CALVINISTIC THEORY OF EDUCATION

I

THE time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century was so big with events that it is easy to forget that the questions and problems of education received the attention of the Calvinistic Reformers as well as those of church and theology. Calvin himself tried to create an interest in pædagogical matters. "Although we accord the first place to the Word of God," he wrote in a prospectus of the elementary schools, "we do not reject good training. The Word of God is indeed the foundation of all learning, the liberal arts are the aids to the full knowledge of the Word, and not to be despised." "Education is necessary to secure public administration, to sustain the church unharmed, and to maintain humanity among men." These words were written before his banishment from Geneva (1538). But this banishment was a blessing in disguise. For in Strassburg Calvin found the school of Jh. Sturm, and the result was evident, when he, recalled from banishment, gave new ordinances as minister of the Genevan church. The matter laid down in that Order is of interest now as showing that Calvin took care for education.

Before him Ulrich Zwingli had published a short treatise on "The Christian Education of Boys" (1523). This was the first book that was written on education from the Protestant point of view.

But it was not from Zurich but from Geneva that a system of education spread through all the lands in which the principles of the Swiss Reformation found adherents. The Reformed Church in Holland, the Huguenots in France, the Puritans in England, and the Presbyterians in Scotland, followed in different ways the school system of the little city at the bend of "lac Léman."

At the beginning of the seventeenth century the educational ideas of Calvin were consistently practised in Holland; and in Scotland the Calvinistic system was more completely applied than in any other country. In the First Book of Discipline John Knox and his fellow-commissioners laid down: "Off necessitie we judge it that everie several Churche have a Scholmaister appointed, such a one as is able, at least, to teach Grammer and the Latin toung, yf the Toun be of any reputation. Yf it be Upaland,

whaire the people convene to doctrine bot once in the weeke, then must eathir the Reider or the Minister thair appointed, take cayre over the children and youth of the parische, to instruct them. . . ."

This is enough to show that Calvinism in the sixteenth century paid attention to the matter of education.

II

Pædagogics had always, however, the mark of their own times. In the period of the Reformation all problems of education disappeared behind the question of school organisation. Matters of a later era did not yet arise for discussion. Then the theory of education was the theory of the relation between church and school, educational books and the method of teaching. All this may seem remote enough from the great philosophical questions which concern the pædagogics of to-day. Nevertheless we cannot say that Calvinism did not give clear indications of sympathy with educational problems. Indeed, during the sixteenth and at the beginning of the seventeenth century, we dare say that Calvinistic educational principles were the most influential factor in the developmental history of Western Europe.

It cannot be denied, however, that little by little pædagogical problems ceased to claim the attention of the reformed people. Theological questions and ecclesiastical matters prevailed against all other departments of science. It is easy to understand how men bestowed their care, on education in the home; how men drew attention to the use of the Bible in the School; how men joined issue with a schoolmaster, who did not believe in the Word of God, on his unbelief; and how accordingly philosophical questions stood in abeyance. More surprising however is the fact that our Calvinistic fathers in the end of the seventeenth and during the eighteenth century did not understand that every method of learning has its bases in a principle. And so it is not astonishing that they made a trial of nearly every new theory of education which tendered its services.

We can understand why, in former days, Johan Amos Comenius was received into the reformed circles of Holland, for he was a Christian and he bore witness to his belief. But it is not easy to understand how Ratke should be recognised as a man from whom Holland could receive much; how the Philanthropists, in Calvinistic Holland, found a ring for their ideas; how it was

possible that schools that had grown out of the principles of Calvin had regard for the theories of Rousseau in the practice of Pestalozzi ; how reformed circles in later days said nothing against the humanistic philosophy of Fröbel and Herbart ; and how even in our own days the dangerous effect of the application of the evolutionary hypothesis to philosophy and psychology is not sufficiently appreciated. *That* indicates a lack of reflection on the theory of education in our circles. The gist of the matter is this : in each method we have the precipitation of a philosophical idea. *That* the reformed school has largely forgotten.

III

For that reason it is possible that to-day more than one antithesis is getting citizenship in the pædagogical city, while the Calvinism, which ought to take exception to this, is too silent a spectator. We have a movement for the individualising of education through special methods of teaching and learning ; and we have a movement for sociological education. We speak about individualistic and sociological education. From the beginning of the twentieth century we have made a fresh start. We have our statistical methods of acquiring information about the development of the child's mind. We have our systems of moral education. One speaks of naturalistic and of cultural education. And among all these one seeks in vain for a conception of life which combines all these different points of view. It seems to us that in seeking the cause of all this dissension we have to look to the old antithesis between two currents of philosophy. Material and spiritual views of life, psyche and logos, reality and idea, cause and purpose, form each in turn the point of departure for the pædagogical tendencies of our time. The reason for this is evident. For in education we have in one way to do with nature, with reality ; in another way with fixing a purpose, with norms, with dogmatics and truth. In one way nothing can be given to the child which it does not possess. To educate is to put in force the powers present, and then to give enrichment to the mind. But on the other hand our education is ruled by an educational purpose and an educational ideal. We want the child to attain to a definite ideal standard. Here the norms dominate. Which is now the most important and ruling factor in pædagogical thinking ? Is it the child's " psyche," or the religious and ethical norm ?

The antithesis here noted faces us constantly. Not only does it meet us in the pædagogical system of Herbart and Schleiermacher, and of Spencer and Natorp, but also in the theory of Dewey and Montessori, and that of Kerschensteiner and the school of Dalton.

The extremes of these conceptions—mechanism and determinism at the one end and rationalism and formalism at the other—are sharply contrasting.

What is then the task of Calvinistic science? We must be constantly conscious of our calling. The Calvinistic conception of the world embraces everything. There is no antithesis between cause and purpose. There is no contrast between individualism and social ideas. Calvinism maintains the thesis that in matters of a philosophical nature it is not: "this *or* this," but "this *and* this."

Individual education is not constantly contrary to social education. There is no society without individuals; and a growing up individual cannot be educated without social life. In our time the "doing-school" is propagated as the opposite of the "listening-school." This contra-distinction again is not found in the nature of the child life, nor in the psychological facts.

And we are surprised that over against such antithesis so little emphasis is laid on the riches of Calvinistic pædagogics. Faith in God, as the creator of the world and all human life, includes the unity of cause and purpose, of nature and idea, of norm and means, to teach obedience to the norms. And the fact that we are living in a world spoiled by sin does not annul this law.

IV

The great *idea* on which our conception is founded is that of the *organic order of all the works of God.* There is nothing in the world that does not refer to the Creator. Therefore it must be evident that all things on earth maintain relations with other things.

Here, of course, the question of conception is a fundamental one; and although I know that in our times too little allowance is made for the philosophical problem, I believe that only by philosophical reflection it will be possible to find the way among the thousand and one existing pædagogical theories. For every opinion has its own philosophy, even when it says that it has none. But although it seems to be allowed to each school to

have its own axiom, *it does not seem permissible to hold the supernatural explanation of life, as an axiom.*

Nevertheless, as Calvinists we maintain that axiom ; and it is only then we can maintain our Calvinistic science also, when we elaborate scientifically that idea.

Our axiom is not capable of proof ; but such is the case with every conception of the world. The argument of principles is always in the first instance, as well as in the last resort, the argument of belief. But this does not alter the fact that the principles are susceptible of close reasoning and logical approximation.

V

Now the theory of education is not only a science of the genesis of man—the science of child-development has here also a task—but it has also to point out the *means and the ways* by which the child can attain to the contemplated purpose. For every system of education has its purposes. For even where, because of a " principle," it seems impossible to speak of a purpose of education in common speech, there is nevertheless a purpose. The " free-growing " of Leo Tolstoy, for instance, is a purpose. It is the purpose of purposelessness. And this purposelessness springs from an idea, an axiom. It is not acquired by experience.

So in education we have always to do with (1) the concrete datum and (2) with purposes, that is to say, with ideas.

The concrete datum is dominated by the law of *causality*, and the purpose by the idea of the possibility of a *teleological* conception.

But a purposeful method is not possible without rules and norms ; that is to say : to get a purpose is finally to work with principles by *deduction.*

And so there appears in pædagogics the antithesis between experience and idea, and between induction and deduction. Old thinking and modern thought have chosen here : " or " . . . " or " . . . We do not.

At the outset we point out that the idea of experience requires an explanation. *What experience is, in fact,* can only be determined by philosophical reflection and metaphysical deduction. But on the other hand philosophy presupposes reality ; and a man without experience of life cannot be a good philosopher, his work merely smells of the midnight oil.

Therefore we can say that there is not such a contradiction

between experience and metaphysical contemplation and speculation as many men, who like to ventilate their ideas as transparent and simple, would have us believe.

Further, in recent times, in the schools of the natural philosophers, one observes that in the matter of understanding the vital function, power and matter and movement only are not sufficient to solve the problems of life. Not only Fechner, but also Driesch and Reinke and many other physicists grant reality; and also that without teleology, at least without presupposing finality, life is not to be comprehended.

After all, several sciences are not explicable without the inner teleological and ruling urge in the human mind. Therefore Eisler very properly observed that the consciousness of rules in the human mind finally is the last cause in the world for the growth of such ruling sciences as logic, ethics, and æsthetics.

Without *detached* rules, however—without " norma normans " —every science of rules will lose itself in subjectivism. This subjectivism leads to doubt; doubt to scepticism; scepticism to criticism; and criticism leads to belief in mechanism and an absolute causality. So the thinking of men has always moved in a cycle.

The Calvinistic " organic " view of life, however, emphasised the important point that *with the teleological principle* was to be accepted *the right of the norm*; for an idea without a norm is like a ship without a rudder. Too often in history this has been only too evident; but one man's fault is another man's lesson. So we propagate a theory of education that humbly looks to the highest norm—The Word of God.

VI

But there is more.

An organic conception embraces facts as well as ideas. For the facts are the means by which the purpose is effected; and the seeming difference and antithesis between " causa " and " telos " is a shadow of a difference only. When I say " causa " and " causality " I say " movement " and " direction "; *causality relates to the working effect of things;* and the *laws* which are accentuated by the world-view of causality refer to the *difference* of things *in* their *working method.* All different individuals, all different powers, are working in another manner, if they are indeed

different. So there emerges a law for each thing on earth; but a law always corresponds with a working method.

How else can it be with the *purpose* of things! For in the purpose is laid down the idea of the individual, the power, the thing. So the *idea refers to a method of being.*

So causality and purpose are in the same relationship as the work of an individual and his nature. But that, of course, means that in the ultimate analysis causality and purpose are in *one* living being, *one* living organisation. Thus, therefore, there is no antithesis in the one personality. There is no " this *or* this." They are both in *one*, and therefore *they are one.*

Such is the conception of our Calvinistic theory of education.

Facts and data are organised in the unity of education that is conducted by the purpose, and the purpose, in its turn, is given by the norms. But these norms again are given their shape and their reality by the facts and circumstances of to-day, of the real child, and the real means of education.

And that we can say, because we know that the origin of life is from God; that life is maintained by the same God, and that it shall revert to Him. Therefore His plan includes all things and all relations between things. But, if for all life our God drew up the plan, He also had all things in His mind, when as yet none of them was created or born. Therefore God knows all relations, and for Him there is no limitation. And because nothing exists that was not made by Him, there is also nothing that does not depend on His will and which is not living by His idea. In all things, in all matter, in all powers, in all concrete, and in all abstract data, we have to seek and to organise the idea of God. Existence and consciousness will then meet each other in the same origin—the thoughts of the Creator.

But in existence and consciousness it is the same idea which has reality, so that all things which are known as possessions of the mind are as real as the concrete reality all around us. Consequently that conception has reality as truly as the world which is seen and felt by the sensory perception. The same ideal good that is in the human mind also exists in the world of phenomena, which, indeed, only by antithesis to the Idea, for convenience sake, can be called pre-eminently " the reality."

In life all things are brought to the purpose by the Idea and plan of God and their purpose is " to God." Therefore our view of the world is primarily teleological.

But in our conceptions we have to do with a teleology that includes the causality. In the organic manner the purpose and the cause work into each other.

So our theistic conception avows a kind of dualism; not by any means, however, necessitating that two equal terms should be in opposition, not that matter and mind, reality and idea, "causa" and "telos" should have equivalent values, but so that the real being of the world and matter, of cause and power, should be accepted as all created for the sake of the Idea of God, that is to say for God's sake.

For of the reconciling and reuniting of the contradictions, of which there seems to be an abundance, according to human insight, in the great struggle of opinions in our age, Christ, in a holy sense, is the author and the cause. Whoever, therefore, believes in Him, is on the way to a holy monism.

VII

So we see that in our organic conception, the experimental and fundamental method, induction and deduction, do not exclude each other. But the idea of an organic conception forbids *any* attempt at bifurcation.

There is therefore in our pædagogics no question of the necessity of the separation of the individual and social life. We may distinguish; yes, but both these are valuable only while each is inseparably linked with the other. For an individual life without social life is a hopeless thing; and social life without individuals is a phantom. For they both are what they are by the idea of Him who has given one law for all His creation—the law of organic unity.

These thoughts are guiding us in our pædagogics, in our theory of Child-development, and very specially in our study of the psychology of children.

It is frequently forgotten that it is not possible to describe the development of a child as a regulation development. For it must be constantly insisted upon that no general rule can be given that will fit all cases. Social circumstances create distinct types. For in the city, with its industry and pauperism, youth is subjected to a different law of development from that which obtains in a little rural village. Here also we have an organic compound of social and individual influences. The individuals make and compose the social life, but the type of social life gives

colour and form to each individual, either by direct influence or by reaction.

Therefore we are always afraid to generalise in matters of psychology, above all in the psychology of children, and in cases of child-development. It is true, that it is an arduous task to seek the relations between masses of different data ; but Calvinistic science was never afraid to set its shoulders to an onerous duty.

VIII

But I believe that our Calvinistic theory of education has an opportunity to render valuable service to youth in our time, when so many schools of educationists put their systems on the markets with their labels : " *not* this *but* this." We as pædagogues should try to propagate the *organic system of pædagogics*, and this system embraces the totality of life, all the realities, and all the ideas, as far as these ideas have grown from the ideas of our God which are revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures.

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