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The place and function of moral education in the public school

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SENIOR THESIS:

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THE PLACE AND FUNCTION OF MORALS .
EDUCATION IN 'THE PUBLIC' SCHOOL .

A Thesis
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OUTLINE OF THE THESIS.

Introduction.

I. The importance of moral Education in the public schools.

(a). Its problem.

II. The agencies of moral conduct.

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(a). Its importance in the development of moral character.

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I.

The subject of the Thesis-

The Place and Function of Moral
Education in the Public School.

The Introduction:-

Course-mindedness is a very serious affliction, most generally this sort of mind is acquired during the early childhood period, if it is acquired at all, and it is a cancer which if not remedied will eat to the very soul. It is a stain that cannot be washed away through a physical process, any more than it can be absolved through advancement of the victim to a place of material success.

The young boys and girls think in terms of the expressions they hear other people use as they go along the highway. These expressions are not chosen by the boy or the girl, but they are the victim. And as these quiet reflections course their way through the memories of these young people tend all the while to go out in action.

It is the duty of the parents the school and the church, to set up a rigid defence against such a possible weakning of the character of the young boys

and girls in the community. It is the duty of the parents to know where their children spend their time, whom they associate with and what kind of language they are acquiring. They should make a quiet and effective inquiry. By doing this the parents can keep up a close relation with their children, and thus always learn of the poison that may be entering the speech and thoughts, in time to prevent the possible acquisition of the degrading habit of course-mindedness.

Purity of thought, speech, and life are all simple phases of the same thing. The parents must study the ways of their boys and girls more carefully, and try to bring them into closer contact with those things that are more pure, and more holy and righteous, and it should not be forgotten that the pure and the beautiful in character are quite as contagious as the forms of vileness.

It is the duty of the Public School and parent to start early to test the boys and girls out in order to learn what new expressions they have picked up during the day. They should be taught to dislike, and reject the unrefined and courser things, and to be fond of the more choice things.

The importance of moral éducation in the Public
Schools.

To train the children of the nation for the responsibilities and duties of citizenship, moral education is just as necessary as intellectual and physical education. In a republic where all the people participate in the government, an ignorant and untrained citizenship is a public peril. The nation therefore undertakes the work of public education in the exercise of its inherent right of self-preservation - as the well known saying goes - "The safety of the people is the supreme law - affords the true ground for any system of public schools". What is necessary in the public schools, must be regarded as necessary to the existence and welfare of the nation. Is it not applicable to say that moral education is necessary in the public schools ? The morals powers are therefore an essential part of human nature, and can not be ignored from the public schools under any condition, if the nation expects to hand over moral being from one generation to the other. No one is willing to deny that man is ⁽⁸⁾not a moral being. The power to distinguish between right and wrong, and the sense of moral obliga-

tion constitute the chief difference between man and the lower animal. The person in whom the moral sense is lacking is an abnormal person. But it is the desire of a civilized nation as far as possible that all of her citizens be normal men and women. There is no human faculty which may not at any time be called into the service of the state. And since conscious^(?) of the sense of duty is essentially a human faculty, it can not ^(be) consistently be ignored in the training of the citizens.

The nation has need of the physical powers of her people in subduing the wilderness, in cultivating and gathering the harvest, in increasing the national wealth, and in defending the nation against the enemy, and finally in order that the people of the nation might have great increasing power to resist the ravage of disease. Therefore that the physical task of the nation may be wrought successfully, and that the physical strength of the nation may not decline in successive generations the study of physiology, and for this reason physical exercises have their place in the public schools. It also stands to reason, that the moral faculties are just as an essential part of the human nature as the intellectual the physical and the voli-

tional education, and the school system that fails to emphasize the moral side of education will fail and continue to fail.

Not only is the moral sense one among other faculties of the human race, but we are safe to say that it is the most important faculty, because it is the regulative faculty, and on its right action depends the right and beneficent action of all the other faculties.

The service which the nation demands of her citizens, moral qualifications are of the paramount importance. There are many great tasks which are regularly developed upon the citizens of the United States, all of these tasks illustrate the paramount necessity for moral qualifications. The most important of these great tasks that the citizens of the United States are expected to qualify themselves, in order that they might be of the most service to their country are as follows-

I. He must qualify himself intellectually and morally in order that he might give testimony in the courts of justice, (2) to serve as jurors, (3) to vote at elections, and (4) to hold office when elected. If the United States is expecting to retain its

government great emphasis must be laid on the development of good citizenship, and in order to develop good citizenship in the nation, great emphasis must be laid on moral training in the Public schools of America. If on the other hand intelligence and mental culture are necessary in the Public Schools is it not self evidence that moral training and moral character are infinitely more important ? What avails the intelligence of the witness if he purposely gives a false testimony ? or the mental training of the juror if he knowingly brings in an unjust verdict ? or the voter if he sells his vote ? The education which has not fitted a man for moral obligations, and has not developed his moral sense to be conscious of his supremacy, has not fitted him for the responsibilities of good citizenship.

,The evils from which any country suffers most and the dangers which any country encounters are moral evils and dangers. To every thoughtful mind the ravages of vice and crime are immeasurably more detrimental to human happiness and welfare than all the cause of loss and suffering. We must admit that the whole sum of human suffering caused by physical agencies is insignificant in comparison with the results

of our moral evils. Moreover, our physical ills are in a large measure, traceable to moral causes, being the retribution which follows sin under the moral government of God. When moral corruption becomes wide spread it threatens the very existence of the nation..

How can the moral evil be combatted, which threatens the very existence of the nation ? It can not be combatted by mere force, because mere force has no place on the moral battle field; moral evils can only be combatted by moral forces. Every moral evil grows up out of falsehood, and the only instrument with which to extirpate moral evils is truth. When one becomes in the possession of his full power from an intellectual physical and moral standpoint, he knows the truth, and the truth alone can free a man. He feels the beautiful, and the beautiful will make him gentle. He therefore wills the good, and the good will give him great strength to combat the evils of the nation.

It is the full duty of a nation to prepare her citizens to meet the morals issues of life as well as the intellectual and physical issues of life. One of the undisputed principles of the state's right- is to transmit her actual character to the nation of the future by impressing that character on to the coming

generation. Since it is agreed that the state has the right to transmit her actual character from one generation to another, what institution is more fitted to perform such a function than the public school? It is the function of the public school, to prepare citizens for the duties of citizenship; the life and welfare of the nation are dependent upon it. This element can not be adequately supplied from any other source; therefore the public school must regard moral training as a principle part of its work.

The Problem of Moral Education.

The separation of the church and state, and the consequent changes that have been brought about in the standard of Values have thrust upon the nation new and grave problems of social intergrations. Speaking from an historical stand point, the church was the mother of the schools. On account of the public schools depending on the state for its support the state has become the father of the public schools. Both the church and the state demand the moral training of the child. The separation of the church and state has raised the question of the ways and means of moral training. The church says that there is no sound morality without religious sanction. Material progress

and the spirit of democracy have raised the state into the place of supreme power. The state has excluded from the public schools sectarian instruction, and has prescribed courses of studies made up of so called secular branches. This new order has not produced moral progress commensurate with the intellectual achievement, and the advance of technical skill.

This problem of moral training cannot be thrashed back upon the home and the church alone. Of course the home and the church must do their part. There must be taken in consideration that the whole child plays, learns, and lives, at home and away from home; and that the whole child comes to school. The teacher must grasp the whole situation in order to do her part. The teacher may have only a working hypothesis as to what to do; but she must work this hypothesis for all it is worth. This is the only method of solving the great moral issue that now confronts the nation.

There are several groups of people who believe that moral education should be taught in various ways;—some believe in the formal method of moral education, there are others who believe in incidental moral training and still others who believe in relig-

ious training, but the time has come that results count, and not so much the method.

The churches hold to the religious sanctions for morality, and demand the Bible in education. There are three plans which the church schools have prepared as follows-

1. Let the church agree upon a common creed concerning God, duty and immorality, and found moral training upon such a creed.

2. Separate the pupils into classes according to sectarian affiliations and turn them over to their own clergyman or teachers.

3. Let each sect build its own schools and draw upon public funds in proportion to the number of children under instruction.

Such plans ~~that~~ we have just named above might work allright in a country other than a democratic country. These sectarian plans are surely inconsistent with the spirit of modern democracy and will not do to set up an adequate standard of moral education in the public schools.

There have been some educators or societies, who have made strenous efforts to exemplify unsectarian moral education. Mr. Felix Adler, the leader

II.

of the Society of Ethical Culture of New York City, attempted to solve this problem (moral education in public schools) by offering this solution: "He said it is the business of the moral instructor in the public school to deliver to his pupil the subject matter of morality, but not to deal with the sanction of it; to give to his pupils a clear understanding of what is right and what is wrong, but not to enter into the question why the right should be done and the wrong avoided. The question he added further can be enlightened, strengthened, guided, without once raising the question why it is wrong to do that which is forbidden.

Mr. Adler's solution or view point of solving the problem of moral training in the public school is too mechanical, and does not deal in a positive way with the question of such great importance in the American Public School. It should be advocated that moral education in the public school is just as essential in the curriculum as any other part of the subject matter in the curriculum, and just as much emphasis should be laid on on moral training as the rest of the courses. Until those who are at the head of the American Public Schools realize this fact, there will be something lacking in the formation of character of

its citizens. It must be definitely understood that moral education is just as essential as any other course of study in the curriculum.

The Agencies of Moral Conduct.

The curriculum as an agency in moral training.

The studies that are conceded to have an important bearing on moral education, are as follows, history, literature, manual training, and nature study. These courses offer a wonderful opportunity for the Public School teachers to enject into the mind of their pupils the great moral training that fit the pupils for efficient citizens of the nation.

The courses in the old curriculum of the secondary school were extremely classical, cultivating conservatism, respect for authority, imitation of the ancient, preparing the pupils to meet the College entrance requirement, etc. No emphasis was laid on the moral side of education. But under the new regime great emphasis is being laid on such subjects as, manual training, nature study, and school gardening. Such subjects named above are most important for moral training. One great educator has said: "The chief value of nature study in character building is that, like life itself, it deals with realities. One impor-

tant thing about nature study it is dynamic if it is genuine, it is real, it is essentially doing. It gives the Public School Teachers a great opportunity to bring home to the pupils great moral lessons. This is the basis of its effectiveness as a moral agent. The same may be said concerning manual training and school gardening. Any subject in the curriculum that tends to furnish the pupil with pleasant occupations for leisure moments out of school, and thus remove him from the bane of idleness is essentially moral.

Great moral lessons can be brought out in history and English Literature, by pointing out to the pupils the moral character of the historians and English writers.

The Personality Of The Teacher.

Everything is due to the personality of the teacher. In accounting for success and failures in discipline and moral training in public school, the word personality looms large.

We may ask this question: What are the elements in a good teacher's personality? Mr. Clapp secured from one hundred experienced school superintendents and principals - men who had wide experience in selecting and training teachers to make out lists

of ten specific qualities that in their opinion, went to make up a good teaching personality. In the list that the teachers made out were such qualities as the following-

1. Sympathy. 2. Personal appearance. 3. Address. 4. Sincerity. 5. Optimism. 6. Entusiasm. 7. Scholarship. 8. Vitality. 9. Fairness. And 10. Reserve or Dignity.

These ten qualities, represented the composite judgement of one hundred experienced schoolmen as to the composition of the teaching personality.

The great power for righteousness in the school, and in the community is the teacher. The teacher is the personal embodiment of the moral ideal for the pupils, and he is also a personal stimulus and a guide. There is no unity, and certainly no growth if the teacher does not come in contact with the pupils. The moral health and growth of the teacher depends also upon the pupils. Another means of moral growth for both teacher and pupils is an intimate acquaintance with a few of the great teachers - as Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Emerson, and other great teachers. The teacher should point out to the pupils lists of good books, have them to cultivate a taste for music, and

art, etc. A living teacher who expects to have great influence over the pupils whom he instructs, must know some of the great Artists and their masterpieces. An educational leader in these modern days must have a living, growing interest in some phase of science, and in some important industry. The teacher who has an outstanding personality has a wonderful chance to throw his influence in favor of the moral forces in the public schools and also in the community.

It is being realized as never before that there is nothing - motive, impulse, thought, aspiration- that is not finding expression in the tone and quality of the whole personality. Psychologist, and physiologist are constantly showing that every idea or state of feeling registers itself definitely and in all-persuasive way, impulse beat, nerve tension, and muscular reaction. This kind of fact is becoming so simple and so demonstrably true that every one can understand it, and no one can doubt it. It is therefore so important in understanding how the mental life behaves that all persons should take account of it.

A question may be raised, "Do the subtle manifestation of the deeper life of the teacher pass over into the hearts and mind of his pupils"? As to

a positive answer to such a question, one should no longer doubt. Because it has been proved in the laboratories that our minds are influenced by little elements in our experience so minute that they can not be perceived, no matter how much we try.

The fact that we are getting definite results for our mental lives out of infinitesimal impressions is demonstrated by experiments on almost all of the senses.

Everything that goes on in the life of the teacher finds expression in the quality of his personality, if filled and seeps into the lives of his pupils. The teacher can (not) in reality hide nothing. What ever the teacher is in the (depths) of his or her heart or life is forming a part of the atmosphere of the school, and this atmosphere is in turn forming unconsciously the lives of his pupils, in the same way that the air, sunshine moisture, and other elements of the soil are feeding the life of the plant.

It is quite impossible for a teacher to * teach something which she hasn't got deep within her heart. It is also impossible for her to have a devout nature and keep it hidden beneath the routine of the days as it is to pollute a spring of pure water, or

quench a fire by throwing oil upon it.

The question of first consideration with the right teacher, who is alive in mind and pure in heart, the question of keeping the flame of morality burning while the necessary tasks of the school days are performed will solve itself. If teachers felt their responsibilities, and their needs, and would pray very often and earnestly the prayer that Socrates prayed, ("Ye God make me beautiful within",) the prayer would be answered by the very act of uttering it. The beauty of the life within the teacher would find expression in the hearts of the pupils, and become a part of the glory of humanity.

The Social Relation Of The School.

When we turn to the school, and view it from the standpoint of a social institution in developing moral education in our public schools, we find that one of the most striking tendencies at present is towards the introduction of the so called manual training, shop work, and the household arts - sewing, and cooking. This kind of work engages the full spontaneous interest of the children. It keeps the children alert and active, instead of passive and perceptive; it makes them more useful, more capable, and therefore

more inclined to be helpful at home, and in the community. It also prepares the pupils to a great extent for the practicable duties of later life.

Our social life has undergone a radical change; if our education is to have any meaning to life, it must necessarily pass through an equally complete transformation. When the school trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service and providing him with the instrument of effective self-direction, there shall be the deepest and best guarantee of a large society which is worthy and harmonious.

The High School owes to the community faithful work, it owes a high moral tone, it owes a higher social environment. The high school should recognize the fact that the community is making great sacrifices for it, in order to send the children to school.

The public school should be a social center, where moral character is developed. How can the high school best meet the needs of the community? It can best meet the social needs of the community, 1. by strong class-room work, 2. by the social function of the teachers. The High School Professors or teachers

should advocate athletics, they should make the public school a recreation center. Where all kinds of games are played such as gymnastics, basket ball, etc. The high school might be a social center, or a polling place, etc. An institution with such a social atmosphere will enable the community to have a definite idea of what the the public school stands for, and they can therefore appreciate the character of the school to a greater degree.

After the social spirit of the school has once been established how may it be kept there ? It can not be kept there by frequent change of teachers and principle. It can not be kept there if democracy is not practised in the public schools. The public school should be purely democratic. There should be no race differences in the school. It must set itself against all creeds or religions.

Fraternities should not be tolerated in the public schools, 1. because they are undemocratic, 2. they are secret societies, 3. indulge in immoral acts, such as 4. drinking whiskey, 5. smoking, 6. playing cards for money and 7. they hold themselves aloft from the non-fraternity students.

It is the moral purpose of the public school

to be just as democratic as the college, in order for the public school to have a profound democratic atmosphere, there must be the same attitude to all the pupils whether rich or poor.

Another way to develop the social spirit in the public school is to organize dramatic clubs in English, Latin and History, etc. But the teachers should be very careful not to have one group of students appear in all of the dramas. All of the pupils should have a chance to appear in the dramas.

The teachers should select such plays that have a profound moral tone, where great moral characters are portrayed. This will offer a wonderful opportunity to inject into the lives of the pupils a lasting moral character. And useful citizens of the nation can be developed through the social agency of the public school.

Moral Discipline In The Public Schools.

I can not agree with the statement of some writers when they say that all children are born good. Nor can I agree with those who think that, by skillful discipline children may be made altogether what they should be. Imperfection may be diminished by good discipline, and wise management, but they can not be re-

moved by it.

If it were true however, that by some possible system of moral government children could be moulded into the desired form, the educators would still be far from achieving the object in view. The great error made by the people who discuss questions of juvenile discipline, is in ascribing all the faults and difficulties to the children and none to the parents. The current assumption concerning school, and family government, as respecting national government, is, that the virtues are with the rulers and the vice is with the ruled. Judging by educational theories, men and women are entirely transfigured in domestic relations. The citizens that we do business with, the people that we meet in the streets, we all know to be imperfect creatures. In the daily scandals, in law suits, in quarrels, we have thrust before us prevailing selfishness, dishonesty, and brutality. Yet when nursery management is criticised, and when we canvass the misbehaviour of juveniles we habitually take for granted that these culpable men and women are free from moral delinquency in the treatment of their offspring. One can feel safe to say, that a great part of the domestic disorder commonly ascribed to the per-

versity of children is tracable to the misconduct of the parents. So we see that the difficulties of moral education are necessarily of dual origin - necessarily results from the combined faults of parents and children. If hereditary transmission is a law of nature, as it really is; then on the average of cases, the defects of children minor the defects of their parents.

With these few preliminary explanations we shall go on to consider the true aim and methods of moral discipline in the public schools.

There are two kinds of discipline or punishments that can be used in the public schools, namely, natural punishment, and artificial punishment. We shall discuss both kinds and try to determine which of the two has the greater moral bearing in the public schools.

The advantage that the natural punishment has over the artificial punishment. 1. Natural punishment is unavoidable and inevitable. 2. It is proportionate to the degree of the offence. 3. It is constant and holds through life.

The reaction against corporal punishment. The progress of the race is always from the brutal and is towards the human. Corporal or artificial pun-

ishment antagonizes the child, and places him in an attitude of habitual opposition to authority. It leads the child to hate and to despise the parents, or the teacher who conflicts with the punishment. It does not carry with it a profound moral teaching. It is a cowardly thing for an adult to take a stick and attack a defenseless child. Artificial punishment tends to discourage pupils with school life, and lead them to take the first opportunity to seek remunerative employment. And above all corporal or artificial discipline tends to brutalize the individual when the punishment is inflicted.

One of the great advantages that the natural system of discipline has over the artificial system is, that it is a system of pure justice. It has a greater moral bearing; and will be recognized by every child as such. Whoso suffers nothing more than the evil which obviously follows naturally from his own misbehaviour, is much less likely to think himself wrongly treated than if he suffers an evil artificially inflicted upon him.

Again the tempers of both the teacher and the pupil are much less liable to be ruffled under the natural system of discipline than under the artificial

system. Instead of letting the pupils experience the harmful results which naturally follow from wrong conduct, the usual course pursued by teachers, and parents is to inflict themselves certain other painful results. A double mischief arises from this making as they do multiplied school laws. And identifying their own supremacy and dignity with the maintenance of these laws; and it happens that every transgression comes to be regarded as an offence against themselves, and a cause of anger on their part. Anger in a teacher towards the pupil, and in a pupil towards a teacher, is especially detrimental and immoral; because it weakens that bond of sympathy which is so essential to a beneficent control.

We therefore see by this method of discipline (natural discipline) - that it gives that rational comprehension of right and wrong conduct which results from actual experience of the good and evil consequences caused by them. The child suffers nothing more than the painful effect brought upon it by its own wrong actions, and the child recognizes more or less clearly the justice of the penalties. After having recognized the justice of the penalties, and receiving those penalties through the working of

things, 'rather than at the hands of individuals, its temper will be less disturbed, while the teacher occupying the comparatively passive position of taking care that the natural penalties are felt will preserve a comparative equanimity. And that mutual exasperation being therefore in a greater measure prevented, a much happier, and more influential state of feeling, will exist between the teacher and the pupils, and a great moral character will be developed from a disciplinary standpoint in the public school.

The purpose of punishment is to restore the offender to normal, healthy actions, and to unity with himself and to society. It is not to develop ill feelings towards authority. Herbert Spencer says, that the punishment must be of the same nature of the offence, and proportioned to it. For an example, the teacher should not keep a pupil after school, or assigning school lessons as punishment such as writing several pages of English Composition or committing to memory poetry, etc., When a boy or girl has committed a defence altogether contrary to the subject matter of the curriculum. The boy should be put to work at something that would remind him of the crime he has committed if the student willed to break the law, to break

with his better self, and with his social group, the punishment, to be of the same nature must work upon the pupils' will rather than his body. Muscular resistance and bodily pain are only the beginnings of the punishing process, and restoration must come after the use of the rod. The rod then does not remedy the offence, and therefore should not have been resorted to in the first place. Instead of remedying the conditions, it widens the breach between pupil and authority, and also between the child and the teacher, and makes the process much more complicated. The teacher has a right to be against the criminal, but he should be against him effectively, by standing for the good, and overcoming evil with good.

CONCLUSION.

Morality is a thing that can not be added or subtracted from human life. Morality can not be taught it must grow in the lives of the pupils by the constant moral touch of the teacher. Moral education is not put into the school curriculum by giving it a special period on the daily programme, if this was the method of moral education, there would be periods in the school when morality would not be present. Moral education is not omitted in schools be-

cause it is not named in the curriculum, but the highest type of manhood and womanhood is developed in schools where every subject and every exercise is inspired and guided by a high moral purpose. . .

Morality is enforced by that constitution of things whereby evil is self-destructive, and good is self-preservative. The constitution of things whereby evil is suicide and good self-conserving is the greatest sanction which morality possesses. . .

The individual whose life is conserved has the sense of righteousness of the principles upon which he acts. When the birth of the moral law in self-consciousness has once taken place, the tendency is strong to conceive of that law as approved by the ideal person, therefore the moral law is thought of as the gift of God.

So moral training brings the unfolding child of God into progressive adjustment with the moral order of the universe by the knowledge of the truth.

THE END.