

Space for Notes



On The Future of Our Educational Institutions*

By Friedrich Nietzsche

First Lecture
(Delivered on the 16th of January 1872).



Rolandseck with Drachenfels in distance

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We had reached our destination: the solemnisation of our rite began. As on the previous occasion, five years ago, the Rhine was once more flowing beneath a light mist, the sky seemed bright and the woods exhaled the same fragrance. We took our places on the farthest corner of the most distant bench; sitting there we were almost concealed, and neither the philosopher nor his companion could see our faces. We were alone: when the sound of the philosopher's voice reached us, it had become so blended with the rustling leaves and with the buzzing murmur of the myriads of living things inhabiting the wooded height, that it almost seemed like the music of nature; as a sound it resembled nothing more than a distant monotonous plaint. We were indeed undisturbed.

Some time elapsed in this way, and while the glow of sunset grew steadily paler the recollection of our youthful undertaking in the cause of culture waxed ever more vivid. It seemed to us as if we owed the greatest debt of gratitude to that little society we had founded; for it had done more than merely supplement our public school training; it had actually been the only fruitful society we had had, and within its frame we even placed our public school life, as a purely isolated factor helping us in our general efforts to attain to culture. We knew this, that, thanks to our little society, no thought of embracing any particular career had ever entered our minds in those days. The all too frequent exploitation of youth by the State, for its own purposes -- that is to say, so that it may rear useful officials as quickly as possible and guarantee their unconditional obedience to it by means of excessively severe examinations -- had remained quite foreign to our education. And to show how little we had been actuated by thoughts of utility or by the prospect of speedy advancement and rapid success, on that day we were struck by the comforting consideration that, even then, we had not yet decided what we should be -- we had not even troubled ourselves at all on this

head. Our little society had sown the seeds of this happy indifference in our souls and for it alone we were prepared to celebrate the anniversary of its foundation with hearty gratitude. I have already pointed out, I think, that in the eyes of the present age, which is so intolerant of anything that is not useful, such purposeless enjoyment of the moment, such a lulling of one's self in the cradle of the present, must seem almost incredible and at all events blameworthy. How useless we were! And how proud we were of being useless! We used even to quarrel with each other as to which of us should have the glory of being the more useless. We wished to attach no importance to anything, to have strong views about nothing, to aim at nothing; we wanted to take no thought for the morrow, and desired no more than to recline comfortably like good-for-nothings on the threshold of the present; and we did -- bless us!

-- That, ladies and gentlemen, was our standpoint then!--

Absorbed in these reflections, I was just about to give an answer to the question of the future of our Educational Institutions in the same self-sufficient way, when it gradually dawned upon me that the "natural music," coming from the philosopher's bench had lost its original character and traveled to us in much more piercing and distinct tones than before. Suddenly I became aware that I was listening, that I was eavesdropping, and was passionately interested, with both ears keenly alive to every sound. I nudged my friend who was evidently somewhat tired, and I whispered: "Don't fall asleep! There is something for us to learn over there. It applies to us, even though it be not meant for us."

For instance, I heard the younger of the two men defending himself with great animation while the philosopher rebuked him with ever increasing vehemence. "You are unchanged," he cried to him, "unfortunately unchanged. It is quite incomprehensible to me how you can still be the same as you were seven years ago, when I saw you for the last time and left you with so much misgiving. I fear I must once again divest you, however reluctantly, of the skin of modern culture which you have donned meanwhile; -- and what do I find beneath it? The same immutable 'intelligible' character forsooth, according to Kant; but unfortunately the same unchanged 'intellectual' character, too--which may also be a necessity, though not a comforting one. I ask myself to what purpose have I lived as a philosopher, if, possessed as you are of no mean intelligence and a genuine thirst for knowledge, all the year you have spent in my company have left no deeper impression upon you. At present you are behaving as if you had not even heard the cardinal principle of all culture, which I went to such pains to inculcate upon you during our former intimacy. Tell me, -- what was that principle?"

"I remember," replied the scolded pupil, "you used to say no one would strive to attain to culture if he knew how incredibly small the number of really cultured people actually is, and can ever be. And even this number of really cultured people would not be possible if a prodigious multitude, from reasons opposed to their nature and only led on by an alluring delusion, did not devote themselves to education. It were therefore a mistake publicly to reveal the ridiculous disproportion between the number of really cultured people and the enormous magnitude of the educational apparatus. Here lies the whole secret of culture -- namely, that an innumerable host of men struggle to achieve it and work hard to that end, ostensibly in their own interests, whereas at bottom it is only in order that it may be possible for the few to attain to it."

"That is the principle," said the philosopher, -- "and yet you could so far forget yourself as to believe that you are one of the few? This thought has occurred to you -- I can see. That, however, is the result of the worthless character of

modern education. The rights of genius are being democratised in order that people may be relieved of the labour of acquiring culture, and their need of it. Every one wants if possible to recline in the shade of the tree planted by genius, and to escape the dreadful necessity of working for him, so that his procreation may be made possible. What? Are you too proud to be a teacher? Do you despise the thronging multitude of learners? Do you speak contemptuously of the teacher's calling? And, aping my mode of life, would you fain live in solitary seclusion, hostilely isolated from that multitude? Do you suppose that you can reach at one bound what I ultimately had to win for myself only after long and determined struggles, in order even to be able to live like a philosopher? And do you not fear that solitude will wreak its vengeance upon you? Just try living the life of a hermit of culture. One must be blessed with overflowing wealth in order to live for the good of all on one's own resources! Extraordinary youngsters! They felt it incumbent upon them to imitate what is precisely most difficult and most high, -- what is possible only to the master, when they, above all, should know how difficult and dangerous this is, and how many excellent gifts may be ruined by attempting it!"

"I will conceal nothing from you, sir," the companion replied. "I have heard too much from your lips at odd times and have been too long in your company to be able to surrender myself entirely to our present system of education and instruction. I am too painfully conscious of the disastrous errors and abuses to which you used to call my attention--though I very well know that I am not strong enough to hope for any success were I to struggle ever so valiantly against them. I was overcome by a feeling of general discouragement; my recourse to solitude was the result neither of pride nor arrogance. I would fain describe to you what I take to be the nature of the educational questions now attracting such enormous and pressing attention. It seemed to me that I must recognise two main directions in the forces at work -- two seemingly antagonistic tendencies, equally deleterious in their action, and ultimately combining to produce their results: a striving to achieve the greatest possible expansion of education on the one hand, and a tendency to minimise and weaken it on the other. The first-named would, for various reasons, spread learning among the greatest number of people; the second would compel education to renounce its highest, noblest and sublimest claims in order to subordinate itself to some other department of life -- such as the service of the State.

"I believe I have already hinted at the quarter in which the cry for the greatest possible expansion of education is most loudly raised. This expansion belongs to the most beloved of the dogmas of modern political economy. As much knowledge and education as possible; therefore the greatest possible supply and demand -- hence as much happiness as possible: -- that is the formula. In this case utility is made the object and goal of education, -- utility in the sense of gain -- the greatest possible pecuniary gain. In the quarter now under consideration culture would be defined as that point of vantage which enables one to 'keep in the van of one's age,' from which one can see all the easiest and best roads to wealth, and with which one controls all the means of communication between men and nations. The purpose of education, according to this scheme, would be to rear the most 'current' men possible, -- 'current' being used here in the sense in which it is applied to the coins of the realm. The greater the number of such men, the happier a nation will be; and this precisely is the purpose of our modern educational institutions: to help every one, as far as his nature will allow, to become 'current'; to develop him so that his particular degree of knowledge and science may yield him the greatest possible amount of happiness and pecuniary gain. Every one must be able to form some sort of estimate of himself; he must know how much he may reasonably expect from

life. The 'bond between intelligence and property' which this point of view postulates has almost the force of a moral principle. In this quarter all culture is loathed which isolates, which sets goals beyond gold and gain, and which requires time: it is customary to dispose of such eccentric tendencies in education as systems of 'Higher Egotism,' or of 'Immoral Culture -- Epicureanism.' According to the morality reigning here, the demands are quite different; what is required above all is 'rapid education,' so that a money-earning creature may be produced with all speed; there is even a desire to make this education so thorough that a creature may be reared that will be able to earn a great deal of money. Men are allowed only the precise amount of culture which is compatible with the interests of gain; but that amount, at least, is expected from them. In short: mankind has a necessary right to happiness on earth -- that is why culture is necessary -- but on that account alone!"

"I must just say something here," said the philosopher. "In the case of the view you have described so clearly, there arises the great and awful danger that at some time or other the great masses may overleap the middle classes and spring headlong into this earthly bliss. That is what is now called 'the social question.' It might seem to these masses that education for the greatest number of men was only a means to the earthly bliss of the few: the 'greatest possible expansion of education' so enfeebles education that it can no longer confer privileges or inspire respect. The most general form of culture is simply barbarism. But I do not wish to interrupt your discussion."

The companion continued: "There are yet other reasons, besides this beloved economical dogma, for the expansion of education that is being striven after so valiantly everywhere. In some countries the fear of religious oppression is so general, and the dread of its results so marked, that people in all classes of society long for culture and eagerly absorb those elements of it which are supposed to scatter the religious instincts. Elsewhere the State, in its turn, strives here and there for its own preservation, after the greatest possible expansion of education, because it always feels strong enough to bring the most determined emancipation, resulting from culture, under its yoke, and readily approves of everything which tends to extend culture, provided that it be of service to its officials or soldiers, but in the main to itself, in its competition with other nations. In this case, the foundations of a State must be sufficiently broad and firm to constitute a fitting counterpart to the complicated arches of culture which it supports, just as in the first case the traces of some former religious tyranny must still be felt for a people to be driven to such desperate remedies. Thus, wherever I hear the masses raise the cry for an expansion of education, I am wont to ask myself whether it is stimulated by a greedy lust of gain and property, by the memory of a former religious persecution, or by the prudent egotism of the State itself.

"On the other hand, it seemed to me that there was yet another tendency, not so clamorous, perhaps, but quite as forcible, which, hailing from various quarters, was animated by a different desire, -- the desire to minimise and weaken education.

"In all cultivated circles people are in the habit of whispering to one another words something after this style: that it is a general fact that, owing to the present frantic exploitation of the scholar in the service of his science, his education becomes every day more accidental and more uncertain. For the study of science has been extended to such interminable lengths that he who, though not exceptionally gifted, yet possesses fair abilities, will need to devote himself exclusively to one branch and ignore all others if he ever wish to achieve

anything in his work. Should he then elevate himself above the herd by means of his specialty, he still remains one of them in regard to all else, -- that is to say, in regard to all the most important things in life. Thus, a specialist in science gets to resemble nothing so much as a factory workman who spends his whole life in turning one particular screw or handle on a certain instrument or machine, at which occupation he acquires the most consummate skill. In Germany, where we know how to drape such painful facts with the glorious garments of fancy, this narrow specialisation on the part of our learned men is even admired, and their ever greater deviation from the path of true culture is regarded as a moral phenomenon. 'Fidelity in small things,' 'dogged faithfulness,' become expressions of highest eulogy, and the lack of culture outside the specialty is flaunted abroad as a sign of noble sufficiency.

"For centuries it has been an understood thing that one alluded to scholars alone when one spoke of cultured men; but experience tells us that it would be difficult to find any necessary relation between the two classes today. For at present the exploitation of a man for the purpose of science is accepted everywhere without the slightest scruple. Who still ventures to ask, What may be the value of a science which consumes its minions in this vampire fashion? The division of labour in science is practically struggling towards the same goal which religions in certain parts of the world are consciously striving after, -- that is to say, towards the decrease and even the destruction of learning. That, however, which, in the case of certain religions, is a perfectly justifiable aim, both in regard to their origin and their history, can only amount to self-immolation when transferred to the realm of science. In all matters of a general and serious nature, and above all, in regard to the highest philosophical problems, we have now already reached a point at which the scientific man, as such, is no longer allowed to speak. On the other hand, that adhesive and tenacious stratum which has now filled up the interstices between the sciences -- Journalism -- believes it has a mission to fulfil here, and this it does, according to its own particular lights -- that is to say, as its name implies, after the fashion of a day-labourer.

"It is precisely in journalism that the two tendencies combine and become one. The expansion and the diminution of education here join hands. The newspaper actually steps into the place of culture, and he who, even as a scholar, wishes to voice any claim for education, must avail himself of this viscous stratum of communication which cements the seams between all forms of life, all classes, all arts, and all sciences, and which is as firm and reliable as news paper is, as a rule. In the newspaper the peculiar educational aims of the present culminate, just as the journalist, the servant of the moment, has stepped into the place of the genius, of the leader for all time, of the deliverer from the tyranny of the moment. Now, tell me, distinguished master, what hopes could I still have in a struggle against the general topsy-turvification of all genuine aims for education; with what courage can I, a single teacher, step forward, when I know that the moment any seeds of real culture are sown, they will be mercilessly crushed by the roller of this pseudo-culture? Imagine how useless the most energetic work on the part of the individual teacher must be, who would fain lead a pupil back into the distant and evasive Hellenic world and to the real home of culture, when in less than an hour, that same pupil will have recourse to a newspaper, the latest novel, or one of those learned books, the very style of which already bears the revolting impress of modern barbaric culture --"

"Now, silence a minute!" interjected the philosopher in a strong and sympathetic voice. "I understand you now, and ought never to have spoken so crossly to you. You are altogether right, save in your despair. I shall now proceed to say a few

words of consolation.”

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Third Lecture
(Delivered on the 27th of February 1872.)

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“You are right, my friend,” said the philosopher, “but whence comes the urgent necessity for a surplus of schools for culture, which further gives rise to the necessity for a surplus of teachers? -- when we so clearly see that the demand for a surplus springs from a sphere which is hostile to culture, and that the consequences of this surplus only lead to non-culture. Indeed, we can discuss this dire necessity only in so far as the modern State is willing to discuss these things with us, and is prepared to follow up its demands by force: which phenomenon certainly makes the same impression upon most people as if they were addressed by the eternal law of things. For the rest, a ‘Culture-State’, to use the current expression, which makes such demands, is rather a novelty, and has only come to a ‘self-understanding’ within the last half century, i.e. in a period when (to use the favourite popular word) so many ‘self-understood’ things came into being, but which are in themselves not ‘self-understood’ at all. This right to higher education has been taken so seriously by the most powerful of modern States -- Prussia -- that the objectionable principle it has adopted, taken in connection with the well-known daring and hardihood of this State, is seen to have a menacing and dangerous consequence for the true German spirit; for we see endeavours being made in this quarter to raise the public school, formally systematised, up to the so-called ‘level of the time’. Here is to be found all that mechanism by means of which as many scholars as possible are urged on to take up courses of public school training: here, indeed, the State has its most powerful inducement -- the concession of certain privileges respecting military service, with the natural consequence that, according to the unprejudiced evidence of statistical officials, by this, and by this only, can we explain the universal congestion of all Prussian public schools, and the urgent and continual need for new ones. What more can the State do for a surplus of educational institutions than bring all the higher and the majority of the lower civil service appointments, the right of entry to the universities, and even the most influential military posts into close connection with the public school: and all this in a country where both universal military service and the highest offices of the State unconsciously attract all gifted natures to them. The public school is here looked upon as an honourable aim, and every one who feels himself urged on to the sphere of government will be found on his way to it. This is a new and quite original occurrence: the State assumes the attitude of a mystagogue of culture, and, whilst it promotes its own ends, it obliges every one of its servants not to appear in its presence without the torch of universal State education in their hands, by the flickering light of which they may again recognize the State as the highest goal, as the reward of all their strivings after education.

“Now this last phenomenon should indeed surprise them; it should remind them of that allied, slowly understood tendency of a philosophy which was formerly promoted for reasons of State, namely, the tendency of the Hegelian philosophy: yea, it would perhaps be no exaggeration to say that, in the subordination of all strivings after education to reasons of State, Prussia has appropriated, with success, the principle and the useful heirloom of the Hegelian philosophy, whose apotheosis of the State in this subordination certainly reaches its height.”

“But,” said the philosopher’s companion, “what purposes can the State have in view with such a strange aim? For that it has some State objects in view is seen in the manner in which the conditions of Prussian schools are admired by, meditated upon, and occasionally imitated by other States. These other States obviously presuppose something here that, if adopted, would tend towards the maintenance and power of the State, like our well-known and popular conscription. Where every one proudly wears his soldier’s uniform at regular intervals, where almost every one has absorbed a uniform type of national culture through the public schools, enthusiastic hyperboles may well be uttered concerning the systems employed in former times, and a form of State omnipotence which was attained only in antiquity, and which almost every young man, by both instinct and training, thinks it is the crowning glory and highest aim of human beings to reach.”

“Such a comparison,” said the philosopher, “would be quite hyperbolic, and would not hobble along on one leg only. For, indeed, the ancient State emphatically did not share the utilitarian point of view of recognizing as culture only what was directly useful to the State itself, and was far from wishing to destroy those impulses which did not seem to be immediately applicable. For this very reason the profound Greek had for the State that strong feeling of admiration and thankfulness which is so distasteful to modern men; because he clearly recognized not only that without such State protection the germs of his culture could not develop, but also that all his inimitable and perennial culture had flourished so luxuriantly under the wise and careful guardianship of the protection afforded by the State. The State was for his culture not a supervisor, regulator, and watchman, but a vigorous and muscular companion and friend, ready for war, who accompanied his noble, admired, and, as it were, ethereal friend through disagreeable reality, earning his thanks therefore. This, however, does not happen when a modern State lays claim to such hearty gratitude because it renders such chivalrous service to German culture and art; for in this regard its past is as ignominious as its present, as a proof of which we have but to think of the manner in which the memory of our great poets and artists is celebrated in German cities, and how the highest objects of these German masters are supported on the part of the State.

“There must therefore be peculiar circumstances surrounding both this purpose towards which the State is tending, and which always promotes what is here called ‘education’; and surrounding likewise the culture thus promoted, which subordinates itself to this purpose of the State. With the real German spirit and the education derived therefrom, such as I have slowly outlined for you, this purpose of the State is at war, hiddenly or openly: the spirit of education, which is welcomed and encouraged with such interest by the State, and owing to which the schools of this country are so much admired abroad, must accordingly originate in a sphere that never comes into contact with this true German spirit: with that spirit which speaks to us so wondrously from the inner heart of the German Reformation, German music, and German philosophy, and which, like a noble exile, is regarded with such indifference and scorn by the luxurious education afforded by the State. This spirit is a stranger: it passes by in solitary sadness, and far away from it the censer of pseudo-culture is swung backwards and forwards, which, amidst the acclamations of ‘educated’ teachers and journalists, arrogates to itself its name and privileges, and metes out insulting treatment to the word ‘German’. Why does the State require that surplus of educational institutions, of teachers? Why this education of the masses on such an extended scale? Because the true German spirit is hated, because the aristocratic nature of true culture is feared, because the people endeavour in this way to drive single great individuals into self-exile, so that the claims of the

masses to education may be, so to speak, planted down and carefully tended, in order that the many may in this way endeavour to escape the rigid and strict discipline of the few great leaders, so that the masses may be persuaded that they can easily find the path for themselves -- following the guiding star of the State!

“A new phenomenon! The State as the guiding star of culture! In the meantime one thing consoles me: This German spirit, which people are combating so much, and for which they have substituted a gaudily *locum tenens*, this spirit is brave: it will fight and redeem itself into a purer age, noble, as it is now, and victorious, as it one day will be, it will always preserve in its mind a certain pitiful toleration of the State, if the latter, hard-pressed in the hour of extremity, secures such a pseudo-culture as its associate. For what, after all, do we know about the difficult task of governing men, i.e. to keep law, order, quietness, and peace among millions of boundlessly egotistical, unjust, unreasonable, dishonourable, envious, malignant, and hence very narrow-minded and perverse human beings; and thus to protect the few things that the State has conquered for itself against covetous neighbours and jealous robbers? Such a hard-pressed State holds out its arms to any associate, grasps at any straw; and when such an associate does introduce himself with flowery eloquence, when he adjudges the State, as Hegel did, to be an ‘absolutely complete ethical organism’, the be-all and end-all of every one’s education, and goes on to indicate how he himself can best promote the interests of the State -- who will be surprised, if, without further parley, the State falls upon his neck and cries aloud in a barbaric voice of full conviction: ‘Yes! Thou art education! Thou art indeed culture!’

Fourth Lecture
(Delivered on the 5th of March 1972)

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The philosopher once more began to speak: “Be careful to remember, my friend,” said he, “there are two things you must not confuse. A man must learn a great deal that he may live and take part in the struggle for existence; but everything that he as an individual learns and does with this end in view has nothing whatever to do with culture. This latter only takes its beginning in a sphere that lies far above the world of necessity, indigence, and struggle for existence. The question now is to what extent a man values his ego in comparison with other egos, how much of his strength he uses up in the endeavour to earn his living. Many a one, by stoically confining his needs within a narrow compass, will shortly and easily reach the sphere in which he may forget, and, as it were, shake off his ego, so that he can enjoy perpetual youth in a solar system of timeless and impersonal things. Another widens the scope and needs of his ego as much as possible, and builds the mausoleum of this ego in vast proportions, as if he were prepared to fight and conquer that terrible adversary, Time. In this instinct also we may see a longing for immortality: wealth and power, wisdom, presence of mind, eloquence, a flourishing outward aspect, a renowned name -- all these are merely turned into the means by which an insatiable, personal will to live craves for new life, with which, again, it hankers after an eternity that is at last seen to be illusory.

“But even in this highest form of the ego, in the enhanced needs of such a distended and, as it were, collective individual, true culture is never touched upon; and if, for example, art is sought after, only its disseminating and stimulating actions come into prominence, i.e. those which least give rise to pure

and noble art, and most of all to low and degraded forms of it. For in all his efforts, however great and exceptional they seem to the onlooker, he never succeeds in freeing himself from his own hankering and restless personality: that illuminated, ethereal sphere where one may contemplate without the obstruction of one's own personality continually recedes from him -- and thus, let him learn, travel, and collect as he may, he must always live an exiled life at a remote distance from a higher life and from true culture. For true culture would scorn to contaminate itself with the needy and covetous individual; it well knows how to give the slip to the man who would fain employ it as a means of attaining to egoistic ends; and if any one cherishes the belief that he has firmly secured it as a means of livelihood, and that he can procure the necessities of life by its sedulous cultivation, then it suddenly steals away with noiseless steps and an air of derisive mockery.

"I will thus ask you, my friend, not to confound this culture, this sensitive, fastidious, ethereal goddess, with that useful maid-of-all-work which is also called 'culture', but which is only the intellectual servant and counselor of one's practical necessities, wants, and means of livelihood. Every kind of training, however, which holds out the prospect of bread-winning as its end aim, is not a training for culture as we understand the word; but merely a collection of precepts and directions to show how, in the struggle for existence, a man may preserve and protect his own person. It may be freely admitted that for the great majority of men such a course of instruction is of the highest importance; and the more arduous the struggle is the more intensely must the young man strain every nerve to utilize his strength to the best advantage.

"But -- let no one think for a moment that the schools which urge him on to this struggle and prepare him for it are in any way seriously to be considered as establishments of culture. They are institutions which teach one how to take part in the battle of life; whether they promise to turn out civil servants, or merchants, or officers, or wholesale dealers, or farmers, or physicians, or men with a technical training. The regulations and standards prevailing at such institutions differ from those in a true educational institution; and what in the latter is permitted, and even freely held out as often as possible, ought to be considered as a criminal offence in the former.

"Let me give you an example. If you wish to guide a young man on the path of true culture, beware of interrupting his naive, confident, and, as it were, immediate and personal relationship with nature. The woods, the rocks, the winds, the vulture, the flowers, the butterfly, the meads, the mountain slopes, must all speak to him in their own language; in them he must, as it were, come to know himself again in countless reflections and images, in a variegated round of changing visions; and in this way he will unconsciously and gradually feel the metaphysical unity of all things in the great image of nature, and at the same time tranquillize his soul in the contemplation of her eternal endurance and necessity. But how many young men should be permitted to grow up in such close and almost personal proximity to nature! The others must learn another truth betimes: how to subdue nature to themselves. Here is an end of this naive metaphysics; and the physiology of plants and animals, geology, inorganic chemistry, force their devotees to view nature from an altogether different standpoint. What is lost by this new point of view is not only a poetical phantasmagoria, but the instinctive, true, and unique point of view, instead of which we have shrewd and clever calculations, and, so to speak, overreachings of nature. Thus to the truly cultured man is vouchsafed the inestimable benefit of being able to remain faithful, without a break, to the contemplative instincts of his childhood, and so to attain to a calmness, unity, consistency, and harmony

which can never be even thought of by a man who is compelled to fight in the struggle for existence.

“You must not think, however, that I wish to withhold all praise from our primary and secondary schools: I honour the seminaries where boys learn arithmetic and master modern languages, and study geography and the marvellous discoveries made in natural science. I am quite prepared to say further that those youths who pass through the better class of secondary schools are well entitled to make the claims put forward by the full-fledged public school boy; and the time is certainly not far distant when such pupils will be everywhere freely admitted to the universities and positions under the government, which has hitherto been the case only with scholars from the public schools -- of our present public schools, be it noted! I cannot, however, refrain from adding the melancholy reflection: if it be true that secondary and public schools are, on the whole, working so heartily in common towards the same ends, and differ from each other only in such a slight degree, that they may take equal rank before the tribunal of the State, then we completely lack another kind of educational institutions: those for the development of culture! To say the least, the secondary schools cannot be reproached with this; for they have up to the present propitiously and honourably followed up tendencies of a lower order, but one nevertheless highly necessary. In the public schools, however, there is very much less honesty and very much less ability too; for in them we find an instinctive feeling of shame, the unconscious perception of the fact that the whole institution has been ignominiously degraded, and that the sonorous words of wise and apathetic teachers are contradictory to the dreary, barbaric, and sterile reality. So there are no true cultural institutions! And in those very places where a pretence to culture is still kept up, we find the people more hopeless, atrophied, and discontented than in the secondary schools, where the so-called ‘realistic’ subjects are taught! Besides this, only think how immature and uninformed one must be in the company of such teachers when one actually misunderstands the rigorously defined philosophical expressions ‘real’ and ‘realism’ to such a degree as to think them the contraries of mind and matter, and to interpret ‘realism’ as ‘the road to knowledge, formation and mastery of reality.’

“I for my own part know of only two exact contraries: institutions for teaching culture and institutions for teaching how to succeed in life. All our present institutions belong to the second class; but I am speaking only of the first.” About two hours went by while the philosophically-minded couple chatted about such startling questions. Night slowly fell in the meantime; and when in the twilight the philosopher’s voice had sounded like natural music through the woods, it now rang out in the profound darkness of the night when he was speaking with excitement or even passionately; his tones hissing and thundering far down the valley, and reverberating among the trees and rocks. Suddenly he was silent: he had just repeated, almost pathetically, the words, “we have no true educational institutions; we have no true educational institutions” when something fell down just in front of him -- it might have been a fir-cone -- and his dog barked and ran towards it. Thus interrupted, the philosopher raised his head, and suddenly became aware of the darkness, the cool air, and the lonely situation of himself and his companion. “Well!” What are we about!” he ejaculated, “it’s dark. You know whom we were expecting here; but he hasn’t come. We have waited in vain; let us go.”

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“I cannot be surprised if you young men behave rashly and thoughtlessly; for it is hardly likely that you have ever seriously considered what I have just said to you. Don’t be in a hurry; carry this question about with you, but do at any rate consider it day and night. For you are now at the parting of the ways, and now you know where each path leads. If you take the one, your age will receive you with open arms, you will not find it wanting in honours and decorations: you will form units of an enormous rank and file; and there will be as many people like-minded standing behind you as in front of you. And when the leader gives the word it will be re-echoed from rank to rank. For here your first duty is this: to fight in rank and file; and your second: to annihilate all those who refuse to form part of the rank and file. On the other path you will have but few fellow-travellers: those who take the first path will mock you, for your progress is more wearisome, and they will try to lure you over into their own ranks. When the two paths happen to cross, however, you will be roughly handled and thrust aside, or else shunned and isolated.

“Now, take these two parties, so different from each other in every respect, and tell me what meaning an educational establishment would have for them. That enormous horde, crowding onwards on the first part towards its goal, would take the term to mean an institution by which each of its members would become duly qualified to take his place in the rank and file, and would be purged of everything which might tend to make him strive after higher and more remote aims. I don’t deny, of course, that they can find pompous words with which to describe their aims: for example, they speak of the ‘universal development of free personality upon a firm social, national, and human basis’, or they announce as their goal: ‘The founding of the peaceful sovereignty of the people upon reason, education, and justice.’

“An educational establishment for the other and smaller company, however, would be something vastly different. They would employ it to prevent themselves from being separated from one another and overwhelmed by the first huge crowd, to prevent their few select spirits from losing sight of the splendid and noble task through premature weariness, or from being turned aside from the true path, corrupted, or subverted. These select spirits must complete their work: that is the *raison d’être* of their common institution -- a work, indeed, which, as it were, must be free from subjective traces, and must further rise above the transient events of future times as the pure reflection of the eternal and immutable essence of things. And all those who occupy places in that institution must co-operate in the endeavour to engender men of genius by this purification from subjectiveness and the creation of the works of genius. Not a few, even of those whose talents may be of the second or third order, are suited to such co-operation, and only when serving in such an educational establishment as this do they feel that they are truly carrying out their life’s task. But now it is just these talents I speak of which are drawn away from the true path, and their instincts estranged, by the continual seductions of that modern ‘culture’.

“The egotistic emotions, weaknesses, and vanities of these few select minds are continually assailed by the temptations unceasingly murmured into their ears by the spirit of the age;’ Come with me! There you are servants, retainers, tools, eclipsed by higher natures; your own peculiar characteristics never have free play; you are tied down, chained down, like slaves; yea, like automata: here, with me, you will enjoy the freedom of your own personalities, as masters should, your talents will cast their luster on yourselves alone, with their aid you may come to the very front rank; an innumerable train of followers will accompany you, and the applause of public opinion will yield you ore pleasure than a nobly-bestowed commendation from the height of genius’. Even the very

best of men now yield to these temptations: and it cannot be said that the deciding factor here is the degree of talent, or whether a man is accessible to these voices or not; but rather the degree and the height of a certain moral sublimity, the instinct towards heroism, towards sacrifice -- and finally a positive, habitual need of culture, prepared by a proper kind of education, which education, as I have previously said, is first and foremost obedience and submission to the discipline of genius. Of this discipline and submission, however, the present institutions called by courtesy 'educational establishments' know nothing whatever, although I have no doubt that the public school was originally intended to be an institution for sowing the seeds of true culture, or at least as a preparation for it. I have no doubt, either, that they took the first bold steps in the wonderful and stirring times of the Reformation, and that afterwards, in the era which gave birth to Schiller and Goethe, there was again a growing demand for culture, like the first protuberance of that wing spoken of by Plato in the Phaedrus, which, at every contact with the beautiful, bears the soul aloft into the upper regions, the habitations of the gods."

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*Taken from the Nietzsche Channel

< <http://www.geocities.com/thenietzschechannel/fed1.htm> >