

1935

A comparison of the theory of education found in the philosophical dictionary of Voltaire and the modern theory of education

Dorothy Ayahr Neyhouse
Indiana State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.indianastate.edu/etds>

Recommended Citation

Neyhouse, Dorothy Ayahr, "A comparison of the theory of education found in the philosophical dictionary of Voltaire and the modern theory of education" (1935). *All-Inclusive List of Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 2730.

<https://scholars.indianastate.edu/etds/2730>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Sycamore Scholars. It has been accepted for inclusion in All-Inclusive List of Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Sycamore Scholars. For more information, please contact dana.swinford@indstate.edu.

A COMPARISON OF THE THEORY OF EDUCATION FOUND
IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY OF VOLTAIRE
AND THE MODERN THEORY OF EDUCATION

-By-

Dorothy Ayahr Neyhouse

Contributions of the Graduate School

Indiana State Teachers College

Number 226

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Master of Arts
Degree in Education

1935

INDIANA STATE
TEACHERS COLLEGE
LIBRARY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Quotation.....	1
Part I	
Brief biography of Voltaire.....	2
Part II	
Brief History of Education.....	12
Part III	
A comparison of the opinions of Voltaire and eminent mo- dern educators on education.....	23
Appendix	
A. Bibliography.....	40

This volume is dedicated to my
mother in gratitude for her assistance and
encouragement.

D. A. N.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to thank Dr. H. V. Wann, Dr. Elizabeth Crawford, and Dr. J. R. Shannon for their invaluable services and helpful suggestions in preparing this thesis.

D. A. N.

Depth, genius, imagination, taste, reason,
sensibility, philosophy, elevation, originality,
nature, intellect, fancy, rectitude, facility,
flexibility, precision, art, abundance, variety,
fertility, warmth, magic, charm, grace, force,
an eagle's sweep of vision, vast understanding,
rich in attraction, excellent tone, urbanity,
vivacity, delicacy, correctness, purity, cleanness,
elegance, harmony, brilliance, rapidity, gayety,
pathos, sublimity, universality, perfection,
indeed,-----behold Voltaire.

Goethe

A COMPARISON OF THE THEORY OF EDUCATION FOUND
IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY OF VOLTAIRE
AND THE MODERN THEORY OF EDUCATION

Part I

In the year 1694 Francois-Marie Arouet, who later changed his name to Voltaire, was born into luxury-sated Paris. The Sun King was on the throne in all his glory. His court was most brilliant, luxurious, and corrupt. Paris was a city of violent contrasts. Abject poverty vied with the height of luxury. Great nobles were finding it difficult to discover enough opportunities to spend money. The peasants were finding it still harder to obtain the money for the taxes which were levied to support the court. Paris was a city for only the wealthy. Louis XIV was completely under the influence of his former mistress, Madame de Maintenon, whom he subsequently married. She was a devout Catholic, and as such assisted the Churchmen to dominate the king. The priests were the real rulers of France; the king became only a tool in their hands.

Catholicism had a strangle hold on France. By

BERNARD SHAW
HARVARD LIBRARY

means of an elaborate system of espionage, the priests were able to eradicate any other form of worship. The convent and monastery were the schools. Children were sent to these places at an early age. For several years their lives were wholly in the keeping of their teachers. The priests were the educators, such as they were. Naturally their first interest was to gain new converts for the church.

Voltaire attended the Jesuit college of Louis the Great, named in honor of the reigning monarch. This was the largest, most important, and most famous college of its day, having an enrollment of more than two thousand students, and basking in the glory of royal patronage. In this great school, what great vistas of learning did the learned Fathers reveal to benefit the youthful minds in their keeping? Voltaire answers for us, "I learnt here little besides Latin and nonsense."¹

There was no curriculum of subjects, except etiquette, which could in any way be of benefit in later life. The main purpose of the college, as in any other church school, was to make the pupils into men who would bow submissively to the authority of the church. The priests were but cogs in a powerful machine, created to crush

¹

Victor Thaddeus, Voltaire, Genius of Mockery
(New York: Bretano's 1928)
p. 11.

protestantism, and combat the teachings of Luther, the Antichrist. Just as Christianity had a difficult birth, so had Protestantism.

The college had two classes of pupils; the nobility, and some of the humbler, but still well-to-do people, who had a patron in the nobility. Voltaire entered the college under the chaperonage of the Abbe de Chateaufort, a powerful but somewhat unorthodox churchman. His rather independent attitude toward the church influenced Voltaire greatly. While attending this college, Voltaire formed many friendships with sons of the nobility who were later in life to be of great importance in saving his life.

Voltaire was studious, but not a prig. His lively love of life, somewhat intensified perhaps because of his frail body, shone in his eyes. His compelling charm of personality affected students and priests alike. He became the school poet. On any occasion of importance, he wrote a witty and clever poem in commemoration of the event. His friend, the Abbe, introduced him to the nobility of the Paris salons. Here his wit gave him entrée. He became the pet of great ladies. He was introduced to Ninon de l'Enclos, old and ugly, but still the most interesting woman in Paris. She was so impressed by his brilliant mind that when she died, she left him a legacy of two thousand francs to buy books.

Through his visits with the Abbe to the great

salons, he realized the vise-like grip which the priests held on all. He also saw the gigantic proportions to which it had grown. The people could not call their souls their own; literally they had given them into the keeping of the Fathers. Their every act either gave them a white or black mark on their chance for heaven, with the black marks predominating. The priest's power was almost hypnotic. Even at this early age Voltaire had decided to pit his small strength against, not the Church, but its administration. His wit was ever barbed with venom and satire against the corrupt **practices** of the church.

Voltaire left the college resolved to be a poet, but his father had other plans for him. According to these plans, he was to be a lawyer. He pleaded in vain. He was sent to Paris on threat of being disinherited. For two years Voltaire went through the motions of studying law in Paris. He neglected his law studies to become a hanger-on in the homes of the great. He had none of his father's social inferiority. He meant to have the nobles for his friends instead of his clients. He entertained his hosts with his verses written when his law studies became too dismal. "What disgusted me with the profession of advocate was the profusion of useless things with which they wished to load my brain. To the point is my device!"²

2

Victor Thaddeus, op. cit., p. 19.

At twenty-four, having had success with his verses, his first drama, Oedipus, was acclaimed. His success as a playwright made him desirous of printing the play. He very tactfully dedicated the edition to the Regent's mother, also giving complimentary copies to the members of the Regent's family. From now his success was assured. His writings were, for the most part, eagerly awaited and read. Voltaire could never seem to lose his lack of tact concerning the politics of France. He was constantly in hot water over his work. Having made one trip to the Bastille, that threat was always upon him. His exile seemed not to have made him any more prudent.

In everything he wrote, were remarks, usually satirical, about the Church and the priests. Before very long churchmen were up in arms against Voltaire. They seemed, however, never to be quite powerful enough effectively to silence him. Voltaire's powerful friends in the nobility always came to his aid. The protests of the priests Voltaire used to good end. Now it would be called good publicity. It served only to whet the appetites of the people for more of Voltaire. In some of the dramas, Voltaire, himself, played parts. He always seemed to take the part which made the church ridiculous.

In Oedipus, Voltaire struck deliberately at the Church. He was clever enough, however, to set his play in an early time. His priests were pagans worshiping

gods, but the people were keen enough to realize his aim and to appreciate it.

In the great salons of Paris, Voltaire was always in evidence. He thought it was good protection. The great ladies were his patronesses and expected him to entertain them with his wit. Here he was able to abuse the church, his bitter enemy, in a roundabout fashion. He told amusing anecdotes in which his moral was hidden. His idea was that, "Priests are not what a foolish people think them to be....their knowledge lies only in our credulity."³ The ladies laughed at him as at a great wit, little realizing his purpose. It was only as the remarks were repeated that they gained significance. Since most of the priests were members of great families of France, they heard the remarks almost at first hand. The priests became his bitter enemies. They made it their lifelong resolve to obliterate Voltaire. They reckoned not, however, with his influence, power, or friends.

"Ignorance and superstition, not knowledge are responsible for human misery. Great crimes have seldom been committed except by celebrated ignoramus....That which makes, and will always make, of this world a vale of tears is the insatiable cupidity and the indomitable pride of man."⁴ Voltaire said this of the influence

³

Victor Thaddeus, op. cit., p. 51.

⁴

Ibid., p. 196.

of the churchmen on his friends. He realized that their worship was largely superstition fostered by the priests to further their own ends.

In Toulouse Voltaire began his long struggle against injustice. His battle cry was "Ecrasez l'infame," crush the infamous thing. Calas, a young Huguenot committed suicide. His father was imprisoned by the Fathers; he was tortured in a vain attempt to make him confess to the murder of his son. Two daughters were shut up in a convent; the rest of the family and a chance guest were tortured also, but were later released in disgrace. All the property was confiscated to the crown. This was what Voltaire had meant in his diatribes against the priests. From then to the end of his life he fought, devoting his fortune and writings to the struggle. No matter what he wrote, a letter to a friend, or an essay, he sounded his battle cry, in the middle, at the end, abbreviated any place he could find a place for it. If he could not find a place, he made one.

Voltaire's Treatise on Toleration was an answer to the Calas tragedy. He flooded Europe with pamphlets on the case. He supported the Calas family, sending the mother to Paris to arouse sympathy. He wrote to all his friends, who in turn wrote to those in authority. "There is only one influence," said Voltaire, "great enough to obtain from the Chancellor or from the king

an order to send (produce) a copy of the record (of the trial)....the cry of the public."⁵ Who better than Voltaire could arouse that cry! His efforts were finally rewarded. A retrial was ordered, the property was restored, and the shadow of disgrace was lifted. This was the first of many cases to which he devoted his life.

His greatest and largest experiment was Ferney. It was a miserable little village when Voltaire first went to it. In wretched little hovels on marshy, unproductive ground, lived a few impoverished peasants. Here Voltaire created a little kingdom. He reclaimed the land, built new houses, established a watchmaking and weaving colony.

While he fought the Infamous, he was also an enterprising business man, selling stockings and watches. His stockings he sold mostly in France, but the clocks and watches of Ferney were soon known throughout the world.

The few wretched hovels became a hundred comfortable houses. These belonged to the peasants, who paid a rent of six per cent to Voltaire throughout his lifetime, and three per cent to Madam Denis, his niece, afterward; these were the terms of the sale.

It was a small town, but a happy one. Voltaire was proudest of the spirit of religious toleration which

⁵

Victor Thaddeus, op. cit., p. 220.

existed in Ferney. In his own mocking manner he commented on his own share in the success of the Colony, "I have done it all from pure vanity. God, as we are assured, made all things for his own glory. We must imitate him as far as we can."⁶

Voltaire's sun was beginning to set, but the skies were ablaze with its glory. He had become the Man of the Age.

Voltaire's return to Paris in 1777 was cause for renewal of activity in the camps of both his friends and enemies. In spite of the hostile group, he was made finally, a member of the Academy, thus fulfilling one of his lifelong desires. His influence, always great, was at once felt. Although he was now in his eighty-third year, his energy was boundless. He had long felt that the French language needed an up-to-date dictionary. He brought this matter before the Academy, of which he was now president, and forced the matter through. His obsession was to finish the dictionary before he died. His frail body was growing weaker even while his brilliant mind shone more brightly. He was writing feverishly, taking opium to deaden the pain; but he was fighting a losing battle.

Just before he died he joined the Church, so that

⁶ Victor Thaddeus, op. cit., p. 251.

he might be buried without disgrace. Although old in years, Voltaire had remained always young. With all his satire and scepticism he died convinced that the reign of superstition was nearing its end. To his friends he said, "You will see great days....you will make them."⁷ In his last letter to his friend Frederick the Great of Prussia, with whom he had corresponded, he wrote, "It is true, then, Sire, that in the end men will become enlightened, and that those paid to blind them will not always be able to put out their eyes."⁸

⁷Victor Thaddeus, op. cit., p. 262.⁸Ibid., p. 262.

Part II

Modern educational practices are the product of intellectual striving over many centuries. Educators in the present are uncertain and doubtful and are looking back over the ground that has been covered to see if the ideas of the past in education will form a foundation for the educational necessities of today. Our education in a democracy should be democratic but this has also had its basis in former theories.

Philosophy is the foundation upon which knowledge is built. Education is the tool used in its furtherance. Philosophy is rather difficult to define, as its meaning is hidden in a multitude of connotations. It first came into use in the time of Socrates. The Greek word sophia, meaning wisdom, and the verb philein, meaning to love, result in the definition, the love of wisdom. It has also been defined as the attempt to use scientific methods to understand the world in which we live. Today philosophy must interpret an exceedingly complex world presenting religious, literary, moral, social, and political aspects.

Greek philosophers began with monistic theories, gradually enlarging them until the time of Aristotle and Plato. Their age was what is commonly known as

the "Golden Age" of philosophy. Each founded a great school of thought and these schools became centers of intellectual activity in Greece. Appreciation and comment became the keynotes of their work, and they became formal and artificial. The literature which came from the culture of Greece is well known and used constantly as reference material.

Plato, a follower and student of Socrates, founded the first system of idealism. He constructed a Utopia which is not a practical world but an ideal pattern, for Plato believed that "human knowledge consisted in the reflection on ideas, human goodness in the organic harmony of ethical ideals,"⁹

Greek culture was absorbed by the Romans. They borrowed the Greek ideas of law and government. "The work of the Romans was a practical one of furnishing the means, the institutions, or the machinery for realizing the Greek ideals. Hence they have ever been looked upon as a utilitarian people."¹⁰ With the decline of the Roman empire, education and culture went into decadence. The study of philosophy disappeared while

9

Arthur Stone Dewing, Introduction to the History of Modern Philosophy, (Philadelphia and London, J. B. Lippincot & Company, 1903.) p. 48.

10

Paul Monroe, A Text-Book on the History of Education, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 177.

literature and learning degenerated. The Roman Empire was absorbed by the Papacy.

Between the sixth and twelfth centuries is the period known as the Dark Ages. In this period the Churches grew in influence, number and wealth. In connection with the Churches monasteries became numerous all over Europe. They were protection from the corrupt world. Here men took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and henceforth led lives of great self-denial. It became necessary for the heads of the monasteries to make plans for the employing of their men. Manual labor was introduced. Copying manuscripts soon became prevalent and intellectual development was reborn. The monks copied the Bible, Lives of the Saints, and other religious works. This was not only profitable in giving the monks religious matters for thought but it also increased the number of books. Since printing was not known, this is one of the greatest contributions of the monasteries, both the preservation and the storing of literature.

The monks were taught to read and write, in order that they might be good copyists. Some of them became quite scholarly. Monastic life changed little from the fourth to the eleventh centuries, and the idea that education is discipline prevailed.

Christian education was a series of dogmatic precepts to be taught. An exhaustive system, the

Philosophy of Scholasticism, was worked out. Its purpose was to find proof for the doctrine which the church leaders had already formulated and for the statements in the Bible. Scholasticism produced many thinkers of whom all were churchmen.

During the later middle ages the interest in thoughtful pursuits, aroused by the Crusades, stimulated the establishment of schools in connection with the monasteries and cathedrals. Universities were founded on these schools, the first in Salerno, Italy. This was a medical school and in 1224 was named the University of Naples.

The Renaissance marks the beginning of modern thought. At the beginning Continental Rationalism was flourishing. An impersonal interest in scientific problems and philosophy was created. Education began to emphasize the importance of social institutions instead of language. This is called Realism. There were two schools of Realism. One was social realism and the other was humanistic or literary realism, which had as its purpose the mastery of social life and natural life as learned from the broader life of the ancients. Social realism was education for practical living in the world. Knowledge that did not function was thought to be useless.

The eighteenth century seethed with discontent.

People were supposed to live for the state, but the state did not exist for the people. Laws were severe, and so social life was useless, formal, extravagant, and artificial. People were bound by superstition, ignorance and fear. Voltaire was devoting his life to releasing the human mind from the despotism of that time in France. His greatest contribution to the field of education was his origination of the theory of scientific study of history. He was the first to realize the value of related documents, and oral sources, if possible, (now called source material). He saw history as one of the most instructive subjects with which the human mind can concern itself; a record of mistakes and virtues of mankind's past, not dates and battles, but a record of the progress of civilization, development of tolerance, increased prosperity and comfort. He endeavored to free humanity of prejudice and bias. His beliefs and doctrines, while in some ways out-moded, remain with corrections and additions, potentially applicable. Gibbon and Hume in England also were attacking the foundations of the Church and State, but they were indifferent to the masses. This gradually degenerated into selfish formalism, skepticism and indifference.

John Frederick Herbart (1776-1841) was a psychologist, a philosopher and a teacher. While a professor of philosophy at Konigsberg, he founded a

practice school, for the purpose of experimentation and also for the training of teachers and supervisors. He also conducted an educational seminar with the aim of the entire program the scientific study of education. This proved successful, with the result that at present universities of any size at all have a department of education.

The fundamental principle which Herbart based his process of moral and intellectual development was his idea that the mind is at first empty but has the capacity to receive and take from the environment. Thus the individual is changed by any and every experience. "The process by which a sensory impression becomes a complete percept is called apperception. Increased education gives one intellectual acquisitions by adding to his store of notions. The difficult problem of the teacher is to give the right apperceptive basis for everything he teaches. He must get the child's viewpoint....Very much of the behavioristic psychology of today is merely Herbartian psychology expressed in different terms. Mind-set and readiness are popular terms expressing this principle of apperception."¹¹

Herbart developed a formal method of five steps

¹¹

J. Franklin Messenger, An Interpretative History of Education, (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1931). p. 216.

in conducting a recitation, which requires the **thought** process to go from particular to general and from general to particular. He also advocated correlation of studies. "Many of his views are accepted today under a different phraseology."¹²

The modern scientific tendency in educational practices is based on the **realism** of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Content of studies, the value of the inductive study method, and the knowledge of the phenomena of nature received great emphasis. Nineteenth century life demanded the introduction of the sciences into the curriculum.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) was the most noted English advocate of scientific education. His interest was in the curriculum and child nature. He said that the function is "To prepare us for complete living not how to live in the mere material sense only, but in the widest sense."¹³ Since time for education is short, subjects must be evaluated, needs classified, and a curriculum built to meet them.

Science came into school curricula slowly. In America they did not make much headway until the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The high schools and **academies** introduced them into secondary

¹²

J. Franklin Messenger, op. cit., p. 227.

¹³

Ibid., p. 229.

education. Geography was added to the curriculum of the elementary schools early in the nineteenth century, and physiology soon followed. By the end of the century, interest in science was almost universal; scientific discoveries were eagerly awaited and science was taught in all public schools. Inventions and discoveries were strongly responsible for this attitude.

The theory of evolution and the psychology of the American philosopher and psychologist William James (1842-1910) were steps in organizing changes and theories into "changed habits and practices in the lives of teachers, in the programs of schools, and in the accepted customs of the community."¹⁴ James applies psychology to education which he incorporated into his Principles of Psychology the appearance of which caused him to become a leader of the physical school.

In later life James occupied himself with philosophical interests called pragmatism. To pragmatism we owe the project method of teaching.

The twentieth century inherited a large number of partially developed ideas. The educational and intellectual world had moved very slowly. People were satisfied to have their children taught as they themselves had been taught, but Spencer demanded a functional

¹⁴

J. Franklin Messenger, op. cit., p. 242.

education and James turned their thoughts to the future. More progressive thinking was a result and experience became a basis of education.

During the eighteenth century there was a struggle for adult freedom; during the nineteenth century a struggle for the freedom of women and children; the twentieth century received a freedom of thought, customs, beliefs, and conduct which furnished a foundation for the whole intellectual and social structure of civilization at present. The determining factor in modern education is this freedom. The church has lost its influence, the schools cannot teach religion; therefore it is necessary for the schools to provide an adequate substitute in moral guidance and character building to fit the conditions.

A scientific study of curriculum construction promised to bring further and greater changes in education than in any other movement. In the past the curricula grew only by addition. New methods of evaluation of subjects have been discovered. In this way some of the useless matter contained in the curriculum can be eliminated.

With the advent of specialization in the number of vocations, it has become necessary to train persons to earn a living and the duty of the school is

to provide sufficient training to fir a child to support himself. In addition to that he should also have something to enrich his life that he may be able to enjoy the modern culture and mode of living. This can be made to be one of the most effective mehtods of character building.

John Dewey, of Columbia University, is the most outstanding American purveyor of contemporary philosophical thinking in education. He is responsible for the changing attitude toward education; recently he has stressed the continuity of man and nature, the theory of which is called naturalism. He emphasized the experimental approach to problems which philosophy is called experimentalizm. "It is one expression of the struggle for democracy in America and in all departments of American Life."¹⁵ "His greatest book is Democracy and Education; here he applies all his philosophy to the developing of a better generation. Philosophy he defines as a theory of education. In the book mentioned, he says, "'There is nothing to which education is subordinate save more education."¹⁶

Dewey's entire philosophy is one of "shared interests." If a student, realizing a purpose, is

¹⁵

Herman Harrel Horne, The Philosophy of Education, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1927.) p. 294.

¹⁶

Ibid., p. 310.

interested, he is identified with his activity. The interests of a child are determined by responses. Thus does Dewey apply the pragmatic philosophy to activities in the school room.

Education has had a rich historical background. from which leaders are constantly choosing theories for modern use. No matter how new the public may think a practice to be, it is very likely that the idea is an old one rejuvenated. Thus do we profit from the past by refurbishing the old theories and applying them to modern educational policies.

Part III

An examination of the opinions of Voltaire in his Philosophical Dictionary and Letters to Frederick the Great of Prussia and the pronouncements of eminent modern leaders in education makes possible an interesting comparison of ideas.

Education

Any educational philosophy which is to be useful for American adaptation at the present time must be the outgrowth of a social philosophy, and the educational and social conceptions and theories must have a definite bearing on the needs and issues which divide and mark our economic, domestic and political life in the generation to which we belong. "Just as our excessive dependence upon law-making is the correlative of absence of stability in our exceedingly mobile community life, so our dependence upon schools has been the reflex of the precarious state of traditional culture."¹⁷ "The deeper and more enduring education, that which shapes disposition, directs action, and conditions experience, comes not from formal educational agencies but out of the very structure and operation

¹⁷

William H. Kilpatrick et al., The Educational Frontier, (New York, London: The century Company 1933.) p. 44.

of institutions and social conditions."¹⁸

The scientific method of education is a potential agency for ridding the present situation of its confusions and conflicts and emancipating society from many of the undesirable conditions of present-day life. Society needs planning, which is the alternative to chaos, disorder and lack of security. Society must become human, not mechanical. Voltaire spent his life endeavoring to educate his people to a changing world. He asks us to "study human nature, to love truth, and to detest persecution and superstition."¹⁹ "How hard a matter it is to discover truth in this world; and then those who know it best are the last to divulge it."²⁰ He bemoans with other eminent teachers the difficulty of teaching truth as such. "If we would improve the present time to best advantage, we should not squander away our lives in brooding over ancient fables."²¹

Voltaire asks us to teach the authentic history, not that which was bandied about by word of mouth and hearsay. He points out that from the fifteenth century, the dawn of the art of printing, history was by that means made permanent. The province of education is primarily

¹⁸

Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁹

John Morley, Voltaire, Paris, London, New York, Chicago: E. R. Du Mont.) V. 38, p. 166.

²⁰

Ibid., V. 38, p. 178.

²¹

Ibid., V. 37, p. 261.

to explain great truths and to teach their most helpful and fruitful adaptation to human needs. Education is a "society that is stably organized when each individual is doing that for which he has an aptitude by nature in such a way as to be useful to others (or to contribute to the whole to which he belongs); and it is the business of education to discover these aptitudes and progressively to train them for social use."²² "Education, in short, cannot be better described than by calling it the organization of acquired habits of conduct and tendencies to behavior."²³ Voltaire gave a wider scope²⁴ to the human mind. "He prepared us to become free." By freeing the minds of his contemporaries of the darkness of ignorance he gave education an added impetus just when it was greatly needed. He devoted his life to the cause of mental freedom, which during his lifetime gave very little in return, but which in later years meant so much to unenlightened mankind.

Moral Conduct

In Candide Voltaire emphasized the need for moral education, although he did not call it that. He thought

²²

John Dewey, Democracy and Education, (New York: The Macmillan Company). p. 102.

²³

Richard Aldington, Voltaire. (London: George Routledge & Sons. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company. 1930). p. 249.

²⁴

William James, Talks to Teachers. (New York: Henry Holt & Company. 1910). p. 29.

that an entire novel with that as the theme could do more toward arousing his readers than some high-sounding, erudite essay on morality. His success cannot, of course, be measured. Needless to say, however, there were results, if only that it set the people to thinking. His work did set in motion some sort of moral education which today is being taught, with some amendment, in modern schools. "We should, then, in my opinion, artfully interweave these useful inquiries with the general texture of events."²⁵ Moral conduct is difficult to develop, in comparison with knowledge and most acts because it often involves acts that conflict with stronger instincts. Because of these opposing tendencies, the task of creating readiness, of getting the proper reaction and of making it more desirable than the wrong is especially necessary and important, although extremely difficult. "That the opportunities of the teacher for the training in conduct are fewer than are desirable is no excuse for their neglect."²⁶ Efficient teaching requires vigilant care to utilize those opportunities which do arise and to use them to best advantage.

²⁵

John Morley, Op. cit., V. 37, p. 266.

²⁶

Edward L. Thorndike and Arthur I. Gates.
Elementary Principles of Education. (New York:
 The Macmillan Company. 1929). p. 145.

Moral conduct requires the ability to examine any situation and realize ~~what~~ the essential point in it is which should determine action. The moral understanding and insight emerges, like knowledge or other subtle factors, from direct experience. Definitions, exhortations, explanations, and slogans may enrich the method of teaching but they are no substitute for it.

John Dewey, like Voltaire, realizes the importance of education for moral conduct. "Moral knowledge is thought of as a thing apart, and conscience is thought of as something radically different from consciousness. This separation, if valid, is of especial significance for education. Moral education in school is practically hopeless when we set up the development of character as the supreme end, and at the same time treat the acquiring of knowledge and the development of character and understanding which of necessity occupy the chief part of school time, as having nothing to do with character. On such basis, moral education is invariably reduced to some kind of catechetical instruction, or lessons about morals. Lessons about morals signify as a matter of course lessons in what other people think about virtues and duties. It amounts to something only in the degree in which pupils happen to be already animated by a sympathetic and dignified regard for the sentiments of others. As a matter of fact,

direct instruction in morals has been effective only in social groups where it was a part of the authoritative control of the many by the few. Not the teaching as such but the reenforcement of it by the whole regime of which it was an incident made it effective. To attempt to get similar results from lessons about morals in a democratic society is to rely upon sentimental magic."²⁷ The task of the teacher is to strengthen the character of the pupils. "Your, (the teacher's) task is to build up a character in your pupils; and a character, as I have so often said, consists in an organized set of habits of reaction. Our moral effort, properly so called, terminated in our holding fast to the appropriate idea.

"Thus are your pupils to be saved; first, by the stock of ideas with which you furnish them; second, by the amount of voluntary attention that you can make them exert in holding to the right ones, however these latter are unpalatable; and third, by the several habits of acting definitely on these latter to which²⁸ they have successfully been trained."

²⁷

John Dewey, op. cit., p. 411.

²⁸

William James, Talks to Teachers, (New York: Henry Holt & Company. 1910). p. 186.

Character training and conduct have not received as much emphasis heretofore as they need. Educators are being brought face to face with this fact now more than ever before. Sad to say, it finds them unready, in most cases, to do anything constrictive about it.

The most insistent demands upon man in our present society are that he learn to achieve some understanding of the present physical world; that he learn to get along safely and efficiently in an artificial, mechanical environment; that he achieve fitness in a vocation well suited by his nature and learn to be as productive as is possible; that he acquire interest and ability in promoting a sound family life, that he become informed and experienced to be able to constructively participate in the solution of the economic, social, and civic issues of his world. "As means of contributing to these ends, we must enable each person to achieve such sustaining resources as sound physical health, sound mental health, and balance, a suitable philosophy of religion, proper recreational reserves, and an adequate intellectual equipment."²⁹

Citizenship

With the birth of republics and the people's

29

Edward L. Thorndike and Arthur I. Gates. op. cit., p. 45.

taking a part in the governing process, a need has been felt for the training of the prospective governors to take their appointed places. More and more the school is the medium for this. The government has not given the support necessary to make this as successful as it might be. If it would, "a government which could provide for all would do more in a year than the orders of friars (teachers) have done since their institution." ³⁰ Voltaire does not mean that the government should do it all. Far from it, he means and sees the need for co-operation of both agencies for the most successful administration of education. "Civic efficiency, or good citizenship, both are necessary. It is, of course, arbitrary to separate industrial competency from capacity in good citizenship. But the latter term may be used to indicate a number of qualifications which are vaguer than vocational ability. These traits run from whatever make an individual a more agreeable companion to citizenship in the political sense; it denoted ability to judge men and measures wisely and to take a determining part in making as well as obeying laws. The aim of civic efficiency

has at least the merit of protecting us from the notion of a training of mental power at large. It calls attention to the fact that power must be relative to doing something, and to the fact that the things which most need to be done are things which involve one's relationships with others. It must be borne in mind that ultimately social efficiency means neither more nor less than capacity to share in a give and take of experience. It covers all that makes one's own experience more worth while to others. Ability to produce and to enjoy capability for recreation, the significant utilization of leisure, are more important elements conventionally associated oftentimes with citizenship."

Even before the time of Voltaire, citizenship was becoming a factor in education. In modern education it is an even more important phase. In modern times, since the child is not under the immediate direction of his parents to such a great extent, the necessity for teaching the qualities of citizenship has become still more important inasmuch as our social inheritance increases to such a great extent from decade to decade. Because of the many complexities of our present-day life,

it devolves more and more upon the educators to fit the student for daily life and to help him understand the greatly different phases of present-day living conditions. Education is often said to be concerned with the process of the individual's adjustment to his environment. Accordingly, education would be limited to the study of the human individual who is to conform to fit external conditions. Such definition is incomplete and misleading. It is true that education involves efforts to change human nature in such a way as to bring man into more harmonious relations with his surroundings. "He must learn to live under conditions that exist." ³² But this is only a part of the truth. Education is not only the process of changing human nature to fit into an unchangeable world; it is quite as fully concerned with changing the world to harmonize with human nature. "It appears that the development of knowledge, while not itself the supreme end of education, is nevertheless a most important means of promoting the aim of education. Knowledge is valuable because it is an essential means of promoting human welfare." ³³

32

Edward L. Thorndike and Arthur I. Gates, op. cit., p. 3.

33

Ibid., p. 29.

American education means democratic education. It means education in a society which has a variety of political organizations controlled by the people to protect and further its own interests. But in addition to social adaptability in the case of all sorts of personal contacts and knowledge of and good will toward people in general, education is the "purposes, ideals and means of participating effectively in many phases of civic life."³⁴ "The distinctive character of the social emphasis needed in modern education is not simply or solely that education shall in general take account of the social make-up and social responsibilities of individuals, but that the common forms in the social pattern shall become matters of deliberate, positive concern and effort."³⁵ Environment has assumed such an unassailable pinnacle in the educational scheme that the student's approach to knowledge is materially influenced by it.

Interest

Interest is the mainstay and most important characteristic of education at present. Little can be

³⁴

Edward L. Thorndike and Arthur I. Gates, op. cit., p. 44.

³⁵

William H. Kilpatrick et al., op. cit., p. 88.

done or said by or in education without finally coming into contact with interest and its influence. Independent interests should be encouraged, particularly the practical interests that play upon present vocational activities. We should therefore "expect the school to arrange the contacts between students and the vocational situations in ways that carry these interests forward educatively and that reconstruct the vocational relationships to the social order."³⁶ It is reasonable to expect the school to encourage and develop independent interests, esthetic, intellectual, or practical, on the part of the students. Heaviness of study is frowned upon now, as it was in Voltaire's time. "Woe to philosophers who cannot laugh away their learned wrinkles! I look upon solemnity as a disease! It seems to me that morality, study, and gaiety are three sisters who should never be separated."³⁷ Interest is regarded by leading modern educationalists in the same light. "Interest means that one is identified with the objects and obstacles to its realization. Any activity with an aim implies a distinction between an

³⁶ ³⁶

William H. Kilpartick, Education and the Social Crisis. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930). p. 44.

³⁷

Victor Thaddeus, Voltaire, Genius of Mockery, (New York: Bretano's, 1929). p. 256.

earlier incomplete phase and a later completing phase; it implies also intermediate steps. To have an interest is to take things entering into such a continuously developing situation, instead of taking them into isolation. On the other side, it protects us from the action that subject matter on its side is something isolated and independent. It shows that subject matter of learning is identical with all the objects, ideas, and principles which enter as resources or obstacles into the continuous intentional pursuit of a course of

³⁸ action." "In all pedagogy the great thing is to strike while the iron is hot, and to seize the wave of pupil interest in each successive subject before its ebb has come so that knowledge may be received and a habit of skill acquired---a headway of interest, in short, secured, on which afterward the individual may

³⁹ float." Interest depends tremendously, on adjusting the task nicely to the individual so that by enlisting his efforts, the pupil succeeds in mastering the tasks assigned. "It depends so greatly on the skill of the teacher in enlisting the elements of movement, com-

³⁸

John Dewey, op. cit., p. 162.

³⁹

William James, Psychology and Briefer Course.
(New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1915). p. 104.

petition, demonstration, and recognition of progress, proper distribution of practice and review, proper time and length of the period of work. This being the case there should be no subjects or activities in the curriculum which are without interests."⁴⁰ Various aims, and methods are used in education but they all finally resolve into an effort to create and maintain interest.

Discipline

In earlier days disciplining means "spare the rod and spoil the child", in other words physical chastisement. Today it is the teachers' efforts to maintain order in a pleasant forceful manner, but not by physical punishment. Voltaire thought disciplining was for those who understood the universe, "not for those who disfigure it, that we owe our allegiance. It is to him who masters our minds By the force of truth, not to those who enslave men by violence."⁴¹ "Disciplining means power at command; mastery of the resources available for carrying through the action undertaken. To know what one is to do and to move to do it promptly and by use of the requisite means is to be disciplined, whether we are thinking of an army or a mind. Discipline is positive. To cow the spirit, to

⁴⁰

Edward L. Thorndike and Arthur I. Gates, op. cit., p. 180.

⁴¹

Victor Thaddeus, op. cit., p. 83.

mortify the flesh, to make a subordinate perform an uncongenial task---these things are or are not disciplinary according as they do or do not tend to the development of power to recognize what one is about and to persistence in accomplishment."⁴² "It is clear that' in general we ought, whenever we can, to employ the method of inhibition by substitution. He whose life is based upon the word 'no' has constantly to grapple with his envious and cowardly and mean propensities, is in an inferior situation in every respect to what he could be if the love of truth and magnanimity positively possessed him from the outset, and he felt no inferior temptations. See to it now that you make freemen of your pupils, by habituating them to act, whenever possible, and in the notion of a good. Get them habitually to tell the truth, not so much through showing them the wickedness of lying as by arousing their enthusiasm for honor and veracity. Wean them from cruelty by imparting to them some of your own positive sympathy with an animal's inner spring of joy."⁴³ Sympathy, tact,

⁴²

John Dewey, Democracy and Education. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916). p. 152.

⁴³

William James, Talks to Teachers. (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1910). p. 194.

and discipline are almost synonymous today. A teacher is not expected nor wanted to use "brute force" but tact and a pleasant reasonableness in governing the classes is desired. Being educated is one part of fitting one's self and therefore should be enjoyed. Enjoyment lends a piquancy to the hitherto somewhat dull, drab business of learning.

Summary

Education is slow in evolving because of the diverse phases it must embrace. "The progress of reason is slow; the roots of prejudice are deep. Doubtless I shall never see the fruits of my efforts, but they are seeds which may some day germinate." ⁴⁴ Voltaire was not discouraged by the seeming slowness of the pace of education. He realized that a firm foundation was necessary before progress could be effected. "It is of grace not of ourselves that we lead civilized lives. Loyalty to whatever is the established environment makes a life of excellence possible is the beginning of all progress. The best we can accomplish for posterity is to transmit, unimpaired and with some increment of meaning, the environment that makes it possible to maintain habits of decent and refined life.

⁴⁴

Victor Thaddeus, op. cit., p. 211.

Our individual habits are links in forming the endless chain of humanity. Their significance depends upon the environment inherited from our forerunners, and it is enhanced as we foresee the fruits of our labors in the world in which our successors live.⁴⁵

While Voltaire is not commonly considered an educator, still he should receive some mention. His writings were very influential on the minds of his readers. He had a means of swaying his readers whether they willed it or not; he had a unique method of emphasizing his points, which kept him always before the public. Voltaire extended a well-conceived hope that sometime in the not-too-distant future world conditions will be greatly improved. His ideas of the conditions of the world then,--and it may be applied today, educationally, spiritually, and morally,--is "one day all will be well--this is our hope. All is well today--this is illusion."⁴⁶

⁴⁵

John Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct. (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1922). p. 21.

⁴⁶

Victor Thaddeus, Voltaire, Genius of Mockery. (New York: Bretano's 1928). p. 269.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aldington, Richard. Voltaire. London: George Routledge & Sons. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company. 1925.
- Childs, John L. Education and the Philosophy of Experimentalism. London, New York: The Century Company. 1931.
- Cubberley, Ellwood P. The History of Education. Boston, Chicago, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1920.
- Dewey, John. Democracy and Education. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1922.
- Dewey, John. Human Nature and Conduct. New York: Henry Holt & Company. 1929.
- Dewing, Arthur Stone. Introduction to the History of Modern Philosophy. Philadelphia, London: J. B. Lippincot Company. 1903.
- Espinasse, Francis. Life of Voltaire. London: Walter Scott Ltd. 1892.
- Graves, Frank Pierrepont. A History of Education. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1929.

- Hall, E. B. Life of Voltaire. London:
1904. 2 Volumes.
- Horne, Herman Harrell. The Philosophy of Education.
New York: The Macmillan Company. 1927.
- James, William. Pragmatism. New York: Longmans,
Green & Company. 1928.
- James, William. Psychology and Briefer Courses. New
York: Henry Holt & Company. 1915.
- James, William. Talks to Teachers. New York: Henry
Holt & Company. 1910.
- Kilpatrick, William Heard, et al. The Educational
Frontier. London, New York: The century
Company. 1933.
- Kilpatrick, William Heard. Source Book in the
Philosophy of Education. New York: The
Macmillan Company. 1928.
- Messenger, J. Franklin. An Interpretative History
of Education. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell
Company. 1931.
- Monroe, Paul. A Brief Course in the History of
Education. New York: The Macmillan
Company. 1923.
- Monroe, Paul. A Text-Book in the History of
Education. New York: The Macmillan
Company. 1923.

Morley, John: Voltaire, A Critique and Biography.

Paris, London, New York, Chicago: E. R.

Du Mont. 1901. Volumes: 2, 22, 37, 38, 40.

Morley, John. Voltaire. London: Macmillan &

Company Ltd. New York: The Macmillan

Company. 1900.

Parton, James. Life of Voltaire. Boston: Houghton

Mifflin Company. Riverside Press,

Cambridge. 1882. 8 Volumes.

Skinner, Charles Edward, et al. Readings in

Educational Psychology. New York:

D. Appleton & Company. 1926.

Tallentyre, S. G. The Life of Voltaire. London:

Smith Elder & Company. 1904. 2 Volumes.

Thaddeus, Victor. Voltaire, VGenius of Mockery.

New York: Bretano's. 1928.

Thorndike, Edward L. and Gates, Arthur I. Elementary

Principles of Education. New York: The

Macmillan Company. 1929.

Vuliamy. C. E. Voltaire. New York: Dodd Mead &

Company. 1930.

INDIANA STATE
NORMAL LIBRARY