

The New Ideal in Education eBook

The New Ideal in Education

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Contents

The New Ideal in Education eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	3
Page 1.....	4
Page 2.....	6
Page 3.....	7
Page 4.....	9
Page 5.....	11
Page 6.....	12
Page 7.....	14
Page 8.....	15
Page 9.....	17

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
Title: The New Ideal In Education		1
		1
THE NEW IDEAL IN EDUCATION.		1
WHY NOT KINGS?		1
THE EDUCATION WHICH MAKES FOR WAR.		2
THE RESULTS OF THE OLD IDEAL.		2
THE EDUCATION WHICH MAKES FOR PEACE.		3
COLLECTIVE WORKS		4
EDUCATION AS AN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIR.		5
MOTHERS, PATRIOTS, AND PRIESTS.		5
THE INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION.		6
TO BRING CHILDREN OF THE WORLD CLOSER TOGETHER.		6
THE INTERNATIONAL CONTROL OF EDUCATION.		8
THE THIRD STAGE OF THE EUROPEAN EDUCATION.		8

Page 1

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THE NEW IDEAL IN EDUCATION

AN ADDRESS GIVEN BEFORE THE LEAGUE OF THE EMPIRE

On July 16th, 1916.

By
Fr. Nicholai Velimirovic, Ph.D.

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THE NEW IDEAL IN EDUCATION.

By Father Nicholai Velimirovic, Ph.D.

"Nature takes sufficient care of our individualistic sense, leaving to Education the care of our panhumanistic sense."

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If we do not want war we must look to the children. There is the only hope and the only wise starting point. It is not without a deep prophetic significance that Christ asked children to come unto Him. In all the world-calamities, in all wars, strifes, religious inquisitions and persecutions, in all the hours of human misery and helplessness, He

has been asking, through centuries, the children to come unto Him. I am sure, if anybody has ears for His voice to-day, amidst the thunderings of guns and passions and revenges, one would hear the same call: Let the children come unto Me!—Not kings and politicians, not journalists and generals, not the grown-up people, but children. And so to-day also, when we ask for a way out of the present world-misery, when we *in profundis* of darkness to-day ask for light, and in sorrow for to-morrow ask for advice and comfort, we must look to the children and Christ.

WHY NOT KINGS?

Why does Christ not ask the kings to come to Him—the kings, and politicians, and journalists, and generals? Because they are too much engaged in a wrong state of things, and because they are greatly responsible themselves for such a wrong state of things, and because consequently it is difficult for them to change their ways, their hearts and their minds. It would be very hard for Napoleon and Pitt to kneel together down before Christ and to embrace each other. It would be almost impossible for Bismarck and Gambetta to walk together. Not less it would be impossible for the Pope and Monsieur Loisy or George Tyrrel to pray in the same bench. Every generation is laden with sins and prejudices. That is the reason why Christ goes only a little way with every generation, and then He becomes tired and asks for a new generation—He calls for children. Christ is always new and fresh as children are. Every generation is spoiled and corrupted by long living and struggling.

Page 2

But for a new generation the world is quite a new wonder. God is shown only to those for whom the world is a new thing, a wonder. No one, who does not admire this world as a wonder, can find God. For the old Haeckel no God exists, just because for him no wonder exists. He pretends to know everything. Christ means for him nothing and he means for Christ nothing. Every foolish child, believing in God and in this wonderful world, has more wisdom than the materialistic professor from Germany. Christ is getting tired of an old generation. Sadly He calls for a new one—for children. In our distress to-day, I think, we should multiply His voice, calling for Him, for a new generation and for a new education.

THE EDUCATION WHICH MAKES FOR WAR.

It is called by a very attractive name, the *individualistic* education. The true name of it is selfishness, or egotism. No religion of Asia ever boasted of having been the birthplace of such an education. It is born in the heart of Europe, in Germany. It was brought up by Schopenhauer and Goethe. It was subsequently supported by the German biologists, by the musicians, sculptors, philosophers, poets, soldiers, socialists and priests, by the wisest and by the madmen beyond the Rhine. Unfortunately France, Russia and even Great Britain have not been quite exempt from this pernicious theory of individualistic education.

The sophistic theories of Athens of old have been renewed in Central Europe—the individuum is the ultimate aim of education. A human individuum is of limitless worth, said the German interpreters of the New Testament. Materialistic science, contradicting itself, agreed on that point with modern theology. Art, in all its branches, presented itself as the sole expression of one individuum, *i.e.*, of the artist. The modern socialism, contradicting its own name, supported individualism very strongly in every department of human activity. Consequently modern Pedagogy, based upon the general tendencies, put up the same individualistic ideal as the aim to be achieved by the schools, church, state, and by many other social institutions.

THE RESULTS OF THE OLD IDEAL.

War is the result of the old ideal of education. I call it old because it is over for ever, I hope, with this war. The old European ideal of education was so called individualistic. This ideal was supported equally by the churches and by science and art. Extreme individualism, developed in Germany more than in any other country, resulted in pride, pride resulted in materialism, materialism in pessimism. Put upon a dangerous and false base every evil result followed quite naturally. If my poor personality is of limitless value, without any effort and merit of my own, why should not I be proud? If the aim of the world's history is to produce some few genial personalities, as Carlyle taught, why should

Page 3

not I think that I am such a personality for my own generation, and why should I not be proud of that? Once filled with pride I will soon be filled also with contempt for other men. Selfishness and denial of God will follow my pride; this is called by a scientific word materialism. Being a materialist, as long as I possess a certain amount of intellectual and physical strength, I will be proud of myself. But as soon as my body or spirit are affected by any illness (it may be only a headache or toothache), I will plunge into a dark pessimism, always the shadow and the end of materialism. Modern Germany was, as you know, the hearth of individualism, and consequently also of pride, materialism, atheism and pessimism. The worship of strong personalities (to-day: Kaiser William and Hindenburg) holds the whole of Germany in unity during this war, which is not the case either in France or in Great Britain or Russia, where the common cause inspires the unity.

THE EDUCATION WHICH MAKES FOR PEACE.

When will wars really stop in the world's history? As soon as a new ideal of education is realised. What is this new ideal of education which makes for peace? I will give it in one word: *Panhumanism*. This word includes all I wish to say.

Individualism means a brick, Panhumanism means a building. Even the greatest individuality (may it be Caesar, or Raphael, or Luther) is no more than a brick in the panhuman building of history. The lives of individuals are only the points, whereas the life of mankind is a form, a deep, high and large form.

If a great and original individuality were the aim of history, I think history should stop with the first man upon earth, for our first ancestor must have been the most striking individual who ever existed. Men coming after Adam have been like their parents and each other. Kaiser William is not such an interesting and striking a creature by far as the first man was. When Kaiser William opens his mouth to speak, he speaks words that are known. When he moves or sits, when he eats or prays—all that is a *nuance* only of what other people do, all is either from heritage or imitation, and quite an insignificant amount is individual. Whereas every sound that the first man uttered was quite new for the Universe; every movement striking and dramatic; every look of his eyes was discovering new worlds; every joy or sorrow violently felt; every struggle a great accumulation of experiences. And so forth. Well, if one striking individuum is the aim of history, history should close with the death of Adam. But history still continues. Why? Just because not Adam was its aim, but mankind; not one, or two, or ten heroes, but millions of human creatures; not some few great men, but all men, all together, all without exception.

From this point of view we get the true ideal of education. The purpose of education is not to make grand personalities, but to make bricks for the building, *i.e.*, to make suitable members of a collective body and suitable workers of a collective work.

Page 4

COLLECTIVE WORKS

Are greater than personal works. A pupil from the old, individualistic school would object:

—And what do you think of the work of Ibsen?

I: I think it is incomparably smaller than the ancient Scandinavian legends.

He: Do you not grant that Alfred the Great was the real creator of the English Kingdom?

I: Never. Millions and millions of human creatures are built into this building that we call England, or English history, or English civilisation.

He: And what about the man who built St. Paul's Cathedral?

I: It is a collective work, as are all the great works that have been done. The architecture of St. Paul's is one of the ancient styles, and no style in architecture was ever invented or created by one person, but by generations and generations.

He: And what about Victor Hugo and Milton? Are they not great poets?

I: Yes, they are if compared with certain minor poets, but they are not great if compared with the popular poetry of India or Greece. Mahabarata, the Koran, and Zend-Avesta, and the Bible, are products of collective efforts—therefore they are superior to every personal effort.

He: Do you not appreciate the great economists and what they did for the household, and common-wealth in general?

I: Certainly I do; but their work is too much overestimated. Not a handful of economic writers, like Adam Smith and Marx, but the common genius of generations and generations arranged the house, set the furniture, created the cooking, constructed towns, invented plays and enjoyments, customs, language, and so forth.

He: You agree, I think, that Shaljapin and Caruso have wonderful voices, don't you?

I: Yes, I agree. But don't you agree that a choir of millions of human voices would be something much more striking and wonderful than any solo singer since the beginning of time?

He: Don't you believe in the wisdom of wise men like Kant and Spencer?

I: No, I don't. I think there is incomparably more healthy and more applicable wisdom in the popular sayings, proverbs, parables, and tales of the nations, cultivated and

uncultivated, in Macedonia, Armenia, Ceylon, New Zealand, Japan, &c., than in some dozen of the greatest thinkers of Europe.

He: Who is then in your opinion a great man?

I: Only a good man is a great man to me, who is conscious that he is a cell in the panhuman organism, or a brick in the building of human history. Such a man is more a man of truth and of the future than any conqueror, who thinks that a hundred millions of people and hundreds of years have waited just for him and his guidance, his work, or his wisdom.

That is what I would say to a pupil of individualism in education. And at the end I would remind him of Christ and His call after the children, and of the new ideal of education, of panhumanism which stands over individualism, and of the collective work of people which stands over every individual work and merit.

Page 5

EDUCATION AS AN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIR.

It is quite surprising and humiliating that other things can be discussed and settled as international affairs, before education. Yet you have hundreds of things regulated by international laws, and among these hundred things education is not yet reckoned. You have the International Institution of the Red Cross, international laws on trade, fishery, travel, copyright, political crimes, barbarities in war-time, &c. But this war shows quite clearly that education—before anything else—should be a matter of international consideration and regulation. Behold, how illusory are all international restrictions when the education of a nation is quite excluded from any control! When the Nietzschean education of Germany teaches the German youth to despise all neighbours, all nations and races as inferior ones, how could you expect the Germans to respect the laws and regulations about Belgium, and submarines—and Zeppelin-warfare, and use of the dum-dum bullets and of poisonous gases?

If there is anything to be learned from this war it is doubtless this: The education of youth in all the countries of the world must become an international affair of the very first importance.

THE RUSSIAN TSAR, MR. CARNEGIE AND NOBEL.

The Russian Tsar suggested the Peace Conference of The Hague. Mr. Carnegie built a wonderful Hall of Peace there, formed several commissions for the investigation of war cruelties during the Balkan Wars, and founded many public libraries for the instruction of the poor. The noble Nobel left his big fortune for the support of the best works of literature or science having as their aim the general good of mankind. If I were either the Russian Tsar or Mr. Carnegie or Professor Nobel I would do neither of the three mentioned things, but I would give suggestions and material support to an International Board of Education.

That is the point to start with in the consolidation of the World. I am sorry to say that no one of these three great friends of mankind listens to the prophetic words of Christ: Let children come unto me! and that no one thought that no great social reform and no real philanthropic foundation of mankind is possible to realise—yea, even to start—otherwise than through the children. The Peace Conference, being rather a law court than anything else, is beaten by the uncontrolled warlike education of the German nation. Carnegie's books have been read by grown-up people who had already got a direction in life, and Carnegie's Hall of Peace in The Hague is still an office without business. Nobel's prize was given also to some German professors who are responsible for the new pedagogy in Germany.

MOTHERS, PATRIOTS, AND PRIESTS.

Page 6

These three can be the best possible supporters or the worst enemies of your educational scheme. Mothers by nature adore their children and excite their individualism. Patriots try to engage the whole heart and imagination of a child for its own country. Priests are asking the whole sympathy of a child for their creed and their church. To be individualistic, to be a patriot and a believer are the quite natural gifts of a healthy person. But maternal love exaggerates very often the individualism of a child and makes it egotistic and selfish; exclusively cultivated patriotism degenerates into chauvinism; and exclusive church education makes a bigot. These three kinds of people (alas! the majority), egotists, chauvinists and bigots, will be against an international scheme of education. But you must say to the sensible mothers: The international education of your child will not kill its individuality, but, on the contrary, will use it to the best advantage for mankind and for itself. You are an enemy of your son if you educate him to be an egotist and egoist. In egotism and egoism one has the worst company in this life, the company which leads to pessimism and disgust of life.

You must say to the sensible patriots: International education approves of patriotic as of a natural inclination; only the new education intends to make a window in every fatherland so that the child may see its neighbours and stretch its hand to greet them.

And you must say to the sensible priests: The international board of education will let every child go to its own church and learn the catechism from its own parish priest; but it will be brought in touch with the children of different creeds, and it will pray with them upon the general ground of all the creeds.

THE INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION.

1. It shall consist of the representatives of all the boards of education in the world.
2. The members of the board shall officially represent their own country.
3. The board will be supported materially by the respective Governments, and it will dispose of a great fortune from private legacies. For all the philanthropists and peacemakers and peace wishers will support such an institution rather than any other in the world.
4. The authority of this board shall be equal to the authority of an international political congress.
5. Its duty will be to control education all over the world, banishing or restricting individualism, egotism, chauvinism and bigotry, and promoting by all means panhumanism by developing the mind for collective work, mutual help, personal goodness and humbleness and social greatness.

**TO BRING CHILDREN OF THE WORLD CLOSER
TOGETHER.**

Page 7

Let them meet as often as possible; I mean the children from England and the children from Serbia, the children from Russia and the children from France. So they will know about each other that they all are human beings, and that they all can smile in friendliness on each other. Let them travel to each other's country; I mean the children from Germany and the children from Italy, the children from Japan and those from Scandinavia. Let them see how every spot on earth is wonderful in its way, and how worthy of love, of patriotism. When will the railway companies and ship companies say: Let the children come to us? When will they arrange the best trains, better than the royal trains, the most commodious and decorated with flowers and flags of different nations and with one special flag of the Children World Union? When the moment comes that the wonderful modern communication begins to help the children to meet each other and to pay visits to each other, at that moment the invention of steam and electricity will justify itself. In transferring the troops and facilitating crime it does not justify itself. Let the word communication be not only for the sake of crime and for the sake of bread; let it be for the sake of peace and of souls.

Let them sing together, everyone in his own tongue; I mean the children from the East and West and North and South. You should have been the other day in the Mansion House when the English and Serbian boys met together, and have listened to the English singing the Serbian and the Serbian singing the English National Anthems, and you would have been fascinated by the sweet revelation of the future world.

Let the children from the East and West and South and North, pray together. Why not? Bring them, thousands of them, to a mountain, upon which our ancestors prayed, and let them at sunset kneel down and sing some common prayer that they all know, or, if they have no such common prayer in their creeds, let them just kneel and silently pray! Such a silent prayer will do more good than any thousand years' old discussion about religion. It is very easy to convince all the children of the world, just because they are children, that they have one Father in Heaven, and that they shall send their prayers to Him. But even if they send their prayers in different directions, they will arrive at the same place. All prayers, whenever and wherever sent, go always the same way.

Let the children from the northern ice and from the tropical heat carry on a correspondence. Millions of letters are written and sent every day, which mean nonsense and evil. The post communication will justify itself much more by bearing the children's mail, with truth and love, than by bearing perfidious diplomatic notes or letters which mean nonsense and evil. One of the unforgettable events in Serbia during this war happened in 1914 on Christmas Day, when an American ship arrived and brought gifts and

Page 8

letters from the children of America to the children of Serbia. This wonderful mail produced the greatest imaginable excitement among the Serbian children. They were busy, very busy for some weeks, reading the friendly letters from so far, and answering them. I am sure they will forget many sad events of the war, but they never can forget this wonderful and surprising mail, which made for peace more than any of the costly commissions for the investigation of war cruelties, or any of Carnegie's empty, although wonderful, luxurious halls of peace.

Let the children, the representatives of all the countries in the world, come to The Hague to hold the International Peace Congress. The programme of this Congress should be: Singing, playing, dancing, smiling and praying. They will meet as friends and speak every one in his native language, and they will understand each other very well as friends always understand each other. This Children's Hague Conference will promote the world peace more than The Hague Conference composed of enemies, mutually annoying themselves by obligatory politeness and bad French.

But, you will ask, who is going to arrange and execute all this? The International Board of Education.

But, you will say, it will be very expensive? Yes, but, supposing it will be as expensive as the war, for which of the two do you prefer to give money—for such a salvatory experiment or for the war? Yet, I am sure of one thing, it will cost less than a war.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTROL OF EDUCATION.

If you do not watch the education of a country all other international precautions for peace and mutual understanding will be wholly illusory.

An International Board of Education should control the programmes of education of all countries. It should watch that one principle prevails in every educational programme, *i.e.*, the principle of Panhumanism. It should not interfere as to the form of education, no, far from that, but look to the unity of the principle of education upon the whole globe. It should carefully avoid all the watchwords which make for separations and wars, like "Germany, Germany over *all*!" The child must love its own country, but it must know also that its country is not the thing over all other things. It must be taught that God and mankind are something which stands above its country.

It should control not only the governmental programmes of education, but it should also watch the mothers, patriots and priests. It should try to have these three world-powers not for the enemies but for the allies and missionaries of a higher, and a panhuman education.

THE THIRD STAGE OF THE EUROPEAN EDUCATION.

There are three stages of the Christian European education:—

1. Compulsory obedience. This was in the Middle Ages when men were compelled to do the common work by the authority of the church and nobility.

Page 9

2. The experiment with Individualism. This has been since the Renaissance, especially since Rousseau—a personality put as the centre and aim of education, the abhorrence of every compulsion whatsoever.

3. Voluntary Obedience. It is the education of tomorrow. It is a stage where all men will see their mission in their collective work, and therefore voluntarily enchain themselves into the panhuman organism, plunging their imaginative, pointlike personalities into a big and mystic personality of mankind.

The Voluntary Obedience will mean a voluntary slavery. We are going to be slaves again, but not by royal or papal compulsion, but by our good will; we are going to be slaves as the parts of a body are slaves and servants of each other, and as the bricks are slaves and servants of a great building. We are going to be “prisoners of the Lord,” as St. Paul says, instead of being as now the prisoners of our dreams, imaginations and ambitions.

This war will close a period of a wrong education, and will open a period of a right one. It will open our eyes that we may see how we all are one, and how the greatest of us is nothing else than a bigger cell in the immense organism of history.

There is no hope for the future in the politicians, or generals, now struggling. The only hope and guarantee lies in the children. A new education in *personal goodness* making for *social greatness* is the only salutary war. Therefore, let us look to the children!