

The Philosophical Propaedeutic*

(1808-11)

By

G. W. F. Hegel

The Science of Laws, Morals and Religion**[For the Lower Class]****Outlines of The Science of Laws, Morals and Religion****Second Part****Science of Duties or Morals****[passages dealing directly with education]**

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To **Theoretic Education** there belong variety and definiteness of knowledge and the ability to see objects from points of view from which things are to be judged. In addition one should have a sense for objects in their free independence without introducing a subjective interest.

Explanatory: Variety of knowledge in-and-for-itself belongs to education for the reason that man, through this, elevates himself above the particular knowledge of insignificant things that surround him to a universal knowledge through which he attains to a greater share in the common stock of information valid for other men and comes into the possession of *universally interesting* objects. When man goes out beyond his immediate knowledge and experience he learns that there are better modes of behaviour and of treating things than his own and that his own are not necessarily the only ones. He separates himself from himself and comes to distinguish the essential from the unessential. *Accuracy of information* relates to essential distinctions, those distinctions which appertain to objects under all circumstances. Education implies the forming of an opinion regarding relations and objects of the actual world. For this it is requisite that one knows what the nature and the purpose of a thing is and what relations it has to other things. These points of view are not immediately gained through sensuous intuition but through attentive study of the thing, through reflection on its purpose and essence, and of whether the means of realizing the same are adequate. The uneducated man remains in the state of simple sensuous intuition, his eyes are not open and he does not see what lies at his very feet. With him it is all subjective seeing and apprehension. He does not see the essential thing. He knows only the nature of things approximately and this never accurately, for it is only the knowledge of general points of view that enables one to decide what is essential. They present the important aspects of things and contain the principal categories under which external existences are classified, and thus the work of apprehending them is rendered easier and more accurate.

The opposite of not knowing how to judge is to make *rash* judgements about everything without understanding them. Such rash judgements are based on partial views, in which one side is seized and the others overlooked, so that the true concept of the thing is missed. An educated man knows at once the *limits of his capacity for judgement*.

Moreover, there belongs to culture the sense for the *objective in its freedom*. It consists in this: that I do not seek my special subjectivity in the

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object but consider and treat the objects as they are in-and-for-themselves in their free idiosyncrasy: that I interest myself in them without seeking any *gain* for myself. Such an unselfish interest lies in the study of the sciences when one cultivates them for themselves. The desire to make use of natural objects involves the destruction of those objects. The interest for the fine arts is also an unselfish one. Art exhibits things in their living independence and leaves out the imperfect and ill formed and what has suffered from external circumstances. The objective *treatment* consists in this: that it has the *form of the universal* without caprice, whims or arbitrariness and is freed from what is strange or peculiar, etc. and, if one's aim is the genuine *object itself* and not a selfish interest, it must be grasped in the inner essential nature.

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Practical Education [*Bildung*] entails that man, in the gratification of his natural wants and impulses, shall exhibit that prudence and temperance which lie in the limits of his necessity, namely, self-preservation. He must (a) stand away from and be free from the natural (b) on the other hand, be *absorbed* in his avocation, in what is essential and therefore, (c) be able to confine his gratification of the natural wants not only within the limits of necessity but also to *sacrifice* the same for higher duties.

Explanatory: The freedom of man, as regards natural impulses, consists not in his *being rid* of such impulses altogether and thus striving to escape from his nature but in his recognition of them as a necessity and as something rational; and in realizing them accordingly through his will, he finds himself constrained only in so far as he creates for himself accidental and arbitrary impressions and purposes in opposition to the Universal. The specific, accurate measure, to be followed in the gratification of wants, and in the use of physical and spiritual powers, cannot be accurately given but each can learn for himself what is useful or detrimental to him. **Temperance** in the gratification of natural impulses and in the use of bodily powers is, as such, necessary to *health*. Health is an essential condition for the use of mental powers in fulfilling the higher vocation of man. If the body is not preserved in its proper condition, if it is injured in any one of its functions, then it obliges its possessor to make of it a special object of his care and, by this means, it becomes something dangerous, *absorbing more than its due share of the attention of the mind*. Furthermore, excess in the use or disuse of the physical or mental powers results in *dullness and debility*.

Finally, moderation is closely connected with **Prudence**. The latter consists in reflecting on what one is doing, so that in his enjoyment or work he is not wholly given up to this or that individual state, but remains open to consider something else which may also be necessary. A prudent person distinguishes himself mentally from his condition, his feeling, his occupation. This attitude of not being completely absorbed in one's condition is on the whole requisite in the case of impulses and aims which though necessary are not essential. On the other hand, in the case of a genuine aim or occupation, one's mind must be present in all its earnestness and not at the same time be aloof from it. Hence Prudence consists in being aware of all the details and aspects of the work.

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As to what concerns one's specific *calling*, which appears as **Fate**, this should not be thought of in the form of an external necessity. It is to be taken up freely, and freely endured and pursued.

Explanatory: With regard to the external circumstances of his lot and all

that he *immediately is*, a man must so conduct himself as to make it his own; he must deprive them of the form of external existence. It makes no difference in what external condition man finds himself through good or bad fortune, provided that he is just and right in what he is and does, i.e. that he fulfils all sides of his calling. The **Vocation** of a man, whatever his condition in life may be, is a manifold substance. It is, as it were, a material or stuff which he must elaborate in every direction until it has nothing alien, brittle and refractory within it. In so far as he has made it perfectly his own for himself, he is free therein. A man becomes the prey of discontentment chiefly through the circumstance that he does not fulfil his calling. He enters into a relation which he fails to assimilate thoroughly; at the same time he belongs to this calling; he cannot free himself from it. He lives and acts, therefore, in an adverse relation to himself.

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To be **Faithful and Obedient** in his vocation as well as *submissive to his fate* and *self-denying* in his acts, these virtues have their ground in the giving up of vanity, self-conceit, and selfishness in regard to things that are in and for themselves necessary.

Explanatory: The Vocation is something universal and necessary, and constitutes a side of the social life of humanity. It is, therefore, one of the *divisions of human labour*. When a man has a Vocation, he enters into cooperation and participation with the Whole. Through this he becomes objective. The Vocation is a particular, limited sphere, yet it constitutes a necessary part of the whole, and, besides this, is *in-itself a whole*. If a man is *to become something he must know how to limit himself*, that is, make some speciality his Vocation. Then his work ceases to be an irksome restraint to him. He then comes to be at unity with himself, with his externality, with his sphere. He is a universal, a whole. Whenever a man makes something trifling, i.e. unessential or nugatory, his object and aim, then the interest lies not in an object as such, but in it as his object. The trifling object is of no importance by itself, but has importance only to the person who busies himself with it. One sees in a trifling object only oneself; there can be, for example, *a moral vanity*, when a man thinks on the excellence of his acts and is more interested in himself than in the thing. The man who does small things faithfully shows himself capable of greater ones, because he has shown his *obedience*, his self-sacrifice in regard to his own wishes, inclinations and fancies.

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Through intellectual and moral education a man receives the capacity for *filling duties toward others*, which duties may be called real duties since the duties which relate to his own education are, in comparison, of a more *formal* nature.

* Scanned from G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophical Propaedeutic*, Translated by A. V. Miller, Editors: Michael George and Andrew Vincent, New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986, pp. 42-45.