

THE ABSORBANT MIND

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CHAPTER I

THE CHILD'S PART IN WORLD RECONSTRUCTION

Mankind – from the mental point of view – is far below the level that civilization claims to have reached.

Humanity is still far from that stage of maturity needed for the realization of its aspirations, for the construction, that is, of a harmonious and a peaceful society and the elimination of wars. Men are not yet ready to shape their own destinies; to control and direct world events, of which – instead – they become the victims.

Education is only thought of as an education of the mind without trying to draw upon any new vitalizing and constructive forces. Noble ideals and high standards we have always had. They form a great part of what we teach. Yet warfare and strife show no signs of abating. If help and salvation are to come, they can only come from the children, for the children are the makers of men.

The child is endowed with unknown powers, which can guide us to a radiant future. If what we really want is a New World, the education must make its aim the development of these hidden possibilities.

Education must be understood as a help to the unfolding of the child's inborn psychic powers. This means that we cannot use the orthodox methods of teaching, which depends on talk.

WASTED RICHES

Tiny children are gifted with a psychic nature peculiar to them. The child's true constructive energy, a dynamic power, has remained unnoticed for thousands of years. Men of our day make progress after progress in civilized life, without noticing the treasures that lie hidden in the psychic world of infancy.

THE VITAL YEARS

By the age of three the child has already laid down the foundations of learning as a human being, and only then does he need the help of special scholastic information. So great are the conquests he has made by then that the child who goes to school at three is already a little man.

Education is not something which the teacher does, but that is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but in virtue of experiences in which the child acts on his environment. The teacher's task is not to talk, but to prepare and arrange a series of motives for cultural activity in a special environment [prepared for the child. Individual activity is the one factor that stimulates and produces development.

NEW MAN

Any reform in education must be based on the personality of man. Man himself should become the centre of education.

Teachers can only help the work going on as servants wait upon a master. They then become witnesses to the development of the human soul; the emergence of the New Man, who will no longer be the victim of events but, thanks to the clarity of vision, will become able to direct and to mould the future of mankind.

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION FOR LIFE

Education must become co-extensive with life; the cultural point of education must be the defence of life. The education of our day is rich in methods, aims and social ends, but it takes no account of life itself. Not one method of education proposes to help the individual from birth and to protect his development. Education, as today received, is something separated both from biological and social life. All who enter the educational world tend to be cut off from society. If the spirit of an undergraduate reacts to social injustice, or to political questions concerning deeply felt truths, the order of authority goes out that young people must avoid politics and concentrate on their studies.

What happens then is that young people who leave the universities can no longer judge the problems of the age in which they live, and their capacity for engaging usefully in social work has been diminished.

SOCIETY AND THE TASK OF EDUCATION

The concept of an education centred upon the care of the living being alters all previous ideas.

Resting no longer on a curriculum, or a timetable, education must conform to the facts of human life. In the light of this conviction, the education of the newly born becomes suddenly of the first importance.

Instead of education remaining aloof and ignored by society, it must acquire the authority to rule over society. The society's first step must be to allocate a higher proportion of its wealth to education. It is for society as a whole to take over conscientiously the responsibility of education, while education in its turn will liberally compensate society by the benefit resulting from its progress.

Education so conceived no longer matters only to children and their parents, but also to the state and to international relationships.

CHILDREN AS THE MAKERS OF MEN

Instead of leaving everything to chance, The child's growth should be a matter for scientific care and attention. This means that something more is needed than mere physical hygiene. Just as physical hygiene wards off injuries to his body, so we need mental hygiene to protect his mind and soul from harm.

The child like the labourer, is a toiler, and the aim of his work is to make a man. The parents, it is

True, provide the means essential to his life and creative activity, but the social problem in his regard is even more important, for the fruits of his labour are not first material things, but he is fashioning humanity itself. Seen in this way, the society must heed the child, recognise his rights and provide for his needs.

When we speak of education we are proclaiming a revolution, one in which everything we know today will be transformed, one from which violence is wholly excluded.

CHAPTER III

THE PERIODS OF GROWTH

The child undergoes the following successive phases of development:-

1. From birth to six years (sub-phases: from birth to three and three to six)
2. From six to twelve years.

3. From twelve to eighteen years (sub-phases: twelve to fifteen and fifteen to eighteen)

In the first sub-phase, the child has a type of mind that the adult cannot approach. In other words,

The adult cannot exert upon the child any direct influence.

In the second sub-phase the mental type is still the same, but in some ways the child begins to become susceptible to adult influence. During this period the personality undergoes great changes.

From six to twelve is a period of growth unaccompanied by other change. The child is calm and happy. Mentally he is in a state of health, strength and assures stability. This stability, mental and physical, is the most conspicuous characteristic of later childhood.

Period from six to twelve is held to be suitable for giving children their first basic ideas of culture. Throughout this whole period, he is constant in his work and strong in health., That is why it is thought to be the best time for receiving culture.

After the twelfth year of age, a higher kind of schooling begins. From twelve to eighteen there

Are also physical changes, the body reaching its full maturity. Man after eighteen is fully developed and no further marked changes occur in him. He grows only in age.

THE CREATIVE PERIOD

The most important period of life is not the age of university studies, but the first one, the period

From birth to the age of six. For that is the time when man's intelligence itself, his greatest implement, is being formed; not only his intelligence but the full totality of his physical power.

The wonderful step taken by the baby is to pass from nothing to something. This wonderful work is not the product of conscious intention. The sense if willing does not exist in the child; both knowledge and will have to be created.

THE ABSORBANT MIND

The child has an intelligence of unconscious type, and that is what brings about his marvelous progress. It begins with knowledge of its surroundings. The child absorbs these impressions not with his mind but with his life itself. The child absorbs knowledge directly with his psychic life. It is the child's way of learning. He learns everything without knowing he is learning it, and in doing so he passes

little by little by little from the unconscious to the conscious, treading always in the path of joy and love.

The child is directed by a mysterious power, great and wonderful, that he incarnates little by little.

In this way he becomes a man. He does it with his hands, by experience, first in plan and then in work. The hands are the instruments of man's intelligence.

The child constructs his mind step by step till it becomes possessed of memory, the power to understand the ability to think.

Our work as adults does not consist in teaching, but in helping the infant mind in its work of development. We would render a great service to mankind if we could help the human being to acquire knowledge without fatigue; if people could find themselves replete with information without knowing how they came by it – as it were by magic! It is true that all the works of nature are, perhaps, magical and mysterious.

The discovery that the child has a mind able to absorb on his own account produces a revolution in education. We now can understand easily why the first period in human development, in which character is formed, is the most important. At no other age has the child greater need of an intelligent help and any obstacle that impedes his creative work will lessen the chance he has of achieving perfection. The child is endowed with great creative energies, which are of their nature so fragile as to need a loving and intelligent defence. The new path on which education has been put is to help the mind in its process of development, to aid its energies and strengthen its many powers.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW PATH

Science is now beginning to take a different direction. Whether it be in the study of man, or of other forms of life, the focus of interest is on the younger specimens, and even on their origins. Something like a new philosophy is springing up in a philosophy which is far from being wholly theoretical

The whole life of the child is an advance towards a greater completeness. From this we may infer that the child will enjoy doing the work needed to complete himself. The child's life is one in which work – the doing of one's duty – begets joy and happiness.

THE TWO LIVES

The child is born of love, and love is his natural origin. Nature inspires both parents with love for their little one's, and this love is not something artificial. The love we find in infancy shows what kind of love should reign ideally in the grown-up world: a love able, of its own nature, to sacrifice the dedication of one's own ego, of one's self, to the service of others. In the depth of their love, all parents renounce their own lives to dedicate them to their children. And this devotion is natural to them and does not feel sacrificial.

CHAPTER V

THE MIRACLE OF CREATION

From the chaotic state of day's world, we might well infer that what is needed to carry out their function has not yet been evolved. For lack of it, we have nothing that acts simultaneously on the whole social body, and guides it to harmony. Democracy, which is civilization's highest form of government, permits everyone to vote, and so choose the Head of Affairs. To rule is the most difficult task of all, and requires a higher specialization than any. So the question here is not of election, but of being trained and suited to the work. Whoever directs others must have transformed himself. No one can ever be a leader, or a guide, who has not been prepared for that work. It seems to be nature's way, the plan she follows in all her works.

The passage from nothing to the complex body of the fully-grown individual is one of the constant miracles of life.

To influence society we must turn our attention to childhood, for, it is the little ones who are building mankind and they can work only on the materials we give them.

The immense influence that education can exert through children, has the environment for its instrument for the child absorbs his environment, takes everything from it, and incarnates it in himself. With this unlimited possibility, he can well be the transformer of humanity. The child brings us a great hope and a new vision.

There is much that teachers can do to bring humanity to a deeper understanding, to a higher well-being, and to a greater spirituality.

PSYCHO-EMBRYONIC LIFE

The child, from birth, must be regarded as a being possessed of an important mental life, and we must treat him accordingly. As life is psychic, every species

of living thing is endowed in some measure with psychic energy, with a certain kind of psychology, however primitive the creature may be.

The child, after he is born, has to incorporate into his life all the practices of his social group. Instead of being born possesses of them, he has to absorb them from outside himself. The vital task of infancy is this work of adaptation, which takes the place of hereditary "behaviour patterns".

BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The child's organs are formed after the nervous centre, in readiness for their work. The psychic patterns of behaviour have to be laid down before he begins to move. Thus the starting point of infantile mobility is not motor, but mental.

The most important side of human development is the mental side, for, man's movements have to be organised according to the guidance and dictation of his mental life. Intelligence is what distinguishes man from animals, and the building up of intelligence is the first thing to occur. Everything else waits upon it. The human being grows first in intelligence, while the remainder of development takes its form and mode of action entirely from the life of his mind.

Man, unlike the animals, is not born with movements already coordinated; he has to shape and coordinate his own movements. Nor has he even a predetermined aim; this, too, he must find for himself. Man brings no abilities with him into the world, yet his gifts are unsurpassed in the learning of movements. Of skilled movements he can acquire the most varied imaginable: those of the craftsman, the acrobat, the dancer, the musician and of champions in many fields of sport. But none of these come from a mere ripening of the organs of movement. It is always a matter of experience in action; of practice; in other words, of education. Every person is the author of his own skills, yet the physical constitution with which he starts is the same. It is the man himself who produces his own perfectioinment.

In man the mental side develops first. The organs wait as long as necessary for this development to occur, and then the mind makes use of them. But when the organ come into action, for the mental development begins to occur, but always with the aid of movements made in the course of environmental experience. Therefore, it happens that if a child is prevented from using his powers of movement as soon as they are ready, this child's mental development is distracted. Mental development, however, has no limits.

We can speak of one method of education, that which follows the natural unfolding of man. All babies have the same psychological needs in attuning to human stature. life.

CHAPTER VI

EMBRIOLOGY AND BEHAVIOUR

The embryo, in fact, can be subjected to influences, which are capable of working changes in it. That

Means that man by acting on the embryo can experimentally alter the course of life. The importance of the embryo lies in the fact that it has not yet fully constructed its organs, and so can be made to change them with relative ease. This is the secret of which man has now become possessed. A variety of bees had

been produced without any stings, and able to collect much more honey than ordinary bees. In the same way many plants have begun to yield more fruit or to develop stems without thorns. Others produce roots far richer in food value, or some already rich have ceased to be poisonous. The best known results are in the improvement of blossoms. Man's intervention now extends beyond the dry land, to the animal and vegetable kingdom which exists under water.

Hence we can say that man, by using his intelligence, has been able to beautify and enrich the earth, to see the purpose of man's life on earth, and to understand that man himself is one of the great cosmic forces of the universe. With the harvest of intelligence man is seen, in fact, as the continuer of creation. By exercising control over life itself, he helps to perfect it.

From this fresh point of view, the purposes of the living seem to be related rather to the doing of work needed by the environment. It is almost as if the living were agents of creation, charged each with a particular task. The harmony of nature on the earth's surface is produced by the efforts of countless human beings, each of which has its own duties. These forms of behaviour serve purposes far beyond the mere ministering of each of its vital needs.

That life could have a function connected with the earth, had already been recognized by geologists of the last century. They have shown the influence of animal endeavour in the very building up of the world's surface itself. The remains of marine animals were found at rock levels so high as those of the Himalayas or the Alps. They were also found in deposits of material washed down by water from the mountaintops.

Life is not present on the earth merely to preserve its own existence, but to carry on a process vital to all creation, and therefore necessary to every thing that lives.

ONE PLAN, ONE METHOD

There exists, among other forces, a force of harmony uniting the efforts of all, so that they work towards a common end. So, in the child, besides the vital impulse to create himself, and to become perfect, there must be yet another purpose, a duty to fulfil in harmony, something he has to do in the service of a united whole.

It is reasonable to suppose that the child, at birth, bears within himself constructive possibilities that must unfold by activity in its environment. The child has in himself potentialities that determine its development, and this will take its characteristics from the world about him.

It is amazing to find that the child brings with him into the world none of the acquisitions of his people and race, not even those of his family, but that he himself has to construct all these! Everybody has the same appearance; he is motionless, empty and insignificant. Yet there exists in this inert being a global power, a "human creative essence", which drives him to form a man of his time, a man of his civilization. And in this faculty of absorption that he possesses, he follows laws of growth that are universal for the whole of mankind. His duty is to realise the present stage of an evolving society, a society which comes from an antiquity lost in the hundreds and thousands of years that have gone, and which has a future before it of thousands and perhaps millions of years.

CHAPTER VII

THE SPIRITUAL EMBRYO

The human species has a double embryonic life – pre-natal and post-natal; one in the physical sphere and the other in the psychological sphere. This post-natal work is a constructive activity which is carried on in what may be called the "formative period", and it makes the baby into a kind of "spiritual embryo".

If the nature of man is to be ruled by a "spiritual halo which enfolds him", If he depends on this and all his behaviour derives from it, then the first care given to the new-born babe - overriding all others - must be a care for his mental life, and not just for his bodily life, which is the rule today.

THE CHILD AS A MEMO OF ADAPTATION

The child comes to love the land into which he is born, no matter where it is. However hard the life may be there, he can never find equal happiness elsewhere. Each has received this adaptation, this love of country, from the child he used to be. The child absorbs the customs and habits of the land in which he lives, until he has formed the typical individual of his place and time. He develops a behaviour not only adapted to his time and region, but also to the local mentality.

The nations of the world have different religions, but even when the mind of a people comes to repudiate one of its ancient tenets, the heart seems deeply perturbed. These beliefs and feelings form an integral part of us. As they say, they are in our blood. All the social and moral habits that shape a man's personality are formed during infancy. Every personal trait absorbed by the child becomes fixed forever, and, even if reason later disclaims it, something of it remains in the subconscious mind. For nothing that is formed in infancy can ever be wholly eradicated. What the child has absorbed, remains a final ingredient of his personality.

The hope of altering adults is vain. While an adult of ancient times could not live in the world of our day, the child adapts to civilization at the level it has reached when he enters it. This shows that the true function of infancy is an adoptive one; to construct a model of behaviour which renders him free to act in the world about him and to influence it.

Only nature, which has established certain laws and determined the need of the human being in course of development, can dictate the educational method to be followed; for this is settled by its aim- to satisfy the needs and the laws of life. These laws, and these needs, the child himself indicates by his spontaneous manifestations, and by his progress. His tranquility and happiness, the interests of his efforts and the courtesy of his freely chosen responses, bear witness to them. Our one duty is to learn from him on the spot, and to serve him, as best as we can.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHILD'S CONQUEST OF INDEPENDENCE

Except when he has regressive tendencies, the child's nature is to aim directly and energetically at functional independence. Development takes the form of a drive towards an even greater independence. The child's conquest of independence begins with his first introduction to life. While he is developing, he perfects himself and overcomes every obstacle that he finds in his path. A vital force is active within him, and this guides his efforts toward their goal. This vital

force for his growth stimulates the child to perform many actions and, if he is permitted to grow morally, without being hindered, it shows itself in what we call the "joy of life". The child is always enthusiastic, always happy.

At birth, the child leaves a prison- his mother's womb- and this makes him independent of her bodily processes. The baby is next endowed with an urge or need, to face the outer world and to absorb it. Awe might say that he is born with "the psychology of world conquest". By absorbing what he finds about him, he forms his own personality.

First in one way, and then in another, he becomes ever less dependent on the persons about him; till the time comes when he wants also to be mentally independent. Then he shows a liking to develop his mind by his own experiences, and not by the experiences of others. He begins to seek the reasons for things.

The child's freedom must be complete; and his independence and normal functioning must be guaranteed by society. Only through freedom and environmental experience is it practically possible for human development to occur.

Freedom is the first rule of life for everything that lives. How does he achieve this independence? He does it by means of a continuous activity. How does he become free? By means of a constant effort. The one thing life can never do is to stand still. In order to reach not only freedom, but also strength, and the perfection of one's powers, it is necessary to follow this path of unremitting toil. Independence springs up in the growing personality, which then becomes able to fend for itself.

The child's first instinct is to carry out his actions by himself, without anyone helping him, and his

first conscious bid for independence is made when he defends himself against those who try to do the action for him. To succeed by himself he intensifies his efforts.

Nature's teachings differ from the ideals which society fashions for itself. The child seeks for independence by means of work; an independence of body and mind. Little he cares about the knowledge of others; he wants to acquire a knowledge of his own, to have experience of the world, and to perceive it by his own unaided efforts. Everything in the living world is active. Life is activity at its peak, and it is only through activity that the perfectionments of life can be sought and gained.

The child, who was born normally and is growing normally, grows towards independence. One who avoids this is degenerate. How are we to cure the

regression that retards and distorts normal development? The deviated child has no love for his environment because he feels it to contain too many difficulties. For him it is too harsh and resistant. How to cope with such disturbed children? Pedagogy teaches us that the environment must offer less resistance; so avoidable obstacles, which the environment contains, are diminished more and more, or perhaps removed entirely. Everything about the child should be made as aesthetic as possible, especially for the children who feel repulsion for their environment itself. The environment must be rich in motives which lend interest to activity and invite the child to conduct his own experiences. These are principles dictated by life and by nature, which help the deviated child who has acquired regressive characteristics, to pass from the tendency to laziness to the desire for work, from lethargy and inertia to activity, from a state of fear (which shows itself some times in excessive attachment to people from whom the child cannot be separated) to a joyous freedom, the freedom to begin the conquest of life. From inertia to work! This is the path of cure, just as from inertia to work is the path of development for the normal child. For a new education this must be the basis. Nature herself indicates and establishes it.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST DAYS OF LIFE

A person whose life is governed solely by his desires, who stands at their mercy, is suffering from some interior defect. His inner guide may still exist, but its power to influence his conduct has been weakened. This makes him the machinelike victim of his senses, a being lost and abandoned. To care for, and keep awake, the guide within every child is therefore a matter of first importance.

THE NEW HYGIENE

The treatment of children should really be considered as a matter of social importance. The science of child care must ultimately become the most permanent and deeply felt concern of every civilized society. How can we be the judge of what will interest the little child? We must put ourselves at his disposal. We should foresee and provide a child with motives of activity belonging to his stage of development to enable him to practice his growing powers. It is necessary for us to become

A person's mental life may be restricted by the type of work open to him, or preferred by him. The mental life of anyone who does not work at all is in grave peril, because, although it is true that all the muscular powers cannot be used,

there is a limit convinced that the child constructs in himself a vital adaptation to his environment, and that he must therefore have full and complete contact with it. For if a child fails in this, we shall find ourselves faced by very grave social problems.

THE CRYING CHILD

The crying of children is a problem in Western countries. The reply of modern psychology is this:

"The baby cries and becomes disturbed, has screaming fits and rages, because he is suffering from mental hunger". And this is the truth. The child is bored. He is being mentally starved, kept prisoner in a confined space offering nothing but frustration to the exercise of his powers. The only remedy is to release him from solitude, and let him join in social life. This treatment is naturally and unconsciously adopted in many countries.

CHAPTER X

SOME THOUGHTS ON LANGUAGE

Language fuses men into groups and nations and is the central point of difference between the human species and all others. Language lies at the root of that transformation of the environment that we call civilization.

No one can predict what a given body will do in the world. But without mutual comprehension with others he would not be able to do much! However intelligent men were, this alone could not produce the deliberations and agreements between them which are necessary for achievement. Language is an instrument of collective thought. Before man's arrival on earth it did not exist.

A language is a kind of wall which enclaves a given human company, and separates it from all others. "The word" has always had a mystical value for man's mind; it is something that unites men even more closely than nationality. Language grows with human thought. Thought has to be expressed by grouping words together into sentences. The words in these sentences have to be arranged in a particular order. To get the words right is not enough; their order is equally important, and the order of the words must also be agreed upon by men. To carry out any of their projects, men must agree, and for this they need a common language.

A language, however difficult we may find it, was at one time spoken by the uneducated classes in the land of its origin. Language develops naturally, like a

spontaneous creation. Its development follows fixed laws which are the same in all children.

CHAPTER XI

HOW LANGUAGE CALLS THE CHILD

In some way, the hearing organs are connected to the mysterious seat of mental life, where the child's language is evolved in the depths of his unconscious mind. We have to remember that speech is produced by a natural mechanism, and not by logical reasoning. It is really nature, which is being logical.

Every human group loves music. Each creates its own music, just as it does its own language. Each group responds to its own music by bodily movements and accompanies it by words. The human voice is a music and words are its notes, meaning nothing in themselves but to which every group attributes its own special meaning. The whole of mankind, in all parts of the world, knows and makes up dances and songs. Hundreds of languages separate the groups but music unites them all.

By helping the child, we become servers and collaborators with the nature, which is creating him.

At about a year and a half, the child discovers another fact, and that is that each thing has its own name. Language is not the only thing the child is forming at this age. Among the others there is his sense of order., While he is passing through a phase of active construction of his psyche, the child often feels the deepest impulse to bring order in to what, according to his logic, is a state of confusion. The child has a wish for order and aversion to disorder.

Mothers, and the society in general, far from keeping babies in isolation, should let them live in contact with grown-ups and frequently hear the best speech clearly pronounced.

The child can even understand whole conversations before being able to express himself.

CHAPTER XII

THE EFFECT OF OBSTACLES ON DEVELOPMENT

Hesitancy or difficulty in speaking takes various forms:

- (a) lack of courage to speak at all,
- (b) lack of courage in forming words,
- (c) difficulty in the use of sentences, the speech is slower than normal, and interpreted with ejaculations.

We must always remember that the child's sensitiveness is greater than anything we can imagine. It is often we who obstruct the child, and so become responsible for anomalies that last a life-time. Always must our treatment be as gentle as possible, avoiding violence, for we easily fail to realise how violent and hard we are being. We have to watch oneself most carefully. The real preparation for education is a study of one's self. The training of the teacher who is to help life is something far more than a learning of ideas. It includes the training of character; it is a preparation of the spirit.

To understand the baby's mind, it is absolutely essential to take the path of observation and discovery. We have to do something like what is done by psychoanalysis when it reaches down to unconscious levels in the adult mind. Sometimes we need to know the baby's whole life, or at least we must investigate his immediate past, before we can pacify this tiny creature in the difficulty he is facing. It is important to know the whole framework of the child's life.

Children's affection for those who merely pet and caress them is not on the same plane with his enthusiasm.

The child's one hope lies in his interpreter. Here is someone who will unlock the garden of discovery to which the world has shut the door. The child's helper is admitted to an intimacy that exceeds affection, because help is a greater gift than consolation.

The child's basic need for order takes priority over all other social claims that the world may make upon him.

However tiresome we may find it, anything that helps human life has an ultimate importance of the greatest value. The child's helper in early infancy has a noble task. It is to begin, and to collaborate in developing, a future science on which mental development and the formation of character must eventually come to rest. To this end we must remember:

- (1) that the first two years of life affect all the rest,
- (2) that the baby has great mental powers to which little attention has been given,
- (3) that he is supremely sensitive and for that reason any kind of violence produces not only an immediate reaction but defects which may be permanent.

CHAPTER III

THE IMPORTANCE OF MOVEMENT IN GENERAL DEVELOPMENT

As a part of school life, which gives priority to intellect, the role of movement has always been sadly neglected.

Man's narrow system contains the following: In the first place, we have the brain (or "centre"). Then there are the various sense organs, which collect impressions and pass them on to the brain. Thirdly, there are the muscles. And nerves, what do they do? These are like cables for transmitting nervous energy to the muscles. So the organisation has three main parts, brain, senses and muscles. Movement is the final result to which the working of all these delicate mechanism leads up. In fact it is only by movement that the personality can express itself.

Physiologists regard the muscles as a part of the central nervous system, saying that this works as a whole to put man in relationship with his surroundings. In fact, this whole apparatus of brain, senses and muscles, is often called the system of relationships, meaning that it puts man into touch with his world, living and non-living, and therefore with other people. Without its help a man could have no contact with his surroundings or his fellows.

The vegetative system provides for a man's physical well being and enables him to enjoy the best of health. But the nervous system gives us the beauty of our impressions, the perfection of our thoughts. It is the source of all inspiration.. So it is wrong for it to be at the level of the vegetable level. If the standard to which we cling are solely connected with our own self-perfection, with the raising ourselves to spiritual heights, this brings us into the region of spiritual pride. It is a grave error, perhaps the greatest that man can make. Man's life is purposive. It is not enough to be always reaching out to higher levels of spiritual refinement and inward beauty. His life would be a vain and worthless thing if his wishes end at

this point. Indeed, what would be the use of his having a brain or muscle? There is nothing in the world which plays no part in the universal economy, and if we are endowed with spiritual riches, with aesthetic feelings and the spiritual conscience, it is not for ourselves, but so that these gifts shall be use for the benefit for all, and take their place in the universal economy of the spiritual life. Spiritual powers are a form of wealth. They must go into circulation so that others can enjoy them; they must be expressed, utilized, to complete the cycle of human relations. Even the heights of spirituality, if pursued for their own sake, have no value and if we aim at these alone we shall be neglecting the greater part of life and its purposes; higher spirituality can only be reached through action. If we are always thinking about ourselves, and of ourselves even in eternity, we shall be eternally selfish. Nature has endowed us with many abilities: these must be developed, and not only developed but used.

The true purpose of movement is to serve the ends of existence, the universal and spiritual economics of nature. Man's movements must be coordinated with the centre - with the brain. Not only are thought and action two parts of the same occurrence, but it is through movement that the higher life expresses itself. To suppose otherwise is to make of man's body a mass of muscles without a brain. Mental development must be connected with movement and be dependant on it.

The muscles directed by the brain are called voluntary muscles, meaning that they are under the will, and will power is one of the highest expressions of the mind.

Everyone, whatever he may want to do, has such a wide range of muscular power that he can choose and set himself a course. His mind can propose and direct his development. Nothing is pre-ordained but everything is possible. It is only necessary for his will to collaborate.

It is not in human nature for all men to tread the same path of development. Every human personality has its own way of doing things, beneath which it is dangerous for those I use to fall.

Without companionship of movement, the brain develops on its own account, as if estranged from the results of its work. Movements not directed by the mind occur haphazardly and do harm. Its place is to serve the whole man and his life in relation to the outside world.

Today's principles and ideas are too much set on self-perfection and self-realisation. Directly we understand the true purposes of movement, this self-centredness is bound to disappear. Movement is that which distinguishes the living from the non-living. Yet living things never move at random. They go towards goals, and their lives follow material laws.

Work is inseparable from movement. The life of men, and of the great human society, is bound up with movement. The very existence of the social order depends on the movement directed to constructive ends.

In the cosmic plan, every form of life depends on directed movements that have effects beyond the conscious aim.

CHAPTER XIV

INTELLIGENCE AND THE HAND

The hand is in direct connection with man's soul. The development of manual skill keeps pace with mental development. Certainly, the more delicate the work, the more it needs the care and attention of an intelligent to guide it. The truth is that when a free spirit exists, he has to materialize itself in some form of work, and for this the hands are needed.

Man's hand has followed his intellect, his spiritual life and his emotions. His hands bring about all the changes in man's environment.

The development of character must have seemed very important to these people, whose manual achievements were on the greatest scale. This illustrates how movements of the hand keep pace all through history with the development of character and civilization; and of how the hand is related to personality.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF DEVELOPMENT

The essence of independence is to be able to do something for one's self, for man achieves his independence by making efforts.

The child's main idea, in whatever he does, is not merely to practise, but to exert the maximum of efforts. The logic of nature is that the grown man must be physically strong. It is: 1. To give the child the upright posture, 2. To make him walk and become strong, 3. To enable him to take part in the life going on about him.

The child must first prepare himself and his bodily instruments, then become strong, then observe others and finally begin to do things himself.

CHAPTER XV

DEVELOPMENT AND IMITATION

At the age of a year and a half the child is already making efforts to express what he has in mind. It is a time of great effort and constructive work.

In the presence of this phase of the child's development, we must be specially careful not to destroy any of life's natural tendencies. We must be prepared to help this effort. Today one realizes that that, before he can imitate, the child must first of all understand. The old idea was that all we grown-ups had to do was to behave in our usual ways, and the children, by imitation, would grow up to do likewise. This ended our responsibilities. Naturally we included the idea of "setting a good example", and stressed the importance of all adults doing this, especially teachers. But nature does not reason like this. She is not concerned with the perfection of adults. The important thing is that before the child can imitate, he must be prepared for doing so, and this preparation derives from the efforts he has been making. This is true of every single human being. The examples set by adults only provides the aim, or motive, for imitation. It does not produce a successful result. As a matter of fact, the child, once launched on his attempts, often improves on the example set him. He does more perfectly and exactly everything to which he has been inspired.

In the educational field, nature herself teaches that imitation requires preparation. The first efforts of the child makes are not aimed at imitating, but at forming in himself the capacity to imitate; they are aimed at changing himself into the thing desired. This shows the universal importance of indirect preparation. Nature gives us not merely the power to transform ourselves, to become what the example typifies.

The whole of our life prepares us indirectly for the future. In all those who have done something of fundamental importance, you will find there has always been a strenuous period in their lives which preceded the doing of this actual piece of work.

Whatever intelligent activity we chance to witness in a child – even if it seems absurd to us or contrary to our wishes (provided, of course, that it does him no harm) - we must not interfere; for the child must always be able to finish the cycle of activity on which his heart is set. Interpreting the child's self-chosen activity, is one of the most harmful forms of repressive action we can take.

WALKING AND EXPLORING

The need of the child of two is to walk. It is natural for him to feel this need, for he has to prepare the future man, and must therefore build up in himself all the essential human abilities. The child of two is well able to walk for a mile or two, and also to climb, if he is in the mood for it. The child does not walk only with his legs, he also walks with his eyes. What urges him on are the interesting things that he sees.

The child has his own laws of development, and if we want to help him to grow, it is a question of following these, not of imposing oneself upon him.

The instinct to move about, to pass from one discovery to another, is a part of their nature, and it must also form a part of the education. The idea of exploration, or scouting, ought to be a regular part of education, and come much earlier in life.

Walking is an exercise complete in itself. Other muscular exertions need not be added to it. A man who walks, breathes and digests better, enjoys all the benefits of health that we pursue in sport. Little by little as man's knowledge increases, his intellectual interests widen, and with these the activities of his body. The path of education should follow the oath of evolution, to walk and to enjoy ever wider horizons. In this way, the child's life becomes increasingly rich.

It is not a good thing to cut life in two, using the limbs to for games and the head for books. Life should be a single whole, especially in the earlier years, when the child is forming himself in accordance with the laws of his growth.

CHAPTER XVI

FROM UNCONSCIOUS CREATOR TO CONSCIOUS WORKER

The period unto three years is a highly creative one – many important changes take place. At the age of three, life seems to begin again; for now consciousness

shines forth in all its fullness and glory. Between these two periods, the unconscious period and the one that follows it of conscious development, there seems to be a well-marked boundary. In the first, there is no possibility of conscious memory. Only with the advent of consciousness do we have unity of the personality, and therefore the power to remember. Before three the functions are being created: after three they develop.

We have to remember that in this first section of his life, the child is entirely dependent on us. He cannot fend for himself, and unless we adults are enlightened – either by nature or by science - as to the way in which his mind develops, we are likely to become the greatest obstacle to his progress.

By the end of this period what the child wants to do is to master his environment, finding therein the means for his development. From the age of three till six, being able now to tackle his environment deliberately and consciously, he begins a period of real constructiveness. The hidden powers he was previously creating are now able to show themselves, thanks to the opportunities for conscious experience that he finds in the world about him. Such experience is not just play, or a series of random activities, but it is work that he has to do in order to grow up. His sense guided by his intelligence begins to do jobs of definitely human type. At first, the child was guided by an impersonal force seeming to be hidden within him; now he is guided by his conscious "I", by his personal self, and we see that his hands are busy. It is as if the child, having absorbed the world by an unconscious kind of intelligence, now "lays his hands" to it.

Hence there are two tendencies: one is the extension of consciousness by activities performed on the environment, the other is for the perfecting and enrichment of those powers already formed. In this formative period there are further psychological developments which still have to take place.

Happiness is not the whole aim of education. A man must be independent in his powers and character, able to work and assert his mastery over all that depends on him.

CHAPTER XVII

FURTHER ELABORATION THROUGH CULTURE AND IMAGINATION SPONTANEOUS ACTIVITY

The minds of children at this age seem to open out and they become eager for knowledge.

By teaching grammar, we help the child to master perfectly the spoken language that he is absorbing. Experience has shown us that little children take the liveliest interest in grammar, and that this is the right time to put them in touch with it. In the first period (from 0 to 3) the acquisition of grammatical form was unconscious, now it can be perfected formally. It can also be noticed that the child of this age learns many new words. This is the age in which vocabulary is most rapidly enriched.

IMAGINATION

The child's mental horizon is not limited to what he sees. He has a type of mind that goes beyond the concrete. He has the power of imagination. The child loves to imagine. Imagination is a force for the discovery of truth. The mind is not a passive thing, but a devouring flame, never in repose, always in action.

MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

The period under six is decisive. Whatever abilities the child constructs then will remain incarnated in him for life. His ways of moving and doing things, becomes fixed and permanent feature of his personality.

The first three years of the child is nature's time for completing her work. If education be constructed on scientific lines, we can effectively reduce the differences that divide men of diverse race and country, and this would lead to a greater harmony of life upon the earth. In other words, civilization can produce changes in man himself, just as it has produced changes in the surrounding offered him by nature. Magic powers are thus conferred upon the human race.

SENSORIAL EDUCATION AND THE MATHEMATICAL MIND

The senses are parts of contact with the environment. No sensorial education can ever occur except as a part of some total activity in which both intelligence and movement are involved. The senses, being explorers of the world, open the way to knowledge.

Sensorial material should provide a kind of guide to education; it should classify the impressions that each sense can receive: The colours, notes, voices, forms and sizes, touch sensations, odours and tastes.

Two powers of the mind (imagination and abstraction), which go beyond the simple perception of things actually present, play a mutual part in the construction of mind's contact.

Man's mind is mathematical in nature, and the knowledge and progress come from accurate observation. If we study the works of all who have left their marks on the world in the form of inventions useful to mankind, we see that the starting point was always something orderly and exact in their minds, and that this was what enabled them to create something new.

In fact if we showed the children exactly how to do something, this precision itself seemed to hold their interest. To have a real purpose to which the action was directed, is the first condition, but the exact way of doing it acted like a support which rendered the child stable in his efforts, and therefore brought him to make progress in his development. Order and precision are the keys to spontaneous work in the school.

THE EMBRYONIC PATTERN

Words and meanings arise by the mutual consent of people wishing to understand one another. Habits and customs, which finally become imbued with the force of morals are also established by social groups. These customs seldom arise merely to make life easier. On the contrary, restrictions of life appear which make one think rather of an inborn instinct of sacrifice.

The mind of man has to fashion itself on what it takes from the outer world, and so makes every individual into the type of person constituting his racial group. This is how differential continuity is kept going between the various human communities which have evolved each its own civilization down the ages.

CHAPTER VIII

CHARACTER AND ITS DEFECTS IN CHILDHOOD

Certain virtues have always been highly valued: courage, perseverance the sense of duty, good moral relationships with others, and a high place has always been given to moral education. But, this notwithstanding, ideas remain vogue in all parts of the world as to what character really is. Philosophers and biologists have debated the matter from early times but always failed to reach a precise definition. There is no ultimate concept acceptable to all. Yet, intuitively, everyone knows the importance of that sum total of qualities that goes universally under the name.

Rooted in the unconscious mind, natural laws undoubted exist which determine psychological development and are common to all men. Differences, instead, depend on the vicissitudes of life: on the accidents, set-backs and regressions produced in the mental field by those obstacles the individual has had to encounter in his path; infinite variations among individuals are caused by their efforts to adapt.

The life the individual from 0 to 18 may be divided into three periods: 0 to 6 years – period of creativeness; 6 to 12 years – the child begins to become conscious of right and wrong in oneself and in others. Moral consciousness is being formed, and this leads later to the social sense; 12 to 18 years – love of country is born; feeling of belonging to a group and concern for honour of that group. We serve the future by protecting the present. The more fully the needs of one period are met, the greater will be the success of the next

At conception and during gestation at birth and the period following birth, the child should be scientifically treated. If (owing to negligence or wrong treatment) the defects caused during 0 and 3 are not arrested, not only do they remain but they get worse. Thus at 6 we may have a child with derivations produced 3 and other defects acquired since. After 6, these in their turn will have an influence on the second main period of life and on the developing awareness of right and wrong. All these defects have their repercussions on mental life and on intelligence. Children find it harder to learn, if circumstances in their previous period have been inimical to the unfolding of their powers.

THE PROBLEM OF CHARACTER AND MORALS AND ITS SOLUTION

The general picture of moral behaviour, and consequently of character, is complicated by the presence of all the ailments and distortions, defects and shortcomings, which have been produced in the personality by conditions adverse to its normal and healthy development.

We must understand the cycle of constructive activities every child ought by nature to traverse. It is now apparent that every defect of character is due to some wrong treatment sustained by the child during his early years. If children have been neglected at this time, their minds are empty because they have had no chance to build up their contents. This starved mind is a basic cause of many evils.

ADVICE TO MOTHERS

Man is an intelligent being, and needs mental food almost more than physical food. Unlike animals he has to build up his own behaviour. If the child is placed upon a path in which he can organise his conduct and construct his mental life, his nightmares vanish, his digestion will become normal, and his greediness subside. His health is restored because his mind is normalized.

So these are not problems of moral education, but of character formation: Lack of character, or defect in character, disappear of themselves, without any need for preaching by grown-ups or for grown-up examples. One does not have to threaten or cajole, but only to "normalize conditions" under which the child lives.. The school environment should offer motives for constructive activity.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CHILD'S CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY – NORMALISATION

The teacher does not have to urge a lazy child to do something. It is enough for her just to put him in touch with the various means of purposive action that are awaiting his use in the environment prepared for him. It does not help to reason with children. Something within them seems to break out and fasten itself to the external activity. This attracts the child's energy, which thus becomes held in a constant piece of work actively repeated.

When children are placed in surroundings that permit them to evolve an orderly activity, they come to have this new aspect.

The human being is a united whole, but this unity has to be built up and formed by active experiences in the real world, to which it is led by the laws of nature.

The transition from one state to the other always follows a piece of work done by the hands with real things, work accompanied by mental concentration.

"To let the child do as he likes", when he has not yet developed any powers of control, is to betray the idea of freedom.

Real freedom is a consequence of development of latent guides, aided by education. Development is active. It is the construction of personality, reached by effort and one's own experiences; it is the long road which every child must travel to attain maturity.

Normalization comes about through "construction on a piece of work. For this we must provide "motives for activity" so well adapted to the child's interests that they provoke their deep attention.

Mental order and the coordination of movement guided by scientific standards are what prepare for concentration, and this, once it has occurred, "frees the actions of the child" and leads him to the cure of his defects. The essential thing is for the task to arouse such an interest that it engages the child's whole personality. Activity freely chosen becomes their regular way of living. The healing of their disorders is the doorway to this new kind of life. An interesting piece of work, freely chosen, which has the virtue of introducing concentration rather than fatigue, adds to the child's energies and mental capacities, and leads him to self-mastery.

Gita says, "It is important to give the right work. The mind needs to work continuously. Spiritual development is to keep it always busy in healthy activities. The devil enters the idle mind. The indolent man cannot be spiritual"

CHAPTER XX

CHARACTER BUILDING IS THE CHILD'S OWN ACHIVEMENT

After six, children can no longer develop character and its qualities spontaneously.

Both the individual and the society have this in common: a continuous tendency to progress. Whether on the outer or inner plane, there is a tiny light in the unconscious of mankind, which guides it towards better things. In other words, man's behaviour is not invariable, like that of the animals, but it can progress, and it is natural for man to feel this urge to go forward.

By character we mean the behaviour of men driven (though often unconsciously) to make progress. Humanity and society have to progress in evolution. There is naturally an attraction towards God. But the progress of mankind moves in this way in worldly matters: Somebody makes a discovery and society progresses along that line. The same thing happens in the spiritual field, a person reaches a high level and gives society a push forwards. Everything we know, spiritually speaking, and all that we see, speaking physically, has been the work of some person.

The education of today is humiliating. It produces an inferiority complex and artificially lowers the powers of man. Its very organisation sets a limit to knowledge well below the natural level.

.It is an education based on man's lower powers, not on his higher ones. And it is man's own fault if the majority of human beings are inferior, for the formation of their characters during the constructive period has been prevented. We have to make an effort to recapture the true human level, letting our children use their creative powers. If in man's whole life there is only one time for mental construction, and if, at that time, it cannot occur, or occurs badly owing to faulty conditions, then it is not surprising that the human masses are under-developed. But if character were allowed its natural way of formation, and if we gave not moral dissertations but the chance to act constructively, then the world would need a very different kind of education.

We want to help the auto-construction of man at the right time, so that mankind can go forward to something great. Society has built up walls, barriers. These, the new education must cast down, revealing the free horizon. The new education is a revolution but without violence. It is the non-violent revolution. After that, if it triumph, violent revolution will have become forever impossible.

CHAPTER XXI

CHILDREN'S POSSESSIVENESS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

In the grow-up world a man whose aim is clearly defined, and who knows how to organise his work, will surely succeed.

The concentration shown by our little ones bring to light something in child psychology. It shows how nature proceeds to bring about the formation of character. Her method is to give the child special interests, interests of exceptional intensity for doing that social creative work necessary for each part of his developing personality. After concentration will come perseverance. This is another trait of character. This repetition which begins after the first concentration, produces a kind of consolidation. It marks the beginning of yet another stage in human character. Here, also, the will that acts is not the child's will; it is nature's will. By its means, she builds the power that enables people to carry out the projects they have undertaken.

Children decide on their actions under the prompting of natural laws. Adults do it by taking thought. If the child is to exercise this power, it is clearly necessary that someone telling him what to do at every moment of his life not direct him. Inner forces affect his choice, and if someone usurps the function of this guide, the child is prevented from developing either his will or his concentration. So if we want him to acquire these traits, the first thing we must do is to make him independent of the adult.. Besides this, the child's own strongest instinct is to free himself of adult control, and this is very logical as we can see by the purpose it serves. These are natural laws that guide growth and formation, and the individual must follow these laws if he is to build up his character, his inner-self.

What happens is not caused only by education, but it comes out of the great and complex processes that guide the universe itself. It is nature's will, not one's doing. It is part of creation, not of education.

The love for his environment makes the child treat it with great care and handle everything with the utmost delicacy.

Aspiration towards the best is part of man's nature. In every way he tries to understand life, so as to protect and improve it, and he ends by helping living things by his intelligent insight.

Only work and concentration, bringing knowledge and love, can induce a transformation which discloses the spiritual man previously lying hidden.

To know, to love, and to serve is the trinomial of all religions, but the child is the spiritual builder of mankind, and obstacles to his free development are the stones in the wall by which the soul of man has become imprisoned.

CHAPTER XXII

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT

The first essential for the child's development is concentration. It lays the whole basis of his character and social behaviour. He must find out how to concentrate, and for this he needs things to concentrate upon. This shows the importance of his surroundings, for no one acting on the child from outside can cause him to concentrate. Only he can organise his psychic life. None of us can do it for him. When adults interfere in the first stage (three to six) of preparation for social life, they nearly always make mistakes.

SOCIAL LIFE

The highest levels of perfection all come through social life. The charm of social life is in the number of different types that one meets. Nothing is duller than a Home of the Aged. To separate by age is one of the cruelest and most inhuman things one can do, and this is equally true for children. It breaks the ends of social life, deprives it of nourishment. What matters is to mix the ages. Children of different ages help one another. The younger ones see what the elder ones are doing and ask for explanations. These are readily given, and the instruction is really valuable, for the mind of a five year old is so much nearer than ours to the mind of a child of three, and the little one learns easily what we should find it hard to impart. There is a communication and a harmony between the two that one seldom finds between the adult and the small child. There are many things that no teacher can convey to a child of three, but a child of five can do it with utmost ease.

The classrooms of those of three to six may not even be rigidly separated from that of the children from seven to nine. Thus, the children of six can get ideas from the class above. The dividing walls could only be waist-high partitions giving easy access from one classroom to the next, and allowing all the groups to intercommunicate. Thus the schools are alive. To understand what the older ones are doing fills the little ones with enthusiasm. The older ones are happy to be able to teach what they know. There are no inferiority complexes, but everyone achieves a healthy normality through the mutual exchange of spiritual energy.

The essential need of childhood is not to be helped unnecessarily.

How the world could change if wickedness always awakened pity and if we made an effort to comfort the criminal with the same sympathy as we do to the sick! Besides, wrong-doing is often pathological and may be due to bad home

conditions, to a misfortune at birth, or some other kind of mishap, and it ought to exert compassion and the wish to help. This alone would raise the very substance of our society.

Children well groomed in the new way, have an instinct to help the weak, encouraging and comforting them, and this is really an instinct for social progress. Indeed, the greatest step forward in human evolution was made when society began to help the weak and the poor, instead of oppressing and depressing them. The children show that they possess these instincts not only for one another, but also for animals.

CHAPTER XXIII

COHESSION IN THE SOCIAL UNIT

It seems clear enough that nature lays down a plan for the construction both of personality and of social life., but this plan becomes realized only through the children's activity when they are placed in circumstances favourable to its fulfillment. In doing this they reveal to us the phases through which social life must pass in the course of its natural unfolding. This corporate life, rules and unites a social life.

ORGANISED SOCIETY

Soon after six years of age, when the child starts another phase of development (making the change from a society in embryo to a society just born), another form of existence sets in spontaneously in which the group is organised entirely on the conscious plane. Children then want to know the customs and laws which men have adopted to guide their conduct: they seek to have someone in control who will govern the community. Obedience to the head and to the laws acts obviously like a kind of connective tissue in the society.

Life in association is a natural fact and, belongs such, to human nature. It grows like an organism and shows a succession of different characteristics in the course of its unfolding.

Society does not depend entirely on organisation, but also on cohesion, and of these two the second is basic and serves as a foundation for the first. Good laws and a good government cannot hold the mass of men together and make them act in harmony, unless the individuals themselves are oriented towards something that gives them solidarity and makes them into a group. The masses, in their turn, are more or less strong and active according to the level of development, and of inner stability, of the personalities composing them.

Whatever is stable and fundamental or basic in a social order, which is constantly being revolutionized, is the cohesive part. When we let the infant develop, and see him construct from the invisible roots of creation that which is to become the grown man, then we can learn the secrets on which depend our individual and social strength.

It is not leaders who are lacking, or at least the question is not limited to this. The problem is infinitely more vast. It is the masses themselves who are totally unprepared for social life in our civilization. Hence the problem is to educate the masses, to reconstruct the character of individuals, to garner the treasures hidden within each one of them and to develop its value.

This is the most urgent and troublesome question of our time: the great mass of folk is inferior to what they should be. The great task of education must be to secure and to procure a normality which, of its own nature, gravitates towards the centre of perfection. Today instead, all we do is to prepare artificially men who are abnormal and weak, predisposed to mental illness, constantly needing care. What is happening today is truly a crime of treason to mankind, and its repercussions on everyone could destroy us. The great mass of illiterates, which covers half the earth, does not really weigh upon society. What weighs upon it is the fact that, without knowing it, we are ignoring the creation of man, and trampling on the treasures which God himself has placed in every child. Yet here lies the source of those moral and intellectual values which could bring the whole world on a higher plane.

We cry out in the face of death, and long to save mankind from destruction, but it is not safety from death, but our own individual elevation, and our destiny itself as men, that we ought to have in mind. Not the fear of death but the knowledge of our lost paradise should be our tribulation.

The greatest danger lies in our ignorance. We are unaware of the spiritual gems, the creative nebulae that the child hides in himself when he enters our world to renew mankind.

They do not believe that children are active teachers. They drive and encourage or give punishments and rewards to stimulate work. They use competition to arouse effort. One may say that all are forced into its hunt for evil for the sake of controlling it, and atypical attitude of the adult is to be always looking for vice in order to suppress it.. The general idea is that everyone is crooked and we must strengthen them as much as possible.

Since education rests on correction of errors, which is often humiliating and discouraging there follows a lowering in the general quality of social life. In the

schools of today no one may copy another's work, and to help someone else is regarded as a crime. To accept help is as guilty as to give it.

The teacher thinks that that the child is incapable and must be taught. But normalized children show the strongest attraction towards good. They do not find it necessary to "avoid evil".

The schools we have today cannot help the creative instincts of the children, who feel in themselves a true delight in activity, a real joy in hard work, in finding the beauty of work in comforting the unhappy and helping the weak. The whole school system is to blame, for it rests on a false foundation.

If rivalry, emulation and ambition have been encouraged throughout the whole period of education, how can we hope that people who have grown in that atmosphere will become good at the age of twenty, or thirty, simply because someone preaches goodness? It is impossible because no preparation has been made for the life of the spirit. Not sermons but creative instincts are important, because they are realities. Children act in accordance with their natures, and not because of their teachers' exhortations. Goodness must come out of reciprocal helpfulness, from the unity derived from spiritual cohesion. This society created by cohesion, which children have revealed to us, is at the root of all social organizations.

We adults cannot teach children from 3 to 6 years of age. We can but observe them with intelligence and follow their development, at every hour of every day, in their endless exercises. What nature has given them develops with work. Nature offers an interior guidance, but to develop anything in any field continuous effort and experience are required. Growth comes from activity, not from intellectual understanding.

Education of little ones is important, especially from three to six years of age, because this is the embryonic period for the formation of character and of society, (first as the period from birth to three is that of forming the mind, and the prenatal period that of forming the body). What the child achieves between three and six does not depend on doctrine but on a divine directive, which guides his spirit to construction. These are the germinal origins of human behaviour and they can only be evolved in the right surroundings of freedom and order.

CHAPTER XXIV

MISTAKES AND CORRECTIONS

There is one thing the teacher must never do is, to interfere by praising a child's work, or punishing him if it is wrong, or even by correcting his mistakes.

If a child has to be rewarded or punished, it means that he lacks the capacity to guide himself so this has to be supplied by the teacher. But supposing he sets himself to work, then the addition of prizes and punishments is superfluous; they only offend the freedom of his spirit. Hence, the schools which are dedicated to the defence of spontaneity and which aim at setting the children free, prizes and punishments obviously has no place. Moreover, the child who freely finds his work shows that to him they are completely unimportant.

To tell a child he is naughty or stupid just humiliates him, it offends and insults, but does not improve him. For if a child is to stop making mistakes, he must become more skilful, and how can he do this if, being already below standard, he is also discouraged? Only exercise and experience can correct a disability, and it takes long practice to acquire the various kinds of skill that are needed. The undisciplined child enters into discipline by working in the company of others; not by being told that he is naughty.

Everyone makes mistakes. This is one of life's realities, and to admit it is already to have taken a great step forward. If we are to tread the narrow path of truth and our hold on reality, we have to agree that all of us can err; otherwise we should all be perfect. So it is well to cultivate a friendly feeling towards error, to treat it as a companion inseparable from our lives, as something having a purpose, which it truly has. Any errors correct themselves as we go through life.

Many errors correct themselves as we go through life. The tiny child starts toddling uncertainly on his feet, wobbles and falls, but ends by walking easily. He corrects his errors by growth and experience. We deceive ourselves if we imagine we are always following life's highway towards perfection. The truth is that we make mistakes after mistakes, and do not correct ourselves. We fail to realise our faults; we live in a state of illusion shut off from reality. The teacher who sets out with the idea that she is perfect, and never notices her own mistakes, is not a good teacher. If we seek perfection, we must pay attention to our own defects, for it is only by correcting these that we can improve ourselves. We have to face them in the full light of day and realise their existence as something unavoidable throughout life.

A scientific principle of "the control of error" is a path to perfection. Whatever is done in school, by teachers, children, or others, there are bound to be mistakes. So we need this rule as a part of school life: namely, that what matters is not so much correction itself as that each individual should become aware of his own

errors. Each should have a means of checking, so that he can tell if he is right or wrong.

If anything is likely to make the character indecisive, it is the inability to control matters without having to seek advice. This begets a discouraging sense of inferiority and a lack of confidence in one's self.

The power to make progress comes in large measure from having freedom and an assured path along to go; but to this must be added some way of knowing if, and when, we have left the path. If this principle be realized, both in school and in daily life, then it does not matter whether teachers and mothers are perfect or not.

Making mistakes bring us closer and makes us better friends. Fraternity is born more easily on the road of error than on that of perfection. A "perfect person" is unable to change.

To tell a person he is clever or clumsy, bright, stupid or bad is a form of betrayal. The child must see for himself what he can do, and it is important to give him not only the means of education but also to supply him with indicators which tell him, his mistakes.

From all the awareness of mistakes, there springs up a kind of brotherhood. Errors divide men, but their correction is a means of union. It becomes a matter of general interest to correct errors wherever they may be found. The error itself becomes interesting. It becomes a link and is certainly a bond of fellowship between human beings. It helps especially to bring harmony between children and adults.

CHAPTER XXV

THE THREE LEVELS OF OBEDIENCE

Education is so largely directed toward the suppression or bending of the child's will, and the substitution for it of the teacher's will, which demands from the child unquestioning obedience.

Evolution does not occur by luck, or by chance, but is governed by fixed laws, and if man's life is an expression of that force, his behaviour must be molded by it.

Under proper conditions, the will is a force which impels activities beneficial to life. Nature imposes on the child the task of growing up, and his will leads him to make progress and to develop his powers.

One thing ought to be very clear, Conscious will is a power which develops with use and activity. We must aim at cultivating ther will, not at breaking it. The will

can be broken in a moment. Its development is a slow process that evolves through a continuous activity in relationship with the environment.

The commonest prejudice in ordinary education is that everything can be accomplished by talking (by appealing, that is, to the child's ears, or by holding one's self up as a model to be imitated (a kind of appeal to the eye), while the truth is that the personality can only develop by making use of its own powers. The child is usually considered as a receptive being instead of an active being, and this happens in every department of his life. Even imagination is so treated by telling fairy tales and stories of enchanted princesses, whereas, these do not develop his own powers to imagine constructively.

Within the child is the work of a creator much more exalted than the teacher, the mother or the father, yet in spite of this he is at their mercy. Discipline is made to rest on threats and fear.

The basic error is to suppose that a person's will must necessarily be broken before it can obey, meaning before it can accept and follow another person's directions. Were this reason to be applied to intellectual education, we should have to destroy a person's mind before we could give him any knowledge.. Will and obedience go hand in hand, on as much as the will is a prior foundation in the order of development, and obedience is a later stage resting on this foundation.

Indeed, if the human soul did not possess this quality, if men had never acquired, by some form of evolutionary process, this capacity for obedience, social life would be impossible. But the uncontrolled form of obedience brings whole nations to ruin.

Obedience occurs in three stages or levels. At the first level, the child obeys sometimes, but not always. Before the child is three he cannot obey unless the order he receives corresponds with one of his vital urges. Obedience at that time has to be judged in relation to the powers that exist. Obedience from a child of two is not to be expected. If the child is not yet master of his actions, if he cannot obey even his own will, so much the less can he obey the will of someone else. That is why he may succeed in obeying sometimes, but not always.

The second level is when the child can always obey, or rather when there are no longer any obstacles deriving from his lack of control. His powers are now consolidated and can be directed not only by his own will, but also the will of another. The child can absorb another person's wishes and express them in his own behaviour. And this is the highest form of obedience to which present day education ever aspires. The ordinary teacher asks only that she be obeyed.

But the child, when allowed to develop in accordance with the laws of nature, goes much further than this. He goes on to the third level of obedience. His obedience is turned towards a personality whose superiority he feels. It is as if the child has become aware that the teacher could do things beyond his own powers. To feel like this seems to fill the child with joy. That one can take directions from this superior life is a sudden discovery that brings with it a new kind of enthusiasm, and the child becomes anxious and impatient to obey.

Perfect silence can only be obtained if all those present are willing. A single person can break it. Success therefore depends on conscious and mental action. From this comes a sense of social solidarity.

The game of silence offers as a means of testing the children's will power. The period of silence could be extended little by little. To this could be added a kind of "call" in which the child's name is barely murmured, and each child on hearing his name, had to come up quietly and slowly, while others stayed motionless as before. This game develops incredible will power in the children.

The power to obey is the last phase in the development of the will, which in its turn has made obedience possible.

CHAPTER XXVI

DISCIPLINE AND THE TEACHER

Let us always remember that inner discipline is something to come, and not something already present. Our task is to show the way to discipline. Discipline is born when the child concentrates his action on some object that attracts him and which provides him with not only a useful exercise but with a control of error.

The true foundation of the teacher's efficiency consists in being able to distinguish between two kinds of activities - pure impulse and the spontaneous energies - each of which has the appearance of spontaneity, because the child in both acts of his own free will, but which are in fact directly opposed.

Only when the teacher has learnt to discriminate can she become an observer and a guide.

THE CHILD IN CHAOS

Let us consider the child of three or four, who has not yet been touched by any of the factors which can act upon him to produce inner discipline. Simple description enables one to recognise three types and their characteristics:

(i) Disorder of the voluntary movements. Rather than try to correct the thousand and one visible signs of a deviation from the normal development, the teacher

needs only to offer, in an interesting form, means for the intelligent development of more harmonious movements.

(2) Another feature that always accompanies the disorder is the child's difficulty, or inability, to concentrate his attention on real objects. His mind prefers to wander in the realm of fantasy.

The spiritual life is really built up on the fundamental basis of a unified personality, well attune to the outer world. The wondering mind that breaks away from reality breaks away also – it must be said – from healthy normality. In the world of fantasy, wherein it thrives, there is no control of error, nothing to co-ordinate thought. Attention to real things, with all the future applications that derive from this, becomes impossible. The teacher who tries to focus the child's attention on something real – by making reality accessible and attractive – in effect speaks with the voice of a trumpet to the vague mind, wandering far from the pathway of its own good. And the coordination of perfected movements, together with the recapture of an attention which has escaped from reality, is all that is needed to effect a cure.

As soon as the ability of fixing the mind on real things is acquired, the mind will return to its state of health, and begins again to function normally. We should, therefore not think of correcting one by one all the signs of a fundamental deviation.

THE CALL

Just as we must call a child's name before he can answer, so we must call the soul vigorously if we wish to awaken it.

APPARENT ORDER

The child is like a bee flying from flower to flower, without finding one on which to stop, from which it can take the nectar and be satisfied. He will not be able to work till he feels the awakening within him of that tremendous instinctive activity which is destined to construct his character and his mind.

General surveillance and individual teaching, given with precision, are two ways in which the teacher can help the child's development. In this period she must take care never to turn her back on the class while she is dealing with a single child. Her presence must be felt by all these spirits, wandering and in search of life. These lessons, exact and fascinating, given in an intimate way to each child separately, are the teacher's offering to the depths of the child's soul.

DISCIPLINE

Free choice is one of the highest of all mental processes. Only the child deeply aware of his need for practice and for the development of his spiritual life, can really be said to choose freely. It is not to speak of free choice when all kinds of external stimuli attract a child at the same time and, having no will power, he responds to every call, passing restlessly from one thing to another. This is one of the most important distinctions that the teacher must be able to make.

Every living creature possesses the power to choose, in a complex and many sided environment, that thing, and only that, which is conducive to its life. The roots of every plant seek out from among the many substances which the soil contains, only those which they need.

Children, especially in their first years, have an intimate sensitiveness as a spiritual necessity. A misdirected or repressive education can cause this to disappear and to be replaced by a sort of slavery of the outer senses to every object in the neighbourhood.

The child whose attention has once been held by a chosen object, while he concentrates his whole self on the repetition of the exercise, is a delivered soul in the sense of spiritual safety. From this moment there is no need to worry about him except to prepare an environment which satisfy his needs, and to remove obstacles which may bar his way to perfection. Before such attention and concentration has been attained the teacher must learn to control herself so that the child's spirit shall be free to expand and show his powers; the essence of her duty is not to interrupt the child in his efforts. The birth of concentration in a child is as delicate a phenomenon as the bursting of a bud into bloom.

The child who concentrates is immensely happy; he ignores his neighbours or the visitors circulating about him. For the time being his spirit is like that of a hermit in the desert: a new consciousness has been born in him, that of his own individuality. When he comes out of his concentration, he seems to perceive the world anew as a boundless field for fresh discovery. He also becomes aware of his classmates in whom he takes an effective interest. Love awakens in him for people and for things. He becomes friendly to everyone, ready to admire all that is beautiful. The spiritual process is plain: he detaches himself from the world in order to attain the power to unite himself with it. To assist and mix with our fellowmen we must sometimes retire into solitude and acquire strength; only then do we look with love on the creatures who are our fellows.. The saint in solitude prepares himself to view with wisdom and justice those social necessities which remain unknown to the masses of men. It is the preparation made in the desert that operates the great mission of love and peace.

The result of concentration is an awakening of their social sense, and the teacher must be ready to follow this. She will be a person to whom the hearts of these children will turn directly when they are awakened.

The child does not want to be told what to do and how to do it – he defends himself from such help. Choice and execution are the prerogatives and conquests of a liberated soul. But after he has done the work he wants his teacher's approval. The teacher must then respond with a word of approval encouraging him with a smile, like that of a mother to her baby. The perfection and confidence must develop in the child from inner sources with which the teacher has nothing to do.

CHAPTER XVII

THE TEACHER'S PREPERATION

The teacher, when she begins work in Kids Academy, must have a kind of faith that the child will reveal himself through work. The teacher must believe that this child before her will show his true nature when he finds a piece of work that attracts him. So she should look out that one child or another will begin to concentrate. To this she must devote her energies, and her activities will change from stage to stage, as in a spiritual ascent. What she does will usually have three aspects.

First stage. The teacher becomes the keeper and custodian of the environment. From this will come healing, and the attraction that captures and polarizes the child's will. She should make the school a place a place of comfort and peace, with full and varied interests. The essential charm of a house is its cleanliness and order, beautiful and shining, in perfect condition. Nothing may be missing, so that to the child it always seems new, complete and ready for use. This means that the teacher must always be attractive, pleasing in appearance, tidy and clean, calm and dignified. Teacher's appearance is the first step to gaining the child's confidence and respect. The teacher should study her own movements, to make them as gentle and graceful as possible. The teacher's first duty is therefore to watch over the environment, and this takes precedence over all the rest. And ofcourse the teacher is part of the environment.

Second stage. How the teacher should behave towards the children? A teacher must amuse the children. She can tell stories, have some games and singing, use nursery rhymes and poetry. The teacher who has a gift for charming the children can have them do various exercises, which, even if they have no great value educationally, are useful in calming them. A lively teacher attracts more than a

dull one. Every action of the teacher's can become a call and an invitation to the children.

Third Stage. Experience shows that it is useless and harmful to give the children sensorial and cultural apparatus before they are ready to benefit from it. Before introducing this kind of material, one must wait till the children have acquired the power to concentrate on something, and usually, this occurs with the exercises of practical life. When the child begins to show interest in one of these, the teacher must not interrupt because this interest corresponds with natural laws and opens up a whole cycle of new activities. The child's interest is not only focussed on the operation itself but more often it is based on his wish to overcome the difficulty.

The duty of the teacher is only to present new things when she knows that a child has exhausted all the possibilities of those he was using before.

True kindness serves the needy without disclosing itself or when it is discovered, it poses not as a help, but as something natural and spontaneous.

The master whom the child serves is the child's spirit; when it shows its needs she must hasten to respond to him. If a child does a piece of work with great concentration, we must keep out of the way, but if he shows a wish for our approval, we should give it generously.

The child has to acquire physical independence by being self-sufficient; he must become of independent will by using in freedom his own power of choice; he must become capable of independent thought by working alone without interruption. The child's development follows a path of successive steps of independence, and no knowledge of this must guide us in our behaviour towards him. We have to help the child to act, will and think for himself. This is the art of serving the spirit, an art which can be practised to perfection only when working among children.

The higher qualities of the human soul are usually hidden in the deviated soul, and when they appear, the teacher by whom they had been foreseen welcomes them with the joy of a faith rewarded. And in the qualities of the child, she sees man as he ought to be: the worker who never tires, because what drives him on is a perennial enthusiasm.

To serve the children is to feel one is serving the spirit of man, a spirit which has to free itself. The teacher of the children up to six years of age knows that she has helped mankind in an essential part of its formation.

On the higher educational level justice is something truly spiritual; it tries to ensure that every child shall make the best of himself. Justice, here, is to give every human being the help he needs to bring about his fullest spiritual status,

ans service of the spirit at every age means helping those energies that are at work to bring this about. This, perhaps, will be the basis on which society will be organised in the future. Nothing of these spiritual treasures should be lost. In comparison with these, economic treasures have no value. Whether I be rich or poor does not matter: if I can attain to the full measure of my powers, the economic problem solves itself. When mankind as a whole can fully perfect its spirit, it will become more productive, and the economic aspect of life will cease to preponderate. Men do not produce with their feet and their bodies, but with their spirit and attention, and when these shall have reached the level of development which is proper to them, then all our "insoluble problems" will have become solved.

Children unaided can construct an orderly society. For us adults, prisons, police, soldiers and guns are necessary. Children solve their problems peacefully; they have shown us that freedom and discipline are two faces of the same medal, because scientific freedom leads to discipline.

In serving the child, one serves life; in helping nature one rises to the next stage, that of super-nature, for to go upwards is a law of life. And it is the children who have made this beautiful staircase that mounts ever higher. The law of nature is order, and when order comes of itself, we know that we have re-entered the order of the universe. It is clear that nature includes among the missions she entrusted to the child, the mission of arousing the adults to reach a higher level.

CHAPTER XXVIII

LOVE AND ITS SOURCE – THE CHILD

If we study the child better than we have done hitherto, we discover love in all its aspects. Love is analyzed by the realities which everyone discloses in himself. Everything man creates, even when called progressive, leads to nothing without love. But this love, which is the gift of every tiny child who is brought into our midst – if this were realized in its potentialities, or if the fulfilment of its values were developed, our achievements, already so vast, would become immeasurable. Grown-ups and children must join their forces. In order to become great, the grown-ups must become humble and learn from the child.

Love is conceded to man as a gift directed to a certain purpose, and for a special reason. It must be treasured, developed and enlarged to the fullest possible extent. To treasure it is his duty. It holds the universe together because it is a real force, and not just an idea. By its means man will be able to hold together

all that he creates with his intelligence. Without it, all he creates will turn (as so often it has) to the bringing of disorder and destruction. Without it, with the growth of his own powers, nothing of his can last, all will collapse.

Of all things love is the most potent. All that men can do with their discoveries depends on the conscience of him who uses them. But this energy of love is given to us so that each shall have it in himself. Although the amount given to man is limited and defused, it is the greatest of all the forces at his disposal.

Whatever be our political or religious affiliations, we are all near to the child and we all love him. It is from this love that comes the child's power of unity. Adults have strong and often fierce convictions, which separate them into groups. But there is one point – the child – on which all have the same feelings. Few people realise how great is the child's importance owing to this.