conformism by which one gains appreciation and success in the world. Even the so-called 'anti-social' types form groups (gangs of youth, criminal associations). Groups of various types are formed within every nation, and nations themselves unite in blocks. But these groups are often separative and in conflict among themselves. All this contributes to the present state of agitation, to the lack of security and to the conflicts to be found in every area.

In spite of this, the ideal of synthesis, world unification and the aspiration toward this ideal have been so strong as to inspire numerous activities that have as their goal the attainment of peace, mutual understanding and world co-operation:

eliminate, or at least lessen the separability, the combative and aggressive impulses and all that rouses and intensifies them.

favour actively the tendency toward synthesis - among young people, in families, schools and in communities.

call attention to and counter-balance excessive and erroneous manifestations of this tendency.

5. psychosynthesis in education

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

synthesis in the individual (intrapersonal psychosynthesis)

synthesis between individuals (interpersonal psychosynthesis), and synthesis between the individual and various groups (group or social psychosynthesis).

Individual psychosynthesis

This combines two main principles and objectives:

the integration of the individual, that is:

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

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

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

Inter-personal psychosynthesis

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

One distinctive characteristic of our society is the enormous increase in communications and the subsequent development of collaborations between individuals and groups. This is creating forms of co-operation, but also produces, at the same time, greater occasions for conflict. These developments, in addition to the new types of community being formed, indicate the need for a new science - the science of relationships - with its new, specific techniques.

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

6. education in the family

The need for education within the family and its decisive importance in conditioning and in influencing the whole life of the child was previously cited. This is an extremely difficult task and all parents as well as future parents should take this fact clearly into consideration and prepare themselves seriously to face the duties and responsibilities that such a task entails. The most obvious difficulties are those due to the crisis that the family, considered as the basic human group or social unit is now passing through, a crisis that is part of the general critical situation of humanity as a whole,

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

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

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

No less serious is the crisis between the older and the younger generations. Tensions and conflicts between the elderly and young people have not been lacking in the past. Turgenev, for example, makes this situation the theme of his novel *Fathers and sons*, but the current trend tends to bring them to the point of an acute and sometimes dramatic hostility. Apart from all that, in the education imparted (or that should be imparted) in the family, there is another fundamental difficulty, independent of time and place. Children are deeply influenced by the psychological life of their parents, and especially by their attitudes, complexes, and unconscious conflicts. Many psychologists and psychoanalysts have indicated the harmful and even disastrous consequences that children suffer. A particularly convincing description of this has been made by Frances G. Wickes in the chapter 'Influence of parents' difficulties on the child's unconscious' from her excellent book *The Inner World of Childhood*. Naturally, one cannot ask parents to be fault-free nor can parents ask it of themselves. But a sincere acknowledging of these faults, along with the awareness of the dangers that they bring to their children should spur parents on to recognise their own responsibility, and to do all that is within their power to reduce them to a minimum, if not to eliminate the consequences entirely. There is much that they can do. Deeper knowledge of man's nature, brought in by dynamic psychology, is now available to the public, and this should encourage farsighted parents to acquire basic concepts concerning the laws governing the life of the psyche, child psychology, and methods for constructively influencing human behaviour. There are many good, non-technical books on such subjects, and one can seek advice from an expert when necessary. But much more should be done, and on a more long-term scale. Education for parenthood should hold an important place in all schools serving adolescents. There are already some beginnings in this direction, and one may expect that their full development will be seen in the future. At the same time, its very importance demands that it be given priority among the

urgent, educational tasks in the present period of transition. Only a few of the main points may be cited here.

pre-natal education

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

understand the true nature of the baby

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

A completely opposite position is taken by Freud and other psychoanalysts who, in describing the powerful instinctive impulses, conflicts and complexes existing in the child, have gone as far as to define him as 'a creature who is perverse in many different ways'.

There are many books and magazines that deal with child psychology from different points of view. Their value varies a great deal, and it is not easy to find one's way in this field. These books are often concerned with the most obvious characteristics and forms of behaviour, ignoring the depths and the heights of human nature in spite of the fact that these are also present in children and in adolescents. For example, in one of these books that is good in certain aspects, the authors (three eminent scholars) do not even mention the unconscious, the imagination, creativity, the will and spiritual experiences. But we can recommend two books that can both be of great help in gaining a new understanding of youth. The first is *The inner world of childhood* by Frances Wickes, and the second is *The recreation of the individual* by Dr. Hinkle (Harcourt, Brace, New York, 1923) in which a chapter entitled 'The child' is particularly instructive.

individual psychological differences

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

psychosexual differences. These are greater than are generally acknowledged and can be noted already from early childhood.

different psychological types. Both of these subjects are dealt with very well in Dr. Hinkle's book.

the psycho-spiritual constitution, the vocations, the specific and unique attitudes of each individual.

the influence of the characteristics of the future

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

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

The specific and essential elements of family education are:

love

It can seem obvious and natural to love ones own children, but in reality, to love in the right way is something that is extremely difficult. We must free ourselves from the widespread illusion that it is enough to 'love', and must sincerely face up to the fact that there are many kinds of 'love', some of which may be harmful and even destructive: possessive love, jealous love, anxious love have had, and still have, disastrous effects. The main duty of parents, therefore, is to acknowledge the necessity of learning the difficult art of loving wisely.

indirect education

There is a paradox in family education that parents should be aware of and always keep in mind. The most effective education does not consist in the direct and deliberate action on the child, but is accomplished by the constant influence of the 'psychological atmosphere' that pervades the house, and through the powerful suggestion of the 'living example' of the parents.

This has often been emphasised and does not require explanation. But it is necessary to point out that the acceptance of this principle and its coherent application would create a real revolution in family education, shifting the emphasis from the children's behaviour to that of the parents. This is the logical consequence of the fact that the inner attitude and the behaviour of the parents create the 'psychological atmosphere' and make them 'examples' or 'models' that inevitably condition the children.

This indirect education asks parents to:

avoid all expressions of irritation, depression, fear and other negative thoughts and emotions in the presence of children. Above all, every bitter discussion caused by conflicts between the parents' points of views should be eliminated.

abstain from 'projecting' onto children one's own negative states of mind and aggressive impulses.

These requests require much from parents, but a sincere and never-ending attempt to satisfy them is an expression of real love - a love that provides the necessary motive and strength. One further incentive is the recognition of the great benefit that this self-discipline gives to those

who subject themselves to it. The paradoxical, but very real consequence to all of this, is that from this point of view, children oblige their parents to educate themselves!

One may add: where the atmosphere of the home is one of wise love, the family relationships will be regulated by understanding, patience, cheerfulness, and ordered activity.

One of the things that parents must realise is that the so-called 'naughtiness' of children is often the product of the unfavourable and unnatural conditions existing particularly in the large cities. They deprive the child of direct contact with nature and an adequate freedom of movement and muscular activity that are essential for his/her normal life and development. As this need becomes more and more recognised, new concepts of city planning and changes in our way of life will be chosen with the aim of satisfying this need.

The parents who seek to penetrate into the inner life of their child have an even more difficult problem of understanding. In this case, one may always rely upon the help made available by the progress in the field of psychology and by those advances expected in the future.

Frequent and varied are those occasions that require the exercise of patience. Aside from the most obvious, the spontaneous expressions of children should be listened to with special attention, without the interruption of criticism. Their questions also merit adequate and precise answers; they constitute precious opportunities to give appropriate instructions to the specific and immediate need of the questioner.

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

The value of ordered activity is obvious if we realise that in order to be trained for action and self-expression, children need and even ask to be active. The acquisition of skill in action, and the sense of doing something useful, have great educational value and are essential to the whole development process. One should therefore ask children to carry out appropriate tasks. These include helping mother with domestic chores, thus permitting the child to feel 'important' and training him/her for harmonious co-operation. Moreover, these activities offer the wise parent countless opportunities to teach many subjects. Such co-operation, on the part of the child, should receive proper appreciation and even a tangible reward.

7. differential education

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

There are two main kinds of differences:

differences of type and of psychological attitudes

differences of psychological and spiritual levels, and of 'gifts'

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

We will consider only the second type of differences here, due to the greater difficulties that they present. First, it is not easy to assess the true level of development of a child or adolescent; and second, it is not easy to offer the appropriate educational aids to the gifted, or to the highly-gifted in the forming of special schools or classes, because these often stir opposition among parents, school authorities and political groups who deem them 'anti-democratic'. On the contrary, one should clearly recognise that it is in the general interest of every community or nation to discover and to offer all the help possible to those who, because of their superior qualities, will become the future leaders of humanity: its scientists, political figures, economists, artists, educators, creators of the new culture and civilisation.

8. education in the school

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

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

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

But much more can be done, as the success of experiments carried out in a number of schools with regard to civic education has demonstrated. This has been accomplished through self-government: the school is modelled as a small town community, in miniature, with a mayor, a community council, a judge and various committees functioning under the discreet and tactful guidance of the instructors. One such school, the School City Pestalozzi in Florence, whose students are drawn from poor sections, has applied this self-government with success for a number of years. The great value of this method as preparation for the social life of the adult is

evident with the countless opportunities it creates for practical application of the required program of study being taught in the regular classes. The choices, decisions and responsibility inherent in the self-government exercise develop some of the essential qualities of the will and constitute the best type of education towards freedom and democracy.

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

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

Exercises in observation, visualisation, mental concentration and creative expression can be amply practised in class. They constitute a good preparation for spiritual education.

9. spiritual education

what is 'spiritual'

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

the first is to distinguish well the essential, eternal values - human and spiritual: kindness, truth, beauty, love, wisdom - from their historical conditioning, from the traditional ways in which they have been presented and imposed. New presentations can be given to these same truths and values which are appropriate to present and future conditions, and which are attractive to youth because they are readily understood and adapted to their mentality.

the second is to understand that technical education is not an end unto itself and should not be given an intrinsic value, but must be seen as a means to ends that transcend them. They are means to humanitarian and spiritual goals. In such a way, humanistic knowledge and technical

instruction may be integrated harmoniously to establish a synthetic education of the total human being.

two main aspects of spiritual education

the first concerns the meaning of life, its evolutionary development and its aims. These are far wider and higher than is ordinarily assumed. A number of scientists have recently affirmed the reality of evolutionary progress and have correctly noted that it cannot stop at the 'not-to-lofty' stage currently reached by humanity, but must continue toward new and higher levels. The meaning and purpose of existence and the wonderful potential achievements of humanity can be presented in school, using words suitable to the different ages of the students.

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

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

methods of spiritual education

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

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

Adolescence offers to the adult a new opportunity to be of help. The adolescent becomes aware of new physical and emotional impulses and undergoes, at the same time, an idealistic, and sometimes, even a 'mystical' re-awakening that he feels in contrast with the other impulses. This gives him/her a sense of bewilderment and creates conflicts that are difficult to face. Indifference or a critical attitude on the part of parents or educators cause the adolescent to withdraw into himself - or herself, while an attitude of understanding and encouragement can create that communication

and intimacy that will enable him/her to successfully pass through this period of often tense relations, and will encourage a future development and spiritual blooming.

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

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

cultivate the sense of beauty in young people, mainly the aesthetic appreciation of the various aspects of nature: the sky, the sea, mountains, flowers, etc.

cultivate the sense of wonder and admiration.

present young people with human examples of a spiritual life in its various aspects: the great religious figures, geniuses, heroes - not only as warriors and conquerors - but as philosophers, poets, artists, scientists, benefactors and as workers in the humanitarian field.

place the emphasis in all specific religious institutions on the inner, vital, spiritual aspects and meaning of the doctrines, forms and symbols.

wisely adapt all other methods, such as concentration and meditation, for use by young people in order to promote a spiritual life. For adolescents, the teaching of spiritual psychology that favours an understanding of their inner make-up puts emphasis on their essential spiritual nature and on their higher possibilities.

10. meditation in education

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

concentration

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

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

observation

Exercises of careful observation must be adopted in education, both as preliminary training to meditation and for their general usefulness in studying and in all activities. A simple exercise consists of showing a group of objects for a short time and then asking the students to give an accurate description of them, of their dimensions, forms and colours. ² In another similar exercise, a picture is shown to the students for a minute and they are then asked to describe it. The picture is reshown again for half a minute so that they may see what they failed to observe the first time and note their possible errors. This type of exercise should be done in school where the children can write their descriptions to save time, thus gaining practice, at the same time, in written expression.

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

visualisation

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

reflective meditation

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

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

Even here, for the reasons stated above, written answers are preferable. One can suggest writing, both as ideas present themselves during the meditation, and immediately afterward, recording the results and conclusions. Every subject can be used for reflective meditation. Adolescents, for example, can use with benefit the rules concerning right relations, good will, and

² Kipling offers an amusing example in his delightful novel *Kim*, which contains other psychological points of interest as well, including an experience of spiritual realisation.

group activity that are especially suitable, thanks to their simplicity and practicalness. Young people are able to understand their meaning and aims, and can try to apply them in daily life. They are closely related to the emerging characteristics of Unification and Synthesis. The practice of reflective meditation is truly a training in the art of thinking - a way of thinking independently and with originality, and should be encouraged in the family and in the school.

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

prayer

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

receptive meditation

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

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

'[...] a state of balance (equilibrium) and of harmony should be obtained by means of a natural, progressive discipline that begins from early childhood. We must still accept and apply the axioms that to cultivate the habit of silence is an integral part of all true education; and that children, far from considering a request for silence as an unnatural and intolerable imposition, have an innate bent for quiet. In order to recognise this, it is enough to take part in a period of silence in a Montessori school; the curtains are drawn, the signal is given and every little face is lowered while a serene calm descends on the children. It is truly silence and not drowsiness. No attempt is made to suggest a meditation theme, and yet something very similar to meditation takes place, because, when the voice of the teacher calls the children by name, one by one, into the adjoining room, they come as beings who have learned a wonderful and blissful secret. There is something deep in their joyous eyes, something more than just health and physical peace in all their behaviour. A strange beauty, a freshness similar to the morning dew, seems to have enriched the natural, child-like vitality and charm, already so delightful in and of themselves.'³

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

³ See also: M. Montessori: *The Secret of childhood*. ed. Garzanti.

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

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

creative meditation

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

The application to everyday life of these indications concerning meditation in education can furthermore lead to:

establishing of right relations

in the family context, particularly between parents and children, and among the children themselves. These relationships are especially tense at the present time, for reasons already stated.

a serious scholastic problem is the establishment of right harmonious and constructive relationships between teachers and pupils.

the relationships among the students themselves, though generally smoother, offer frequent occasions for individual and group conflicts, and the training towards co-operation, by means of group work, is therefore particularly useful. The secondary school programs should include instruction in the practice of right relations outside the school and in all areas of social life.

good will is an essential element in fostering right motivation, and is particularly necessary for counter-balancing the separative and egoistic use of the will. It must be given the greatest importance in education; first, in its aspect of a courteous and kind disposition towards others, and second, even more in the active and dynamic quality of the will itself.

group activity is at the root of co-operation, in the family as in school. Social service offers, for example, a wider field of action, and the opportunities for such service must be offered during the school years.

THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND SUPER-GIFTED CHILDREN⁴

Roberto Assagioli, M.D.

introduction

It might seem superfluous to emphasise the importance of recognising gifted children, of educating them with special care, and of working out the ways and means of such education. But the fact is that, in spite of the great interest aroused by these problems — resulting recently in interesting experimentation and a number of studies, particularly in America (in many countries there has been practically no activity in this direction) - very much more can and should be done.⁵ Some of the principles involved and the methods used call for careful examination and frank discussion.

The gifted, and particularly those among them who are super-gifted, differ widely from each other and require correspondingly diverse handling. As a first broad approximation they can be divided into two groups:

Those who are gifted in a general or multiple way, that is, who demonstrate a marked superiority over the average in all or in several fields. They are usually healthy, strong and sure of themselves. Their education should not present specific difficulties; the problem is, rather, to offer them the most favourable conditions for self-development and the utilisation of their gifts. (These conditions will be considered later.) There is perhaps one particular direction in which they do need help and guidance - the choice of which of their various talents should receive special training, so that they may avoid indecision, delays and a wasteful scattering of energies.

The second group is different and presents difficult educational problems. It comprises those possessing a specific gift so exceptional as to border upon or enter the field of genius, but having side by side with it serious deficiencies or lack of balance in other aspects of their personalities.

In this group we find young people who have artistic, literary, musical and in some cases mathematical abilities, but are hypersensitive, over-emotional and over-imaginative. They often are physically weak or clumsy, impractical and absentminded. They are thus generally neither understood nor appreciated by parents and teachers, and are apt to be the target of the ridicule or antagonism of their fellow students. Such lack of understanding and appreciation, and the consequent ineptitude in dealing with these young people, are the cause of much suffering, despondency and despair; or of revolt in many cases, and in others even of deviations or perversions. Among the many well-known instances of this kind we may mention Baudelaire, Verlaine, Strindberg and Kafka.

In other cases adults, recognising and appreciating the special gift, often endeavour to force its cultivation. Their aim is to produce an infant prodigy as a musician, a precocious mathematician or scientist, without taking into consideration the injurious consequences of such lopsided

4. Part of this article is contained in the pamphlet *Psychosynthesis in Education*. It is included here in order to present a whole picture.

2. A clear exposition and comprehensive survey is contained in *Educating Gifted Children*, by Robert F. DeHaan and Robert J. Havighurst. The University of Chicago Press, 1957.

development. This sometimes means an actual exploitation, either by the family - due to vanity, ambition or financial greed - or by the community. At present - owing to the rude awakening, by the Sputnik, of the Western powers from a false sense of security and technical superiority - we are witnessing a frantic spotting and high-pressure training of young people whose gifts are particularly applicable to physics, chemistry, mathematics and applied technology. But even outside this field there has been and there is an excessive tendency in modern life towards specialisation and over-valuing of practical efficiency. In order to counteract this trend a well-rounded, harmonious and integrated education is necessary, as the best educators have recognised. Such education is doubly required in the case of gifted young people.

There is another and even more important reason that should induce us to do our utmost on behalf of these gifted children: the realisation of how precious they are to humanity! In our present period of transition and planetary crisis we are urgently in need of individuals who are superior to the average, intellectually as well as morally. They are the ones on whose shoulders, in the future, will lie the responsibility of guiding the disoriented and distressed peoples of the world, and this they will have to do not only on behalf of the blind and restless masses, but also for the intelligentsia, many of whom today lack vision, are super-critical, negative, desperate and bitter. Our one great hope is our superior children, who will lead humanity to a brighter future, who will be the inaugurators of a new civilisation and a new culture more in accord with the needs and requirements of the new era. Our gifted children of today will tomorrow be our scientists, authors, artists, politicians, economists and teachers.

The more intelligent and the more effective the help we now give them, the sooner and the better will they be able to develop their precious talents and make full use of them for the benefit of humanity.

What has been done about all this so far? A good start has been made, particularly in the U.S.A., with special classes, accelerated and enriched courses, and a few schools for 'gifted children'* The American Association for Gifted Children (15 Gramercy Park, New York City) is active in publicising the importance and urgency of giving such children the most suitable education and, particularly, in drawing the attention of teachers and parents to these problems.

These efforts are valuable and praiseworthy, and they should be extended to include every part of the world, adapting the methods used to the psychology of the respective countries; that is, to the various characteristics which distinguish one nation from another, and also to the conditions under which they live. However, what is being done is not adequate either in extent or in scope. 'Not more than 5% of our country's high schools now employ systematic programs to encourage superior students to develop their academic potential'.⁶

Moreover, the great need for a special type of education shows itself in pupils who are from eleven to eighteen years old. It is during these years that a child's evolutionary level manifests itself with clarity. These are not only years when exceptional gifts become apparent, but when under inner stress and strain, the 'personality' is being formed in all the young. This difficulty is considerably enhanced in superior children, because the richness of their natures and endowments complicates the process of their psychosynthesis.

6. Conference Report on the Identification and Education of the Academic Talented Student in the American Secondary School, N.E.A., 1958. p. 4

the super-gifted child

The existing special schools, classes and courses seek within the existing framework of education to meet the needs of gifted children (estimated at 10% of the school population), but the system is not adapted to the smaller number of the really super-gifted children (described by Drs. De Haan and Havighurst in *Educating Gifted Children* as 'the extremely gifted - the 1/10th of 1% of public school children'). Their superiority lies not only in some specific talent but often in their outstanding moral and spiritual qualities. Such young people need a very special type of education, extremely 'individual,' and their teachers must be of a correspondingly high personal calibre and educational competence. Such a difficult task can best be accomplished in Educational Centres or Institutes dedicated to this specific purpose.

These are the reasons that impel us to present the need for the creation of Centres for the Education of Super-Gifted Children, the outline of which follows. Such a Centre will not officially bear this name, and nothing in it should indicate to the pupils that they are considered 'superior.' It will be for them simply a college in which modern and 'active' methods of education will be used and an international spirit fostered. They will also be offered varied opportunities to meet children and youths outside the Centre and to co-operate in activities for the benefit of the community.

It is impossible to outline a complete educational program here, but we can enumerate the main points that we consider particularly appropriate for the exceptionally gifted.

integrating education

This has two goals in view:

- a. An harmonious and well-balanced development of all aspects of the human being: physical, emotional, imaginative, mental, intuitive, spiritual.
- b. The integration of these characteristics into an organic synthesis, into a 'personality' that is Self-conscious and 'well constructed' (spiritual psychosynthesis).

The danger to avoid is that of over-specialisation, of exploiting the specific talent with which the child may be gifted. The more a child has a specialised talent, the more he needs to develop also other functions.

Often there is unbalance and one must apply the principle of psycho-synthesis, of harmonious integration, and help him to become a fully functioning, whole being.

2. employment of active methods and expressive techniques

The pupils should take an active part in the processes of education. They should be encouraged and guided to learn by doing. This activity on their part is twofold:

Action that aims at learning, as much as possible, through personal application and experimentation, that which humanity has already achieved, both in the field of knowledge and in regard to the mastery of the forces of nature.

Creative manifestation of the pupil's own personality, of his own capacities and inner life, through the use of various expressive techniques, such as speech and drama, writing, drawing and painting, modelling and sculpture, dance, and the composition and performance of music: or the carrying out of research, problem solving and experimenting by scientifically inclined students.

3. differentiated education

In consideration of the great diversities of human beings (independent of the differences of I.Q.), it is obvious that education should take this diversify into full account and should be 'individualised' as far as possible. This means that, to really educate, one must apply different methods according to the special character, needs and problems of each pupil. The most marked diversities are those deriving from the different psychological types (such as extrovert and introvert; sensorial, emotional, mental, intuitive, and their several combinations); and those that derive from the special compound of physical, psychological and spiritual elements which make a unique being out of each person.

Differentiated education is based upon two fundamentals which at first seem to be opposites, but which can and should complement each other. A balanced application of each requires great ability on the part of the teacher. He must, after due recognition, adapt his methods to the psychological type to which each pupil belongs, while at the same time he must try to correct and even eliminate, as far as possible, the one-sidedness and shortcomings of each type, with the objective of attaining an harmonious synthesis of the personality.

Added to the typological diversities that are due to the pupil's make-up, there are the diversities of a dynamic nature which express the different individual 'rhythms': rhythms in the development of the various capacities, and rhythms of learning and of action. These rhythms must be observed and taken into consideration. This is true in relation to the education of all young people, but particularly so in regard to the gifted and the exceptional ones.

4. physical education

Gifted children are especially in need of physical education in order to balance their mental and imaginative activities that are often excessive, and to help them to 'keep their feet on the ground.' What is generally done in this respect is inadequate or ill suited. A few hours per week of gymnastics or participation in strenuous competitive sports will not solve the problem. What proves really helpful is direct and prolonged contact with nature. For this reason, the 'Educational Centre' should be located in the country, and be in some respects similar to an agricultural college or colony. The life at the Centre should be characterised, to a certain degree, by 'natural living.' The pupils should work in the garden and the orchard and raise small animals. These activities would also offer many good opportunities of 'learning by doing.'

A more specific kind of physical education, bio – psychosynthesis, consists of methods of rhythmical movements, both regulated and free, which enable one to acquire a proper awareness, control and command of one's body. There are several good methods of this kind, for instance that of Dalcroze. Also, appropriate games in the open are useful for the same purpose.

5. intellectual education

This will not be based on memorisation - as unfortunately is still too often the case - but on the active training and use of the mind. The pupils will not be asked to study and repeat, almost verbatim, the contents of textbooks; instead, they will be taught to find out for themselves what they need to learn by the intelligent consultation of textbooks, treatises, grammars, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, etc.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the science that is most important to man: psychology. Many of the most significant facts and laws of the psychological life, if presented in a living, humanistic way, that is, referred to their own experience and problems, can be easily grasped by boys and girls of high school age. They can also be trained to develop, use and control their minds through well graduated exercises of concentration, reflection and meditation.

6. education of the imagination and the peeling nature

Imagination is of great importance in human life and has more influence than is generally recognised; therefore it should receive particular attention. The training could include exercises of visualisation, creative imagination, etc., so that the young people will gradually learn how to control and rightly use this precious function which, if not constructively applied, often has harmful and even dangerous effects.

The control and utilisation of the emotional energies and the development of a finer sensitivity will be adequately taught. All the best methods will be used, both those transmitted by the wisdom of the centuries and those based on the latest developments of psychology.

Here we can only briefly mention that every repression and unnecessary restriction should be avoided, but the pupils should be taught how to keep their exuberant emotions and drives within proper bounds and how to transmute and sublimate them.

7. education of the will

The will is the central and most precious power inherent in man, and yet it is the one that has been neglected most, both in family and in school education. One can say that a widespread - even if unconscious - tendency exists to prevent or discourage the development of the will, despite the crying need for greater self-discipline. The oppressive and authoritative methods used in the past have proved ineffective and have, rather, been causes (though not the only ones) of the rebellion against discipline so widespread among modern youths.

It is, therefore, a matter of urgency to encourage and help young people to train and develop their will as a means of self-discipline, as well as of success in life. The methods for this purpose are available. In reality all the previously mentioned aspects of education - physical, mental, emotional, creative, etc. - are indirectly exercises for the development of the will; but they could become more effective if they were consciously used for that purpose also. In addition, there are other specific methods for the development of the different aspects or phases of the will: deliberation, decision, planning and action.

8. spiritual education

Super-gifted children show at a very early age an interest in philosophical, moral and spiritual subjects.⁷ They often possess real intuition and spiritual illumination. Typical, among others, is the case of the English poet, Wordsworth, who added to the title of his famous poem, *Intimations of immortality*, the subtitle, *Remembrances of early childhood*.

These children - as well as all others who at any age put similar questions - have a right to receive adequate answers. Their questions must be taken seriously; one can use such opportunities to instil into them a spiritual conception of life, make them feel the greatness and beauty of the universe and the admirable order that characterises it - a sign that there is a Superior Mind that created it, rules it with wisdom and guides it toward a glorious goal. From this general picture one may gradually proceed to giving them more detailed information, according to one's own faith, but seeing to it that the feeling of wonder and mystery remains with the child. At the same time one must observe and encourage all spontaneous manifestations of a spiritual nature, such as higher aspirations, intuitions and illuminations, that might arise in them. Also, any parapsychological sensitivity they might have and demonstrate should never be denied or ridiculed, but should be explained to the pupil as far as possible and be wisely watched and regulated. But the chief aim of spiritual education is to help the pupil to realise that he - as well as all human beings - is in truth and essentially a Self, a spiritual being, and to make him understand and 'feel' the dignity and value of this great inner reality, showing to him all the opportunities it offers.

9. education in right human relations - inter-individual psychosynthesis

This important aspect of education is, in reality, part of the spiritual education, because to be spiritual does not mean only to be able to transcend the little self in a 'vertical' direction through realisation of the Self and communion with the Supreme Reality. It includes also a 'horizontal' attitude, that is, communion of thought and love and harmonious collaboration with all fellow-creatures. This expansion is achieved through 'concentric circles,' which gradually include ever larger groups, from the family to humanity as a whole. Therefore, education should aim at creating, producing and bringing about:

Right family relations.

The family can be regarded as a 'human cell,' almost as a small 'collective entity.' Here the parents have a difficult and noble task, for which, unfortunately, they are often not prepared. While in some respects their problem may be easier when dealing with highly gifted children, it is in other ways more exacting and difficult.

When parents are not able to cope with such a task they need the help of competent educators. In any case, parents should have the wisdom demonstrated by birds which make their young ones leave the nest when they become able to 'fly with their own wings.' Such a moment obviously arrives earlier than usual in the case of gifted children. This does not mean a sudden detachment from the family but, rather, a gradually widening scope of the youth's human contacts and independent experiences. In certain cases, due to conditions in the family or the particular needs of the child, a more or less prolonged stay in an Educational Institute is advisable or even necessary.

Right relations with others of the same age.

These are necessary in order that the development of the personality may take place in a normal and satisfactory manner. It is no less - rather, even more - unnatural for a child to live all, or most, of the time with adults than it would be for adults of the age of thirty or so to live only with nonagenarians.

Here we find one of the most difficult problems in the education of the gifted, and particularly of the

7. Leta S. Hollingworth has observed that children, even at the early age of six or seven, are interested in the problem of the origin and destiny of man, and ask for rational explanations of life and death. See: *Children Above 180 IQ*. (World Book, 1942, pp. 61-62).

highly gifted child. The company of 'normal' children or youths of their own age does not satisfy them, and reciprocally the 'normal' ones do not understand or appreciate the gifted, and are often hostile to them. Nor does the company of older children constitute a satisfactory solution because in this case also tensions and conflicts of various kinds easily occur.⁸ Therefore, the best solution for such children is to have the company of their equals in a psycho-spiritual sense. This can be achieved to some extent in classes or schools for the gifted, but much better in a special Educational Institute.

Right social and collective relations.

These concern the many groups and communities with which an individual is or becomes connected, and cannot be considered in detail here. The general task of the educator in this respect is that of helping, wisely and appropriately, to distribute the pupils' sense of 'belonging' to each of the various groups. At the present time particular attention should be given to balancing the rightful feeling of national belonging and the natural love for one's country with the respect and appreciation due all the other peoples, and with the wider and higher realisation of human brotherhood and world citizenship. To these wider identifications highly gifted young people are particularly inclined.

The best way to foster such 'planetary consciousness' personal acquaintance between individuals and groups of various countries, particularly when it develops into the deeper and more intimate mutual knowledge and appreciation made possible living and working together. For this reason, as well as for others, an Educational Centre such as we have mentioned would gather pupils from various countries, and all of them would be taught the principal modern languages. The 'natural' method should chiefly be used, that is, the way in which a small child learns to speak and understand its native tongue.⁹

10. the environment and the educators

Since the time of Plato the educative value of a beautiful and harmonious environment has been recognised. Such helpful influence is exercised by natural scenery, by attractive living quarters and by the arts, chiefly music. But most of all it resides in the human and spiritual qualities of the educator. An interesting inquiry concerning the qualities that children consider most desirable and helpful in the personality and behaviour of teachers showed, on analysis of 14.000 replies, the following traits, mentioned in the order of their frequency:

co-operative, democratic attitude

kindliness and consideration for the individual

patience

wide interests

pleasing personal appearance and manner

fairness and impartiality

sense of humour

good disposition and consistent behaviour

interest in pupils' problems

flexibility

use of recognition and praise

unusual proficiency in teaching a particular subject.¹⁰

8. This has been observed and emphasised by various American educators such as Terman, Hollingworth, etc. See: *The Gifted Child*, edited by P. Witty. (D. C. Heath, Boston, pp. 101-103).

9. This has been explained at length in my paper A psychological method for learning languages. *The Gifted Child*, pp. 106 ff. American Association for Gifted Children, New York.

10. *The gifted child*, pp 106 ff. American Association for Gifted Children. New York.

While one cannot, of course, expect an educator to be an ideal person, the aim in the choice and training of the teaching staff for such a Centre would be to ascertain the existence, and promote the development and use, of as many as possible of the qualities listed. In a certain sense the essential problem with gifted children consists in finding and training gifted educators!

Through such 'integral education' highly gifted children would be helped to assume their proper place and to function within the vanguard group of the builders of a new and better civilisation, the creators of a higher culture, the first representatives of a humanity led and pervaded by the Spirit.

ROBERTO ASSAGIOLI

Roberto Assagioli M.D. was born in Venice, Italy in 1888. He spent his boyhood among the narrow canals near the Ca'd'Oro. His parents moved the family to Florence so that Roberto could continue his education at the University of Florence where he received his medical degree specialising in neurology and psychiatry. At the same time, he pursued the study of psychology and philosophy with a particular interest in the work of William James and Henri Bergson. While studying psychoanalysis with Bleuler in Zurich, Assagioli became acquainted with C. G. Jung and they became good friends. At the age of 21, he completed his doctoral dissertation on psychoanalysis.

In his early clinical practice, Assagioli used psychoanalytic techniques, but his vision of the human experience propelled him to reach for a more comprehensive conceptual framework that could include love, wisdom, creativity and will. His position was not that psychoanalysis was an incorrect approach, but rather that it was incomplete, as Freud had not given sufficient weight to the higher aspects of human nature. By 1911, he began to formulate the concept of psychosynthesis and continued to dedicate his entire professional life to this work.

In 1928, Assagioli founded the Institute of Psychosynthesis in Rome. A decade later the Institute was closed by Mussolini's Fascist government, which was critical of Assagioli's Jewish background, his humanitarianism, and his internationalism. In 1940, he was arrested, jailed, and eventually placed in solitary confinement. He transformed this imprisonment into an opportunity to explore the inner realms of consciousness by meditating for hours every day. He shared that never before had he felt such peace; never in his life had he so enjoyed being alive. At the time of his death he was working on a paper about his experience entitled Freedom in jail.

The Institute of Psychosynthesis was re-established in Florence after the war where it is still in operation. During his career he wrote over a hundred articles and essays, many of which have been translated into eight languages. Most well known are his books Psychosynthesis and The act of will. He travelled and spoke extensively throughout Europe and came to the United States for the opening of the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation in New York in 1948. Professionals around the world came to Florence to study with Assagioli.

Assagioli, more than any other western psychotherapist with the possible exception of Jung, explored Eastern approaches and welcomed them into his system as valuable resources for

personal growth. He learned Sanskrit so he could read mystical texts in their original language. Psychosynthesis is a synthesis of eastern traditions and western psychology.

Psychosynthesis, with its holistic approach and its inclusive view of the human being, was far ahead of its time. However, since the new paradigm of transpersonal psychology, psychosynthesis has been a leader in that field. It was Assagioli's vision and courage that brought to the prevailing mechanistic worldview of psychology an approach that included all the dimensions of human experience—physical, emotional, mental and spiritual.

Assagioli was known as a man of true modesty and humility who worked with a selfless dedication. A giant in contemporary psychology, he died in his home in Florence at the age of 86 on August 23, 1974. With his characteristic wisdom, he did not wish for psychosynthesis to be seen as his own personal creation. Instead, he has left us with a living entity and a growing thought form to which many will contribute in the years to come.