

**ARCHITECTS
OF AMERICAN
EDUCATION**

RALPH WALDO EMERSON
WILLIAM JAMES
WILLIAM T. HARRIS

Architects of American Education

**Collection of essays by
Ralph Waldo Emerson, William James,
and William Torrey Harris**

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The essays The Philosophy of Education, by William Torrey Harris, The American Scholar, by Ralph Waldo Emerson, and The Ph.D. Octopus, by William James, edited and included in this edition, are in the public domain. Minor grammatical alterations have been made for ease of reading.

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Preface

This collection of essays features contributions from three eminent figures who left an indelible mark on our understanding of education, philosophy, and psychology. Each author brings a distinct perspective, reflecting their unique contributions to the world we now live in. Ralph Waldo Emerson emerges as the most influential of the trio, renowned for his foundational role in the transcendentalist movement and his profound impact on American literature, philosophy, and culture. Emerson's essays, speeches, and philosophical inquiries have been instrumental in shaping American thought and identity. His writings not only delve into the essence of individualism and personal integrity but also explore the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature, encouraging an active approach to learning and living. William James, another contributor, is celebrated for his pivotal contributions to psychology and philosophy, particularly in the realm of pragmatism. His seminal works, including "The

Principles of Psychology” and “The Varieties of Religious Experience,” have profoundly influenced these fields, making him a significant figure in both psychology and philosophy. James’ exploration of religious experience, human consciousness, and the philosophy of pragmatism has bridged the gap between the abstract and the practical, leaving a lasting legacy on our understanding of the human mind and its interaction with the world. Lastly, William Torrey Harris, though perhaps less recognized by the broader public compared to Emerson and James, has been an influential force in the field of education. As a former U.S. Commissioner of Education and an advocate for public education reform, Harris was guided the educational philosophy and practices in the United States. His efforts laid the foundation for the 20th century American educational system, emphasizing the importance of structured curriculum and the moral development of students.

The significance of these three authors cannot be overstated. This collection of essays presents an opportunity to explore the diverse yet interconnected ways these thinkers have shaped the educational system of the nation.

Introduction

The essays within this collection present a diverse yet cohesive exploration of fundamental themes that underscore the essence of education. Central to all is the emphasis on intellectual independence. In “The American Scholar,” Emerson praises the value of self-reliance, encouraging scholars to trust their instincts. Similarly, Harris advocates for the holistic development of individuals in “The Philosophy of Education,” while James critiques the surplus of scholars and calls for increased autonomy among academics in “The PhD Octopus.” Emerson, Harris, and James all highlight the crucial role of fostering critical thinking and active engagement with ideas, urging scholars to challenge assumptions and embrace new perspectives. The essays converge on the purpose and societal impact of education. Emerson celebrates the transformative potential of learning in “The American Scholar,” while Harris advocates for an education system that prepares individuals for active citizenship. Conversely, James critiques

the narrow scope of doctoral research and calls for a more interdisciplinary approach to scholarship. Collectively, these essays challenge conventional views on learning while advocating for a better approach to intellectual inquiry. In the historical context of their respective eras, they emerge as profound reflections on the intellectual landscapes of America.

Emerson penned “The American Scholar” in 1837 during the peak of American Transcendentalism, a period marked by a fervent pursuit of individualism, intuition, and a deeper connection with nature. As the country was still establishing its cultural identity, Emerson’s essay championed the idea of a distinctly American intellectual tradition, calling for scholars to embody self-reliance while gaining a deeper appreciation for the natural world. In doing so, Emerson’s work not only shaped the trajectory of American literature and thought but also left an indelible mark on the country’s evolving intellectual identity.

In the late 19th century, Harris authored “The Philosophy of Education” against the backdrop of burgeoning industrialization of the era. With the expansion of public schooling to prepare individuals for active citizenship, Harris

articulated a comprehensive philosophy of education centered on the holistic development of individuals.

Fast forward to the turn of the 20th century when James wrote “The PhD Octopus” originally published in the March 1903 edition of the Harvard Monthly amid a rapid expansion of higher education and the increasing professionalization of academia. Critiquing the overproduction of scholars along with the narrow focus of doctoral research, James raised important questions about the purpose of higher education in an increasingly competitive specialized academic landscape. His essay contributed substantially to ongoing debates regarding the role of academicians in society, leaving a lasting impact on discussions surrounding the future of academia.

These essays offer timeless insights that inspire reflection on the dynamic nature of knowledge, learning, and societal progress. They have played a pivotal role in shaping education policies throughout the 20th century, while also anticipating the detrimental trends that have culminated in today’s educational system.

Elliot Bramham

The Philosophy of Education

William Torrey Harris

1923

A course of five lectures on the Philosophy of Education was given to those members of the University who are engaged in teaching or who expect to become teachers, by William T. Harris, LL. D., Commissioner of Education, January 7-14, 1893. An abstract of the principal topics discussed is here given.

The following list of books is suggested as useful for reference in connection with the course:

1. Rosenkranz: Paedagogik als System (English Translation, D. Appleton & Co., New York). Third part, treating of the substantial

contents of the national education Its sacred books, and the idea that the nation stands for in the history of the world. (Lecture 1.)

2. Karl Schmidt: Geschichte der Paedagogik; gives a much fuller statement of the details of the culture systems of the several nations. (Lecture 1.)

3. R. H. Quick; Educational Reformers. (Lectures 2, 3, 4, and 5.)

4. Pestalozzi: Lienhard und Gertrud. (English Translation, Boston.) (Lecture 3.)

6. Herbart; Lehrbuch zur Psychologie. (English translation, New York). (Lecture 3.)

6. Rousseau: Emile. (Lecture 4.)

7. Herbert Spencer; Essay on Education. (Lecture 5.)

Lecture I. –January 7th, 1893

The Literature of Education

The first and most important of all educational literature is that showing the ideals of a people the literature on which they are brought up generally the sacred books which reveal what the people regard as divine; consequently what is the highest ideal to be realized. China, for example, has Confucius and Mencius, showing the family as the type of the social whole. These writings furnish the contents of the mind of the Chinese minute observances of etiquette; how to behave towards one's elders and superiors in rank; towards one's inferiors or juniors; towards one's equals. Chinese schools are almost exclusively devoted to filling the memory of the pupil with the ethical maxims of these sacred books, so that the mind shall be full of family etiquette. The aim of Chinese education was to teach the young how to behave; that of the Persians, how to ride, shoot, and speak the truth a faculty not much thought of by

the Hindus. The Persian differs from the Buddhist in that the latter wishes to get rid of the world, while the former attempts to conquer the real. The Phoenicians, again, furnish a contrast to Chinese education. Their object was to wean the child from the family; whereas the Chinese endeavor to educate the young so that they will become submerged in the family. The Phoenicians aimed to create a love of adventure. Their children were educated in myths. The stories in Homer's "Odyssey" must have been derived from the tales of the Phoenician sailors, which were calculated to engender a hunger and thirst for adventure, so that the young Phoenician would gladly get on board ship and go to the ends of the world in the interests of trade. The Greeks were imbued with the new world-principle of a spiritual and beautiful individuality. They thought more of the games which they practised in the evenings on the village green than of the tasks by which they earned their bread. They learned history and geography from the second book of Homer's "Iliad." They thought not of commercial education, like the Phoenicians, but of that heroic individual who furnished a beautiful ideal.

Later on, Greek education became more scientific and more reflective. The Roman concentrated his whole mind on the

will. He went beyond the circle of his city, and studied to cause even foreigners to live under the same laws with himself. Freedom meant more to him than to any of the Asiatic nations. It meant the power of the individual to hold, alienate, and devise property. This was an enormous step upward in educational progress. Hitherto, property could only be held by the family. Contract is the supreme idea of the Roman. He even carries it into his religion. Thus he prays to one of his deities to help him in some extremity or to give him his desire, and he promises, in turn, to build the god a temple. The Roman wants to conquer all peoples and to make them free under the law. But the greatest educational lesson is derived from the Hebrew people. They teach the personality of the Divine apart from Nature. This Divine Person creates Nature in order that He shall have something to recognize Him. The Divine Being does not efface man simply, but is the embodiment of goodness and righteousness the righteousness that breathes the spirit of loving kindness, holding his creatures responsible only in so far as they know the right, and returning their deeds upon them. Art education ranked first in the Greek mind, for he worshipped the beautiful. Then came science and philosophy. From the Greeks we get these elements of our educational curriculum. From the Romans we get the principle of

organization. Whether or not a person is educated reflectingly into civilization, he finds himself in the great network of usages that go to make up civilization. Education is meant to give one an insight into the genesis of these things, so that he can detect an element of each in the threads of his civilization. Ninety-nine out of a hundred people in every civilized nation are automata, careful to walk in the prescribed paths, careful to follow prescribed custom. This is the result of substantial education, which, scientifically defined, is the subsumption of the individual under his species. The other educational principle is the emancipation from this subsumption. This is subordinate, and yet, in our time, we lay more stress upon it than the other. Look at the French Revolution. What a prodigious emancipation that was. It was predicted by Rousseau; but those who read him only superficially, without first studying his genesis, will find that their minds are poisoned by his doctrine of the supremacy of nature. Comenius taught the emancipation of the individual from the printed page. Spencer says that the modern school system is all wrong, and has a tendency to get away from science and cause students to waste time over the dead languages.

Emancipation has now become the important side of the educational question. But the student of advanced education must first avail himself of the wisdom of the race, and learn how not to be limited by it. He cannot progress unless he is a free man, for he must not be so much subsumed that he cannot investigate scientifically, and with safety to himself, all problems that present themselves.

Lecture II. –January 14th, 1893

Problems Peculiar to American Education

There are two kinds of education. The first may be called substantial education the education by means of the memory; the education which gives to the individual methods and habits and the fundamentals of knowledge. It is this education which the child begins to receive from its birth. This sort of education is education by authority that is, the individual accepts the authority of the teacher for the truth of what he is told, and does not question it or seek to obtain insight into the reason for its being so. It is this education by authority the education of the past that the modern or second kind of education seeks to supersede. This second kind may be called individual or scientific education; it is the education of insight as opposed to that of authority. When this kind of education is acquired, it frees the individual from the authority of the other. Under the system of education by authority when told, for

instance, that the sum of three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, this will be blindly believed only as long as authority sanctions this belief; but when an insight into the reason for this geometrical truth is obtained, no change of authority is able to make the individual doubt. But there is this danger in the system of education by insight, if begun too early, that the individual tends to become so self-conceited with what he considers knowledge gotten by his own personal thought and research, that he drifts toward empty agnosticism with the casting overboard of all authority. It is, therefore, necessary that this excessive conceit of self which this modern scientific method of education fosters, be lessened by building on the safe foundations of what has been described as the education of authority. The problems of the reform movement centre, therefore, on the proper method of replacing this authoritative or passive method of education by education through self-activity.

There is another problem that of the method of study. Germany advises us to teach by oral methods, by giving pieces of information and insight orally by word of mouth. But the American educators have blundered upon what may be defended as the correct method, namely, the textbook method.

It was merely the outcome of an unconscious trend. The method is of course liable to very serious abuse, but the good points greatly outweigh the bad. It has the advantage of making one independent of his teacher; you can take your book wherever you please. You cannot do that with the great lecturer, neither can you question him as you can the book, nor can you select the time for hearing the great teacher talk as you can for reading the book. And it is true that nearly all the great teachers have embodied their ideas in books. The greatest danger of text-book education is verbatim, parrot-like recitation; but even then from the poorest text-book a great deal of knowledge can be gleaned. Then there is the alertness which in any large class will necessarily be engendered by an intelligent understanding and criticism of the results arrived at by different pupils in discussing a certain piece of work given in his own words. And then there is the advantage to be found in the fact that with the textbook the child can be busy by itself. Lastly, there is the problem of discipline. There should be very little corporal punishment; the milder forms of restraint should be used. The child that is brought up accustomed to the rod loses his self-respect and may become the man who must have police surveillance.

Silence, punctuality, regularity and industry are fundamental parts of a “substantial education” as much as the critical study of mathematics, literature, science and history is a part of the “education of insight.” These two kinds of education, that of authority and that of self-activity, should be made complementary.

Lecture III. –January 21st, 1893

Opposition Between Pestalozzi and Herbart as Educational Leaders

Pestalozzi laid great stress on sense-perception as the foundation of all school education. Herbart lays stress on the elaboration of sense-perception or rather upon the mental reaction against the impressions made on our senses. Thought goes back of the object to understand and explain its origin, how it became to be what it is, what purpose it is to serve. Thought sees objects in the perspective of their history. It studies causes and purposes. Thus thought is not as the disciples of Pestalozzi hold, a continued and elevated sort of sense-perception, but rather a reaction against it. It is a discovery of the subordinate place held by objects in the world; they are seen to be mere steps in a process of manifestation, the manifestation of causal energies. A new perception is received

into the mind by adjusting it to our previous knowledge; we explain it in terms of the old; we classify it, identify it; reconcile what is strange and unfamiliar in it with previous experience; we interpret the object and comprehend it ; we translate the unknown into the known. This process of adjusting, explaining, classifying, identifying, reconciling, interpreting and translating, is called *apperception*. We must not only perceive, but we must apperceive; not only see and hear, but digest or assimilate what we hear and see. Herbart's "apperception" is far more important for education than Pestalozzi's "perception." At first the memory was the chief faculty cultivated in education; then Pestalozzi reformed it by making the culture of sense-perception the chief aim; now with Herbart the chief aim would be apperception or the mental digestion of what is received by perception or memory. Illustrations of the power of apperception to strengthen perception: Cuvier could reconstruct the entire skeleton from a single bone; Agassiz the entire fish from one of its scales; Winckelman the entire statue from a fragment of the face; Lyell could see its history in a pebble; Asa Gray the history of a tree by a glance. Apperception adds to the perceived object its process of becoming. Noiré has illustrated apperception by showing the two series of ideas called up by the perception of

a piece of bread. First the regressive series dough, flour, rye; and the processes baking, kneading, grinding, threshing, harvesting, planting, &c. Each one of these has collateral series, as for example, planting has plowing, plow, oxen, yoke, furrow, harrowing, sowing seeds, covering it, etc. The second series is progressive bread suggests its uses and functions; food, eating, digesting, organic tissue, life, nourishing strength, supply of heat, bodily labor, &c. The course of study in schools must be arranged so as to prepare the mind for quick apperception of what is studied. The Pestalozzian makes form, number, and language the elements of all knowledge. He unfortunately omits causal ideas, which are the chief factors of apperception; we build our series on causally. Accidental association satisfies only the simple-minded and empty-headed.

Lecture IV. –January 25th, 1893

Rousseau and the Return to Nature
Revolutionary Protest

The time of Louis XIV: the nobles attracted to Court and to a life of gayety, neglecting their estates and wasting the fruits of toil in riotous living; the laborers deprived of the advantage of the directive power of the nobility fail in power of production. The French Revolution is the result. Rousseau its prophet; he proclaims a return to nature. “Nature,” a word of ambiguous meaning; human nature versus physical nature; human history the revelation of man’s nature; it is realized in institutions and not by man as an isolated individual. Nature in time and space is under the dominion of necessity, everything constrained to be what it is by outside forces. Human nature is an ideal, and when realized it has the form of freedom and self-determination, each man a law unto himself and each one

engaged in helping every other one, for by this each one helps himself. Rousseau appealed to nature in everything. What we call civilization was to him a mere artificial form. His plea was to be natural, come back to the point where nature leaves you. Rousseau came from Switzerland to France, and at an opportune time for him; for there was a great ferment of ideas at this epoch. He was struggling along in Paris, barely securing a livelihood, when there came the offer from the Academy of Dijon of a prize for an essay on the progress of the arts and sciences, whether it has tended towards the purification of morals and manners. The negative side suggested itself more forcibly to him, as he was better fitted for it by his mode of living and morals, and by his literary style, and he found himself at once a “censor of civilization.” This essay was soon followed (1752) by one on the origin of the inequality among men. The great tension produced by the artificiality of the civilization of the Court life of the time had caused men to become anxious to get back to a simplicity of living, and Chateaubriand painted the charms of the forest life of the Indians. In this reaction the meaning of civilization is ignored. Man emancipates himself from drudgery and compels nature by the forces of his intellect to feed and clothe him. The “Social Contract” followed (1762) this with an attack on the authority

of the State; and in the same year his *Émile* undermined the School and the Church: and so he attacked all the social institutions one after another the family, civil society, the Church and the State. He proposed to sweep all away by summoning them before the bar of his individual judgment and condemning all. In the opening paragraph of his *Émile* he declares that everything which comes from nature is good, while everything degenerates in the hands of man. The antithesis of civilization is savagery, and Voltaire wittily exposed the fallacy of Rousseau's teaching in his letter accepting the book. He said "never has anyone employed so much genius to make us into beasts. When one reads your book he is seized at once with a desire to go down on all fours." External authority is a perennial necessity for man in his immaturity. An appeal to nature is always a piece of jugglery with words. In mere nature we have matter and force. Everything inorganic is made by some external influence. But organic nature is the opposite of inorganic. The plant has the power of assimilation, and the animal the further powers of locomotion and feeling, or ability to select or choose its surroundings. In man this is still further increased by recollection and memory, by which the mind makes over its impressions. To do his duty properly he must look to higher things, and in ethical ideas the human becomes

transcendental. The moral man acts as though the sole being in the world is humanity. No natural instinct is admitted as having validity against the moral law. If we adopt the doctrines of material nature and yield to our feelings and impulses, we remain animals. But if we take nature in the sense of our ideal, divine possibility, and realize it by education, we attain to human nature properly so-called, which is not something given us without effort, but only the product of culture.

Lecture V. –February 4th, 1893

Herbert Spencer and what Knowledge is of Most Worth

In Herbert Spencer, the return to nature means the study of natural science, and this becomes the great thing. But natural science is only the instrument with which we conquer nature. Everybody becomes filled with the idea of progress by it, for we see that nature as it is, existing in time and space, is conquered by inventions and made to serve man. There was never a more unscientific book made than Spencer's essay on education; for while he praises science, he does not apply it to a study of education as it is and has been. To do this he ought to study the genesis of the course of study and explain its functions. The unscientific person takes things as they are, and cares not for their origin. To study things from a scientific standpoint means to take an inventory of them to find the process in which they

are being produced; to connect them with other things; to see things in their causal process. He does not understand the system of education as it exists, because he does not know the educational value of its branches. The education he proposes for us is for the purpose of complete living; but what is Spencer's definition of this complete living? Spencer does not take education as the genesis of man's spiritual life, but merely as something useful for showing how to care for the body and perform the lower social functions as the tool of life, the instrument by which life is preserved. Now suppose the definition of complete living to be to elevate each individual so that he can take advantage of the life and experience of his race. Then he would find complete living to involve the initiation into the civilizations of the past that furnish the elements out of which our own civilization is formed. Spencer thinks that the first business of the child is to know physiology; the next is the selection of a vocation or trade, which leads to training for citizenship; and last of all he puts relaxation and amusement, in which he includes literature and art. Now, Aristotle characterized man as the symbol-making animal. Human nature has to be expressed by symbols. The poets of a people first paint the ideal, which makes civilization possible. Literature furnishes the most essential branch of education, so

far as its function is to help the child into civilization. Man sits in the theatre of the world (as Plato tells us) and sees the shadows of men and events thrown on the curtain before him. Behind him and out of his sight is the Great Leader, who is making these shadows. From them he draws his ideals, but ideals are potentialities, not realities. Self-activity, the freedom of the soul, is made possible by the institutions of society, the family, civil society, State and Church. We must not confound the mere school with these other great institutions of civilization. In the family are learned the mother tongue, habits, and nurture. Civil society teaches him his vocation; the State, his duties as citizen; and the Church shows him his place in the divine plan of the universe. Spencer calls education the subject which involves all other subjects, and the one in which they should all culminate. But someone has better said that school education is the giving to man the possession of the instrumentalities of intelligence. By his school education he does not attain all education, but he gets the tools of thought by which to master the wisdom of the race. There are, then, three epochs of school education elementary, secondary and higher. The first or elementary stage is the opening of the five windows of the soul. Arithmetic is the foundation of our knowledge of nature, by which we measure and count all

things inorganic. When its first principles are mastered the child begins to want to combine the organic with the inorganic, and then we come to another window, that of elementary geography. The distribution of animal and plant life is learned, and the child begins to peep into the organization of things, the growth of plants, and the formation of the continents and the earth. Thirdly, he learns to read and write, and gets a glimpse into literature. The original colloquial vocabulary learned at home, variously estimated at from 300 or 400 to 3,000 or 4,000 words, deals only with commonplace things. But the school takes this colloquial vocabulary as a key and opens up the great reservoir of literature in books, initiating him into a higher class of words, expressive of fine shades of feeling and thought. Thus, to his own vocabulary are added those of great writers, who have seen nature from a different point of view and presented their thoughts in gems of literary style. Literature lifts up the pupil into the realms of human nature and discloses the motives which govern the actions of men. Yet Spencer puts this last in his course of study. After learning all science has to give, after learning one's trade and the care of his body, he would then, if there is leisure, permit literature and art. But literature is the greatest educator we have. It has made possible newspapers and periodicals and

books, with pictures of human life and of the motives governing our actions. The fourth window of the soul is grammar, wherein we have a glimpse of the logical structure of the intellect as revealed in language. The fifth window is history (that of his own country), wherein he sees revealed the aspirations of his countrymen, his own nature, written out in colossal letters; and these five studies should make the elementary education of the student. The secondary education takes up human learning and continues it along the same lines, namely: 1, inorganic nature; 2, organic nature; 3, literature (the heart); 4, grammar and logic (the intellect); and 5, history (the will). Algebra deals with general numbers, while Arithmetic has definite numbers to operate with. Geometry and physics continue inorganic nature, while natural history continues the study already commenced in geography. Then come Greek and Latin, and here is opened up a great field of study into the embryology of our civilization. In the dead language we have the three great threads running through the history of human progress. The Greek, with its literature and aesthetic art and its philosophy, showing the higher forms of human freedom in contrast with the Egyptian, which showed only the struggle for freedom and never the man separated from the animal and the inorganic world. The Roman, with the continual gaze upon the

will of man, seeks the true forms of contracts and treaties and corporations, whereby one man may combine with another, and it essays the conquering of men and reducing them to obedience to civil law, not only external conquest but internal conquest as well. The Hebrew thread is the religious one, which we recognize in the celebration of worship one day each week and in the various holy days. We acknowledge this the most essential thread of our civilization. So, with the secondary education we begin to get the embryology of our forms of life. The higher or collegiate education is the comparative step of education. Each branch is studied in the light of all the others. Natural science and sociology are investigated; logic and mental philosophy; ethics and rhetoric; as well as the philosophy of history and of literature, and the comparative sciences, which furnish the light for the whole method of higher education. The first, or elementary education, then, is but superficial, a mere inventory ; the secondary insists on some reflection on what has been learned ; and the third, or higher education, is the unity and comparison of all that has been learned, so that each is explained by the whole. Give the child possession of the embryology of civilization, and his insight into the evolution of civilization is insured. Educators have adopted the course of study as it exists, led by an unconscious

or blind impulse. Herbert Spencer should have investigated and discovered its purpose, which is a far deeper one than he has thought out when he advocates its overthrow for the sake of knowledge that leads to direct self-preservation.

The American Scholar

Ralph Waldo Emerson

1837

Mr. President and Gentlemen,

I greet you on the re-commencement of our literary year. Our anniversary is one of hope, and, perhaps, not enough of labor. We do not meet for games of strength or skill, for the recitation of histories, tragedies, and odes, like the ancient Greeks; for parliaments of love and poesy, like the Troubadours; nor for the advancement of science, like our contemporaries in the British and European capitals. Thus far, our holiday has been simply a friendly sign of the survival of the love of letters amongst a people too busy to give to letters any more. As such, it is precious as the sign of an indestructible instinct. Perhaps the

time is already come, when it ought to be, and will be, something else; when the sluggard intellect of this continent will look from under its iron lids, and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill. Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close.

The millions, that around us are rushing into life, cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests. Events, actions arise, that must be sung, that will sing themselves. Who can doubt, that poetry will revive and lead in a new age, as the star in the constellation Harp, which now flames in our zenith, astronomers announce, shall one day be the pole-star for a thousand years?

In this hope, I accept the topic which not only usage, but the nature of our association, seem to prescribe to this day,—the AMERICAN SCHOLAR. Year by year, we come up hither to read one more chapter of his biography. Let us inquire what light new days and events have thrown on his character, and his hopes.

It is one of those fables, which, out of an unknown antiquity, convey an unlooked-for wisdom, that the gods, in the beginning, divided Man into men, that he might be more helpful to himself; just as the hand was divided into fingers, the better to answer its end.

The old fable covers a doctrine ever new and sublime; that there is One Man, –present to all particular men only partially, or through one faculty; and that you must take the whole society to find the whole man. Man is not a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, but he is all. Man is priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier. In the *divided* or social state, these functions are parceled out to individuals, each of whom aims to do his stint of the joint work, whilst each other performs his. The fable implies, that the individual, to possess himself, must sometimes return from his own labor to embrace all the other laborers. But unfortunately, this original unit, this fountain of power, has been so distributed to multitudes, has been so minutely subdivided and peddled out, that it is spilled into drops, and cannot be gathered. The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking

monsters, –a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man.

Man is thus metamorphosed into a thing, into many things. The planter, who is Man sent out into the field to gather food, is seldom cheered by any idea of the true dignity of his ministry. He sees his bushel and his cart, and nothing beyond, and sinks into the farmer, instead of Man on the farm. The tradesman scarcely ever gives an ideal worth to his work, but is ridden by the routine of his craft, and the soul is subject to dollars. The priest becomes a form; the attorney, a statute-book; the mechanic, a machine; the sailor, a rope of a ship.

In this distribution of functions, the scholar is the delegated intellect. In the right state, he is, *Man Thinking*. In the degenerate state, when the victim of society, he tends to become a mere thinker, or, still worse, the parrot of other men's thinking.

In this view of him, as Man Thinking, the theory of his office is contained. Him nature solicits with all her placid, all her monitory pictures; him the past instructs; him the future invites.

Is not, indeed, every man a student, and do not all things exist for the student's behoof? And, finally, is not the true scholar the only true master? But the old oracle said, 'All things have two handles: beware of the wrong one.' In life, too often, the scholar errs with mankind and forfeits his privilege. Let us see him in his school, and consider him in reference to the main influences he receives.

I

The first in time and the first in importance of the influences upon the mind is that of nature. Every day, the sun; and, after sunset, night and her stars. Ever the winds blow; ever the grass grows. Every day, men and women, conversing, beholding and beholden. The scholar is he of all men whom this spectacle most engages. He must settle its value in his mind. What is nature to him? There is never a beginning, there is never an end, to the inexplicable continuity of this web of God, but always circular power returning into itself. Therein it resembles his own spirit, whose beginning, whose ending, he never can find, –so entire, so boundless. Far, too, as her splendors shine, system on system shooting like rays, upward, downward, without centre, without circumference, –in the mass and in the particle, nature hastens to render account of herself to the mind. Classification begins. To the young mind, every thing is individual, stands by itself. By and by, it finds how to join two things, and see in them one nature; then three, then three thousand; and so, tyrannized over by its own unifying instinct, it goes on tying things together, diminishing anomalies,

discovering roots running under ground, whereby contrary and remote things cohere, and flower out from one stem. It presently learns, that, since the dawn of history, there has been a constant accumulation and classifying of facts. But what is classification but the perceiving that these objects are not chaotic, and are not foreign, but have a law which is also a law of the human mind? The astronomer discovers that geometry, a pure abstraction of the human mind, is the measure of planetary motion. The chemist finds proportions and intelligible method throughout matter; and science is nothing but the finding of analogy, identity, in the most remote parts. The ambitious soul sits down before each refractory fact; one after another, reduces all strange constitutions, all new powers, to their class and their law, and goes on for ever to animate the last fibre of organization, the outskirts of nature, by insight.

Thus to him, to this school-boy under the bending dome of day, is suggested, that he and it proceed from one root; one is leaf and one is flower; relation, sympathy, stirring in every vein. And what is that Root? Is not that the soul of his soul? –A thought too bold, –a dream too wild. Yet when this spiritual light shall have revealed the law of more earthly natures, –when he has learned to worship the soul, and to see that the natural

philosophy that now is, is only the first gropings of its gigantic hand, he shall look forward to an ever expanding knowledge as to a becoming creator. He shall see, that nature is the opposite of the soul, answering to it part for part. One is seal, and one is print. Its beauty is the beauty of his own mind. Its laws are the laws of his own mind. Nature then becomes to him the measure of his attainments. So much of nature as he is ignorant of, so much of his own mind does he not yet possess. And, in fine, the ancient precept, "Know thyself," and the modern precept, "Study nature," become at last one maxim.

II

The next great influence into the spirit of the scholar, is, the mind of the Past, –in whatever form, whether of literature, of art, of institutions, that mind is inscribed. Books are the best type of the influence of the past, and perhaps we shall get at the truth, –learn the amount of this influence more conveniently, –by considering their value alone.

The theory of books is noble. The scholar of the first age received into him the world around; brooded thereon; gave it the new arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it again. It came into him, life; it went out from him, truth. It came to him, short-lived actions; it went out from him, immortal thoughts. It came to him, business; it went from him, poetry. It was dead fact; now, it is quick thought. It can stand, and it can go. It now endures, it now flies, it now inspires. Precisely in proportion to the depth of mind from which it issued, so high does it soar, so long does it sing.

Or, I might say, it depends on how far the process had gone, of transmuting life into truth. In proportion to the

completeness of the distillation, so will the purity and imperishableness of the product be. But none is quite perfect. As no air-pump can by any means make a perfect vacuum, so neither can any artist entirely exclude the conventional, the local, the perishable from his book, or write a book of pure thought, that shall be as efficient, in all respects, to a remote posterity, as to contemporaries, or rather to the second age. Each age, it is found, must write its own books; or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period will not fit this.

Yet hence arises a grave mischief. The sacredness which attaches to the act of creation, –the act of thought, –is transferred to the record. The poet chanting, was felt to be a divine man: henceforth the chant is divine also. The writer was a just and wise spirit: henceforward it is settled, the book is perfect; as love of the hero corrupts into worship of his statue. Instantly, the book becomes noxious: the guide is a tyrant. The sluggish and perverted mind of the multitude, slow to open to the incursions of Reason, having once so opened, having once received this book, stands upon it, and makes an outcry, if it is disparaged. Colleges are built on it. Books are written on it by thinkers, not by Man Thinking; by men of talent, that is, who

start wrong, who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles. Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views, which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given, forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries, when they wrote these books.

Hence, instead of Man Thinking, we have the bookworm. Hence, the book-learned class, who value books, as such; not as related to nature and the human constitution, but as making a sort of Third Estate with the world and the soul. Hence, the restorers of readings, the emendators, the bibliomaniacs of all degrees.

Books are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst. What is the right use? What is the one end, which all means go to effect? They are for nothing but to inspire. I had better never see a book, than to be warped by its attraction clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system. The one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul. This every man is entitled to; this every man contains within him, although, in almost all men, obstructed, and as yet unborn. The soul active sees absolute truth; and utters truth, or

creates. In this action, it is genius; not the privilege of here and there a favorite, but the sound estate of every man. In its essence, it is progressive. The book, the college, the school of art, the institution of any kind, stop with some past utterance of genius. This is good, say they, –let us hold by this. They pin me down. They look backward and not forward. But genius looks forward: the eyes of man are set in his forehead, not in his hindhead: man hopes: genius creates. Whatever talents may be, if the man create not, the pure efflux of the Deity is not his; –cinders and smoke there may be, but not yet flame. There are creative manners, there are creative actions, and creative words; manners, actions, words, that is, indicative of no custom or authority, but springing spontaneous from the mind's own sense of good and fair.

On the other part, instead of being its own seer, let it receive from another mind its truth, though it were in torrents of light, without periods of solitude, inquest, and self-recovery, and a fatal disservice is done. Genius is always sufficiently the enemy of genius by over influence. The literature of every nation bear me witness. The English dramatic poets have Shakspearized now for two hundred years.

Undoubtedly there is a right way of reading, so it be sternly subordinated. Man Thinking must not be subdued by his instruments. Books are for the scholar's idle times. When he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings. But when the intervals of darkness come, as come they must, –when the sun is hid, and the stars withdraw their shining, –we repair to the lamps which were kindled by their ray, to guide our steps to the East again, where the dawn is. We hear, that we may speak. The Arabian proverb says, “A fig tree, looking on a fig tree, becometh fruitful.”

It is remarkable, the character of the pleasure we derive from the best books. They impress us with the conviction, that one nature wrote and the same reads. We read the verses of one of the great English poets, of Chaucer, of Marvell, of Dryden, with the most modern joy, –with a pleasure, I mean, which is in great part caused by the abstraction of all *time* from their verses. There is some awe mixed with the joy of our surprise, when this poet, who lived in some past world, two or three hundred years ago, says that which lies close to my own soul, that which I also had wellnigh thought and said. But for the evidence thence afforded to the philosophical doctrine of the identity of

all minds, we should suppose some preestablished harmony, some foresight of souls that were to be, and some preparation of stores for their future wants, like the fact observed in insects, who lay up food before death for the young grub they shall never see.

I would not be hurried by any love of system, by any exaggeration of instincts, to underrate the Book. We all know, that, as the human body can be nourished on any food, though it were boiled grass and the broth of shoes, so the human mind can be fed by any knowledge. And great and heroic men have existed, who had almost no other information than by the printed page. I only would say, that it needs a strong head to bear that diet. One must be an inventor to read well. As the proverb says, "He that would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry out the wealth of the Indies." There is then creative reading as well as creative writing. When the mind is braced by labor and invention, the page of whatever book we read becomes luminous with manifold allusion. Every sentence is doubly significant, and the sense of our author is as broad as the world. We then see, what is always true, that, as the seer's hour of vision is short and rare among heavy days and months, so is its record, perchance, the least part of his volume. The

discerning will read, in his Plato or Shakespeare, only that least part, –only the authentic utterances of the oracle; – all the rest he rejects, were it never so many times Plato's and Shakespeare's.

Of course, there is a portion of reading quite indispensable to a wise man. History and exact science he must learn by laborious reading. Colleges, in like manner, have their indispensable office, –to teach elements. But they can only highly serve us, when they aim not to drill, but to create; when they gather from far every ray of various genius to their hospitable halls, and, by the concentrated fires, set the hearts of their youth on flame. Thought and knowledge are natures in which apparatus and pretension avail nothing. Gowns, and pecuniary foundations, though of towns of gold, can never countervail the least sentence or syllable of wit. Forget this, and our American colleges will recede in their public importance, whilst they grow richer every year.

III

There goes in the world a notion, that the scholar should be a recluse, a valetudinarian, –as unfit for any handiwork or public labor, as a penknife for an axe. The so-called ‘practical men’ sneer at speculative men, as if, because they speculate or *see*, they could do nothing. I have heard it said that the clergy, –who are always, more universally than any other class, the scholars of their day, –are addressed as women; that the rough, spontaneous conversation of men they do not hear, but only a mincing and diluted speech. They are often virtually disfranchised; and, indeed, there are advocates for their celibacy. As far as this is true of the studious classes, it is not just and wise. Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential. Without it, he is not yet man. Without it, thought can never ripen into truth. Whilst the world hangs before the eye as a cloud of beauty, we cannot even see its beauty. Inaction is cowardice, but there can be no scholar without the heroic mind. The preamble of thought, the transition through which it passes from the unconscious to the conscious, is action. Only so much do I know, as I have lived. Instantly we know whose words are loaded with life, and whose not.

The world, –this shadow of the soul, *or other me*, lies wide around. Its attractions are the keys which unlock my thoughts and make me acquainted with myself. I run eagerly into this resounding tumult. I grasp the hands of those next me, and take my place in the ring to suffer and to work, taught by an instinct, that so shall the dumb abyss be vocal with speech. I pierce its order; I dissipate its fear; I dispose of it within the circuit of my expanding life. So much only of life as I know by experience, so much of the wilderness have I vanquished and planted, or so far have I extended my being, my dominion. I do not see how any man can afford, for the sake of his nerves and his nap, to spare any action in which he can partake. It is pearls and rubies to his discourse. Drudgery, calamity, exasperation, want, are instructors in eloquence and wisdom. The true scholar grudges every opportunity of action past by, as a loss of power.

It is the raw material out of which the intellect moulds her splendid products. A strange process too, this, by which experience is converted into thought, as a mulberry leaf is converted into satin. The manufacture goes forward at all hours.

The actions and events of our childhood and youth, are now matters of calmest observation. They lie like fair pictures in the air. Not so with our recent actions, –with the business which we now have in hand. On this we are quite unable to speculate. Our affections as yet circulate through it. We no more feel or know it, than we feel the feet, or the hand, or the brain of our body. The new deed is yet a part of life, –remains for a time immersed in our unconscious life. In some contemplative hour, it detaches itself from the life like a ripe fruit, to become a thought of the mind. Instantly, it is raised, transfigured; the corruptible has put on incorruption. Henceforth it is an object of beauty, however base its origin and neighborhood. Observe, too, the impossibility of antedating this act. In its grub state, it cannot fly, it cannot shine, it is a dull grub. But suddenly, without observation, the selfsame thing unfurls beautiful wings, and is an angel of wisdom.

So is there no fact, no event, in our private history, which shall not, sooner or later, lose its adhesive, inert form, and astonish us by soaring from our body into the empyrean. Cradle and infancy, school and playground, the fear of boys, and dogs, and ferules, the love of little maids and berries, and many another fact that once filled the whole sky, are gone

already; friend and relative profession and party, town and country, nation and world, must also soar and sing.

Of course, he who has put forth his total strength in fit actions, has the richest return of wisdom. I will not shut myself out of this globe of action, and transplant an oak into a flower-pot, there to hunger and pine; nor trust the revenue of some single faculty, and exhaust one vein of thought, much like those Savoyards, who, getting their livelihood by carving shepherds, shepherdesses, and smoking Dutchmen, for all Europe, went out one day to the mountain to find stock, and discovered that they had whittled up the last of their pine-trees. Authors we have, in numbers, who have written out their vein, and who, moved by a commendable prudence, sail for Greece or Palestine, follow the trapper into the prairie, or ramble round Algiers, to replenish their merchantable stock. If it were only for a vocabulary, the scholar would be covetous of action. Life is our dictionary. Years are well spent in country labors; in town, –in the insight into trades and manufactures; in frank intercourse with many men and women; in science; in art; to the one end of mastering in all their facts a language by which to illustrate and embody our perceptions. I learn immediately from any speaker how much he has already lived, through the

poverty or the splendor of his speech. Life lies behind us as the quarry from whence we get tiles and copestones for the masonry of today. This is the way to learn grammar. Colleges and books only copy the language which the field and the work-yard made.

But the final value of action, like that of books, and better than books, is, that it is a resource. That great principle of Undulation in nature, that shows itself in the inspiring and expiring of the breath; in desire and satiety; in the ebb and flow of the sea; in day and night; in heat and cold; and as yet more deeply ingrained in every atom and every fluid, is known to us under the name of Polarity, –these “fits of easy transmission and reflection,” as Newton called them, are the law of nature because they are the law of spirit.

The mind now thinks; now acts; and each fit reproduces the other. When the artist has exhausted his materials, when the fancy no longer paints, when thoughts are no longer apprehended, and books are a weariness, –he has always the resource *to live*. Character is higher than intellect. Thinking is the function. Living is the functionary. The stream retreats to its source. A great soul will be strong to live, as well as strong

to think. Does he lack organ or medium to impart his truths? He can still fall back on this elemental force of living them. This is a total act. Thinking is a partial act. Let the grandeur of justice shine in his affairs. Let the beauty of affection cheer his lowly roof. Those 'far from fame,' who dwell and act with him, will feel the force of his constitution in the doings and passages of the day better than it can be measured by any public and designed display. Time shall teach him, that the scholar loses no hour which the man lives. Herein he unfolds the sacred germ of his instinct, screened from influence. What is lost in seemliness is gained in strength. Not out of those, on whom systems of education have exhausted their culture, comes the helpful giant to destroy the old or to build the new, but out of unhandselled savage nature, out of terrible Druids and Berserkirs, come at last Alfred and Shakespeare.

I hear therefore with joy whatever is beginning to be said of the dignity and necessity of labor to every citizen. There is virtue yet in the hoe and the spade, for learned as well as for unlearned hands. And labor is everywhere welcome; always we are invited to work; only be this limitation observed, that a man shall not for the sake of wider activity sacrifice any opinion to the popular judgments and modes of action.

I have now spoken of the education of the scholar by nature, by books, and by action. It remains to say somewhat of his duties. They are such as become Man Thinking. They may all be comprised in self-trust. The office of the scholar is to cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances. He plies the slow, unhonored, and unpaid task of observation. Flamsteed and Herschel, in their glazed observatories, may catalogue the stars with the praise of all men, and, the results being splendid and useful, honor is sure. But he, in his private observatory, cataloguing obscure and nebulous stars of the human mind, which as yet no man has thought of as such, –watching days and months, sometimes, for a few facts; correcting still his old records; –must relinquish display and immediate fame. In the long period of his preparation, he must betray often an ignorance and shiftlessness in popular arts, incurring the disdain of the able who shoulder him aside. Long he must stammer in his speech; often forego the living for the dead. Worse yet, he must accept, –how often! poverty and solitude. For the ease and pleasure of treading the old road, accepting the fashions, the education, the religion of society, he takes the cross of making his own, and, of course, the self-accusation, the faint heart, the frequent uncertainty and loss of time, which are the nettles and tangling

vines in the way of the self-relying and self-directed; and the state of virtual hostility in which he seems to stand to society, and especially to educated society. For all this loss and scorn, what offset? He is to find consolation in exercising the highest functions of human nature. He is one, who raises himself from private considerations, and breathes and lives on public and illustrious thoughts. He is the world's eye.

He is the world's heart. He is to resist the vulgar prosperity that retrogrades ever to barbarism, by preserving and communicating heroic sentiments, noble biographies, melodious verse, and the conclusions of history. Whatsoever oracles the human heart, in all emergencies, in all solemn hours, has uttered as its commentary on the world of actions, – these he shall receive and impart. And whatsoever new verdict Reason from her inviolable seat pronounces on the passing men and events of today, – this he shall hear and promulgate.

These being his functions, it becomes him to feel all confidence in himself, and to defer never to the popular cry. He and he only knows the world. The world of any moment is the merest appearance. Some great decorum, some fetish of a government, some ephemeral trade, or war, or man, is cried up

by half mankind and cried down by the other half, as if all depended on this particular up or down. The odds are that the whole question is not worth the poorest thought which the scholar has lost in listening to the controversy. Let him not quit his belief that a popgun is a popgun, though the ancient and honorable of the earth affirm it to be the crack of doom. In silence, in steadiness, in severe abstraction, let him hold by himself; add observation to observation, patient of neglect, patient of reproach; and bide his own time, –happy enough, if he can satisfy himself alone, that this day he has seen something truly. Success treads on every right step. For the instinct is sure, that prompts him to tell his brother what he thinks. He then learns, that in going down into the secrets of his own mind, he has descended into the secrets of all minds. He learns that he who has mastered any law in his private thoughts, is master to that extent of all men whose language he speaks, and of all into whose language his own can be translated. The poet, in utter solitude remembering his spontaneous thoughts and recording them, is found to have recorded that, which men in crowded cities find true for them also. The orator distrusts at first the fitness of his frank confessions, –his want of knowledge of the persons he addresses, –until he finds that he is the complement of his hearers; –that they drink his words

because he fulfill for them their own nature; the deeper he dives into his privatest, secretest presentiment, to his wonder he finds, this is the most acceptable, most public, and universally true. The people delight in it; the better part of every man feels, This is my music; this is myself.

In self-trust, all the virtues are comprehended. Free should the scholar be, –free and brave. Free even to the definition of freedom, “without any hindrance that does not arise out of his own constitution.” Brave; for fear is a thing, which a scholar by his very function puts behind him. Fear always springs from ignorance. It is a shame to him if his tranquility, amid dangerous times, arise from the presumption, that, like children and women, his is a protected class; or if he seek a temporary peace by the diversion of his thoughts from politics or vexed questions, hiding his head like an ostrich in the flowering bushes, peeping into microscopes, and turning rhymes, as a boy whistles to keep his courage up. So is the danger a danger still; so is the fear worse. Manlike let him turn and face it. Let him look into its eye and search its nature, inspect its origin, –see the whelping of this lion, –which lies no great way back; he will then find in himself a perfect comprehension of its nature and extent; he will have made his

hands meet on the other side, and can henceforth defy it, and pass on superior. The world is his, who can see through its pretension. What deafness, what stone-blind custom, what overgrown error you behold, is there only by sufferance, –by your sufferance. See it to be a lie, and you have already dealt it its mortal blow.

Yes, we are the cowed, –we the trustless. It is a mischievous notion that we come late into nature; that the world was finished a long time ago. As the world was plastic and fluid in the hands of God, so it is ever to so much of his attributes as we bring to it. To ignorance and sin, it is flint. They adapt themselves to it as they may; but in proportion as a man has anything in him divine, the firmament flows before him and takes his signet and form. Not he is great who can alter matter, but he who can alter my state of mind. They are the kings of the world who give the color of their present thought to all nature and all art, and persuade men by the cheerful serenity of their carrying the matter, that this thing which they do, is the apple which the ages have desired to pluck, now at last ripe, and inviting nations to the harvest. The great man makes the great thing. Wherever Macdonald sits, there is the head of the table. Linnaeus makes botany the most alluring of studies, and

wins it from the farmer and the herb-woman; Davy, chemistry; and Cuvier, fossils. The day is always his, who works in it with serenity and great aims. The unstable estimates of men crowd to him whose mind is filled with a truth, as the heaped waves of the Atlantic follow the moon.

For this self-trust, the reason is deeper than can be fathomed, –darker than can be enlightened. I might not carry with me the feeling of my audience in stating my own belief. But I have already shown the ground of my hope, in adverting to the doctrine that man is one. I believe man has been wronged; he has wronged himself. He has almost lost the light, that can lead him back to his prerogatives. Men are become of no account. Men in history, men in the world of today are bugs, are spawn, and are called ‘the mass’ and ‘the herd.’ In a century, in a millennium, one or two men; that is to say, –one or two approximations to the right state of every man. All the rest behold in the hero or the poet their own green and crude being, –ripened; yes, and are content to be less, so *that* may attain to its full stature. What a testimony, –full of grandeur, full of pity, is borne to the demands of his own nature, by the poor clansman, the poor partisan, who rejoices in the glory of his chief. The poor and the low find some amends to their

immense moral capacity, for their acquiescence in a political and social inferiority. They are content to be brushed like flies from the path of a great person, so that justice shall be done by him to that common nature which it is the dearest desire of all to see enlarged and glorified. They sun themselves in the great man's light, and feel it to be their own element. They cast the dignity of man from their downtrod selves upon the shoulders of a hero, and will perish to add one drop of blood to make that great heart beat, those giant sinews combat and conquer. He lives for us, and we live in him.

Men such as they are, very naturally seek money or power; and power because it is as good as money, –the “spoils,” so called, “of office.” And why not? for they aspire to the highest, and this, in their sleep-walking, they dream is highest. Wake them, and they shall quit the false good, and leap to the true, and leave governments to clerks and desks. This revolution is to be wrought by the gradual domestication of the idea of Culture. The main enterprise of the world for splendor, for extent, is the upbuilding of a man. Here are the materials strown along the ground. The private life of one man shall be a more illustrious monarchy, –more formidable to its enemy, more sweet and serene in its influence to its friend, than any

kingdom in history. For a man, rightly viewed, comprehendeth the particular natures of all men. Each philosopher, each bard, each actor, has only done for me, as by a delegate, what one day I can do for myself. The books which once we valued more than the apple of the eye, we have quite exhausted. What is that but saying, that we have come up with the point of view which the universal mind took through the eyes of one scribe; we have been that man, and have passed on. First, one; then, another; we drain all cisterns, and, waxing greater by all these supplies, we crave a better and more abundant food. The man has never lived that can feed us ever. The human mind cannot be enshrined in a person, who shall set a barrier on any one side to this unbounded, unboundable empire.

It is one central fire, which, flaming now out of the lips of Etna, lightens the capes of Sicily; and, now out of the throat of Vesuvius, illuminates the towers and vineyards of Naples. It is one light which beams out of a thousand stars. It is one soul which animates all men.

But I have dwelt perhaps tediously upon this abstraction of the Scholar. I ought not to delay longer to add what I have to say, of nearer reference to the time and to this country.

Historically, there is thought to be a difference in the ideas which predominate over successive epochs, and there are data for marking the genius of the Classic, of the Romantic, and now of the Reflective or Philosophical age. With the views I have intimated of the oneness or the identity of the mind through all individuals, I do not much dwell on these differences. In fact, I believe each individual passes through all three. The boy is a Greek; the youth, romantic; the adult, reflective. I deny not, however, that a revolution in the leading idea may be distinctly enough traced.

Our age is bewailed as the age of Introversion. Must that needs be evil? We, it seems, are critical; we are embarrassed with second thoughts; we cannot enjoy anything for hankering to know whereof the pleasure consists; we are lined with eyes; we see with our feet; the time is infected with Hamlet's unhappiness, — "Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. Is it so bad then? Sight is the last thing to be pitied. Would we be blind? Do we fear lest we should outsee nature and God, and drink truth dry? I look upon the discontent of the literary class, as a mere announcement of the fact, that they find themselves not in the state of mind of their fathers, and regret the coming

state as untried as a boy dreads the water before he has learned that he can swim. If there is any period one would desire to be born in, – is it not the age of Revolution; when the old and the new stand side by side, and admit of being compared; when the energies of all men are searched by fear and by hope; when the historic glories of the old, can be compensated by the rich possibilities of the new era? This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it.

I read with joy some of the auspicious signs of the coming days, as they glimmer already through poetry and art, through philosophy and science, through church and state.

One of these signs is the fact, that the same movement which effected the elevation of what was called the lowest class in the state, assumed in literature a very marked and as benign an aspect. Instead of the sublime and beautiful, the near, the low, the common, was explored and poetized. That, which had been negligently trodden under foot by those who were harnessing and provisioning themselves for long journeys into far countries, is suddenly found to be richer than all foreign parts. The literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life, are the

topics of the time. It is a great stride. It is a sign, –is it not? of new vigor, when the extremities are made active, when currents of warm life run into the hands and the feet.

I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; what is doing in Italy or Arabia; what is Greek art, or Provencal minstrelsy; I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into today, and you may have the antique and future worlds. What would we really know the meaning of? The meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat; the glance of the eye; the form and the gait of the body; –show me the ultimate reason of these matters; show me the sublime presence of the highest spiritual cause lurking, as always it does lurk, in these suburbs and extremities of nature; let me see every trifle bristling with the polarity that ranges it instantly on an eternal law; and the shop, the plough, and the ledger, referred to the like cause by which light undulates and poets sing; –and the world lies no longer a dull miscellany and lumber-room, but has form and order; there is no trifle; there is no puzzle; but one design unites and animates the farthest pinnacle and the lowest trench. This idea has inspired the genius of Goldsmith, Burns, Cowper, and, in a newer time, of

Goethe, Wordsworth, and Carlyle. This idea they have differently followed and with various success. In contrast with their writing, the style of Pope, of Johnson, of Gibbon, looks cold and pedantic. This writing is blood-warm. Man is surprised to find that things near are not less beautiful and wondrous than things remote. The near explains the far. The drop is a small ocean. A man is related to all nature. This perception of the worth of the vulgar is fruitful in discoveries. Goethe, in this very thing the most modern of the moderns, has shown us, as none ever did, the genius of the ancients. There is one man of genius, who has done much for this philosophy of life, whose literary value has never yet been rightly estimated; –I mean Emanuel Swedenborg. The most imaginative of men, yet writing with the precision of a mathematician, he endeavored to engraft a purely philosophical Ethics on the popular Christianity of his time. Such an attempt, of course, must have difficulty, which no genius could surmount. But he saw and showed the connection between nature and the affections of the soul. He pierced the emblematic or spiritual character of the visible, audible, tangible world. Especially did his shade-loving muse hover over and interpret the lower parts of nature; he showed the mysterious bond that allies moral evil to the foul material

forms, and has given in epical parables a theory of insanity, of beasts, of unclean and fearful things.

Another sign of our times, also marked by an analogous political movement, is, the new importance given to the single person. Every thing that tends to insulate the individual, –to surround him with barriers of natural respect, so that each man shall feel the world is his, and man shall treat with man as a sovereign state with a sovereign state; –tends to true union as well as greatness. “I learned,” said the melancholy Pestalozzi, “that no man in God’s wide earth is either willing or able to help any other man.”

Help must come from the bosom alone. The scholar is that man who must take up into himself all the ability of the time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future. He must be an university of knowledges. If there be one lesson more than another, which should pierce his ear, it is, The world is nothing, the man is all; in yourself is the law of all nature, and you know not yet how a globule of sap ascends; in yourself slumbers the whole of Reason; it is for you to know all, it is for you to dare all.

Mr. President and Gentlemen, this confidence in the unsearched might of man belongs, by all motives, by all prophecy, by all preparation, to the American Scholar. We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. The spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame. Public and private avarice make the air we breathe thick and fat. The scholar is decent, indolent, complaisant. See already the tragic consequence. The mind of this country, taught to aim at low objects, eats upon itself. There is no work for any but the decorous and the complaisant. Young men of the fairest promise, who begin life upon our shores, inflated by the mountain winds, shined upon by all the stars of God, find the earth below not in unison with these, – but are hindered from action by the disgust which the principles on which business is managed inspire, and turn drudges, or die of disgust, –some of them suicides. What is the remedy? They did not yet see, and thousands of young men as hopeful now crowding to the barriers for the career do not yet see, that, if the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him. Patience, –patience; –with the shades of all the good and great for company; and for solace, the perspective of your own infinite life; and for work, the study and the communication of

principles, the making those instincts prevalent, the conversion of the world. Is it not the chief disgrace in the world, not to be an unit; –not to be reckoned one character; –not to yield that peculiar fruit which each man was created to bear, but to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundred, or the thousand, of the party, the section, to which we belong; and our opinion predicted geographically, as the north, or the south? Not so, brothers and friends, –please God, ours shall not be so. We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds. The study of letters shall be no longer a name for pity, for doubt, and for sensual indulgence. The dread of man and the love of man shall be a wall of defence and a wreath of joy around all. A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men.

The Ph.D. Octopus

William James

1903

Some years ago, we had at our Harvard Graduate School a very brilliant student of Philosophy, who, after leaving us and supporting himself by literary labor for three years, received an appointment to teach English Literature at a sister-institution of learning. The governors of this institution, however, had no sooner communicated the appointment than they made the awful discovery that they had enrolled upon their staff a person who was unprovided with the Ph.D. degree. The man in question had been satisfied to work at Philosophy for her own sweet (or bitter) sake, and had disdained to consider that an academic bauble should be his reward.

His appointment had thus been made under a misunderstanding. He was not the proper man; and there was nothing to do but inform him of the fact. It was notified to him by his new President that his appointment must be revoked, or that a Harvard doctor's degree must forthwith be procured.

Although it was already the spring of the year, our Subject, being a man of spirit, took up the challenge, turned his back upon literature (which in view of his approaching duties might have seemed his more urgent concern) and spent the weeks that were left him in writing a metaphysical thesis and grinding his psychology, logic, and history of philosophy up again, so as to pass our formidable ordeals.

When the thesis came to be read by our committee, we could not pass it. Brilliancy and originality by themselves won't save a thesis for the doctorate; it must also exhibit a heavy technical apparatus of learning; and this our candidate had neglected to bring to bear. So, telling him that he was temporarily rejected, we advised him to pad out the thesis properly, and return with it next year, at the same time informing his new President that this signified nothing as to

his merits, that he was of ultra-Ph.D. quality, and one of the strongest men with whom we had ever had to deal.

To our surprise we were given to understand in reply that the quality per se of the man signified nothing in this connection, and that the three magical letters were the thing seriously required. The College had always gloried in a list of faculty members who bore the doctor's title, and to make a gap in the galaxy, and admit a common fox without a tail, would be a degradation impossible to be thought of. We wrote again, pointing out that a Ph.D. in philosophy would prove little anyhow as to one's ability to teach literature; we sent separate letters in which we outdid each other in eulogy of our candidate's powers, for indeed they were great; and at last, *mirabile dictu*, our eloquence prevailed. He was allowed to retain his appointment provisionally, on condition that one year later at the farthest his miserably naked name should be prolonged by the sacred appendage the lack of which had given so much trouble to all concerned.

Accordingly he came up here the following spring with an adequate thesis (known since in print as a most brilliant contribution to metaphysics), passed a first-rate examination,

wiped out the stain, and brought his College into proper relations with the world again. Whether his teaching, during that first year, of English Literature was made any the better by the impending examination in a different subject, is a question which I will not try to solve.

I have related this incident at such length because it is so characteristic of American academic conditions at the present day. Graduate schools still are something of a novelty, and higher diplomas something of a rarity. The latter, therefore, carry a vague sense of preciousness and honor, and have a particularly “up- to-date” appearance, and it is no wonder if smaller institutions, unable to attract professors already eminent, and forced usually to recruit their faculties from the relatively young, should hope to compensate for the obscurity of the names of their officers of instruction by the abundance of decorative titles by which those names are followed on the pages of the catalogues where they appear. The dazzled reader of the list, the parent or student, says to himself, “This must be a terribly distinguished crowd, —their titles shine like the stars in the firmament; Ph.D.’s, S.D.’s, and Litt.D.’s bespangle the page as if they were sprinkled over it from a pepper caster.”

Human nature is once for all so childish that every reality becomes a sham somewhere, and in the minds of Presidents and Trustees the Ph.D. degree is in point of fact already looked upon as a mere advertising resource, a manner of throwing dust in the Public's eyes. "No instructor who is not a Doctor" has become a maxim in the smaller institutions which represent demand; and in each of the larger ones which represent supply, the same belief in decorated scholarship expresses itself in two antagonistic passions, one for multiplying as much as possible the annual output of doctors, the other for raising the standard of difficulty in passing, so that the Ph.D. of the special institution shall carry a higher blaze of distinction than it does elsewhere. Thus, we at Harvard are proud of the number of candidates whom we reject, and of the inability of men who are not distingues¹ in intellect to pass our tests.

America is thus a nation rapidly drifting towards a state of things in which no man of science or letters will be accounted respectable unless some kind of badge or diploma is stamped upon him, and in which bare personality will be a mark of outcast estate. It seems to me high time to rouse ourselves to

¹ Archaic for distinguish, from the French distingué.

consciousness, and to cast a critical eye upon this decidedly grotesque tendency. Other nations suffer terribly from the Mandarin disease. Are we doomed to suffer like the rest?

Our higher degrees were instituted for the laudable purpose of stimulating scholarship, especially in the form of “original research.” Experience has proved that great as the love of truth may be among men, it can be made still greater by adventitious rewards. The winning of a diploma certifying mastery and marking a barrier successfully passed, acts as a challenge to the ambitious; and if the diploma will help to gain bread-winning positions also, its power as a stimulus to work is tremendously increased. So far, we are on innocent ground; it is well for a country to have research in abundance, and our graduate schools do but apply a normal psychological spur. But the institutionizing on a large scale of any natural combination of need and motive always tends to run into technicality and to develop a tyrannical Machine with unforeseen powers of exclusion and corruption. Observation of the workings of our Harvard system for twenty years past has brought some of these drawbacks home to my consciousness, and I should like to call the attention of my readers to this disadvantageous aspect of

the picture, and to make a couple of remedial suggestions, if I may.

In the first place, it would seem that to stimulate study, and to increase the *gelehrtes Publikum*, the class of highly educated men in our country, is the only positive good, and consequently the sole direct end at which our graduate schools, with their diploma-giving powers, should aim. If other results have developed, they should be deemed secondary incidents, and if not desirable in themselves, they should be carefully guarded against.

To interfere with the free development of talent, to obstruct the natural play of supply and demand in the teaching profession, to foster academic snobbery by the prestige of certain privileged institutions, to transfer accredited value from essential manhood to an outward badge, to blight hopes and promote invidious sentiments, to divert the attention of aspiring youth from direct dealings with truth to the passing of examinations,--such consequences, if they exist, ought surely to be regarded as drawbacks to the system, and an enlightened public consciousness ought to be keenly alive to the importance of reducing their amount. Candidates themselves

do seem to be keenly conscious of some of these evils, but outside of their ranks or in the general public no such consciousness, so far as I can see, exists; or if it does exist, it fails to express itself aloud. Schools, Colleges, and Universities, appear enthusiastic over the entire system, just as it stands, and unanimously applaud all its developments.

I beg the reader to consider some of the secondary evils which I have enumerated. First of all, is not our growing tendency to appoint no instructors who are not also doctors an instance of pure sham? Will anyone pretend for a moment that the doctor's degree is a guarantee that its possessor will be successful as a teacher? Notoriously his moral, social, and personal characteristics may utterly disqualify him for success in the classroom; and of these characteristics his doctor's examination is unable to take any account whatever. Certain bare human beings will always be better candidates for a given place than all the doctor-applicants on hand; and to exclude the former by a rigid rule, and in the end to have to sift the latter by private inquiry into their personal peculiarities among those who know them, just as if they were not doctors at all, is to stultify one's own procedure. You may say that at least you guard against ignorance of the subject by considering only the

candidates who are doctors; but how then about making doctors in one subject teach a different subject? This happened in the instance by which I introduced this article, and it happens daily and hourly in all our colleges. The truth is that the Doctor-Monopoly in teaching, which is becoming so rooted an American custom, can show no serious grounds whatsoever for itself in reason. As it actually prevails and grows in vogue among us, it is due to childish motives exclusively. In reality it is but a sham, a bauble, a dodge, whereby to decorate the catalogues of schools and colleges.

Next, let us turn from the general promotion of a spirit of academic snobbery to the particular damage done to individuals by the system. There are plenty of individuals so well endowed by nature that they pass with ease all the ordeals with which life confronts them. Such persons are born for professional success. Examinations have no terrors for them and interfere in no way with their spiritual or worldly interests. There are others, not so gifted, who nevertheless rise to the challenge, get a stimulus from the difficulty, and become doctors, not without some baleful nervous wear and tear and retardation of their purely inner life, but on the whole successfully, and with advantage. These two classes form the

natural Ph.D.'s for whom the degree is legitimately instituted. To be sure, the degree is of no consequence one way or the other for the first sort of man, for in him the personal worth obviously outshines the title. To the second set of persons, however, the doctor ordeal may contribute a touch of energy and solidity of scholarship which otherwise they might have lacked, and were our all candidates drawn from these classes, no oppression would result from the institution.

But there is a third class of persons who are genuinely, and in the most pathetic sense, the institution's victims. For this type of character, the academic life may become, after a certain point, a virulent poison. Men without marked originality or native force, but fond of truth and especially of books and study, ambitious of reward and recognition, poor often, and needing a degree to get a teaching position, weak in the eyes of their examiners--among these we find the veritable *chair a canon* of the wars of learning, the unfit in the academic struggle for existence. There are individuals of this sort for whom to pass one degree after another seems the limit of earthly aspiration. Your private advice does not discourage them. They will fail, and go away to recuperate, and then present themselves for another ordeal, and sometimes prolong the process into

middle life. Or else, if they are less heroic morally, they will accept the failure as a sentence of doom that they are not fit, and are broken-spirited men thereafter.

We of the university faculties are responsible for deliberately creating this new class of American social failures, and heavy is the responsibility. We advertise our “schools” and send out our degree-requirements, knowing well that aspirants of all sorts will be attracted, and at the same time we set a standard which intends to pass no man who has not native intellectual distinction. We know that there is no test, however absurd, by which, if a title or decoration, a public badge or mark, were to be won by it, some weakly suggestible or hauntable persons would not feel challenged and remain unhappy if they went without it. We dangle our three magic letters before the eyes of these predestined victims, and they swarm to us like moths to an electric light. They come at a time when failure can no longer be repaired easily and when the wounds it leaves are permanent; and we say deliberately that mere work faithfully performed, as they perform it, will not by itself save them, they must in addition put in evidence the one thing they have not got, namely this quality of intellectual distinction. Occasionally, out of sheer human pity, we ignore our high and

mighty standard and pass them. Usually, however, the standard, and not the candidate, commands our fidelity. The result is caprice, majorities of one on the jury, and on the whole a confession that our pretensions about the degree cannot be lived up to consistently. Thus, partiality in the favored cases; in the unfavored, blood on our hands; and in both a bad conscience, —are the results of our administration.

The more widespread becomes the popular belief that our diplomas are indispensable hallmarks to show the sterling metal of their holders, the more widespread these corruptions will become. We ought to look to the future carefully, for it takes generations for a national custom, once rooted, to be grown away from. All the European countries are seeking to diminish the check upon individual spontaneity which state examinations with their tyrannous growth have brought in their train. We have had to institute state examinations too; and it will perhaps be fortunate if some day hereafter our descendants, comparing machine with machine, do not sigh with regret for old times and American freedom, and wish that the regime of the dear old bosses might be re-installed, with plain human nature, the glad hand and the marble heart, liking and disliking, and man-to-man relations grown possible again.

Meanwhile, whatever evolution our state-examinations are destined to undergo, our universities at least should never cease to regard themselves as the jealous custodians of personal and spiritual spontaneity. They are indeed its only organized and recognized custodians in America today. They ought to guard against contributing to the increase of officialism and snobbery and insincerity as against a pestilence; they ought to keep truth and disinterested labor always in the foreground, treat degrees as secondary incidents, and in season and out of season make it plain that what they live for is to help men's souls, and not to decorate their persons with diplomas.

There seem to be three obvious ways in which the increasing hold of the Ph.D. Octopus upon American life can be kept in check.

The first way lies with the universities. They can lower their fantastic standards (which here at Harvard we are so proud of) and give the doctorate as a matter of course, just as they give the bachelor's degree, for a due amount of time spent in patient labor in a special department of learning, whether the man be a brilliantly gifted individual or not. Surely native distinction needs no official stamp and should disdain to ask for one. On

the other hand, faithful labor, however commonplace, and years devoted to a subject, always deserve to be acknowledged and requited.

The second way lies with both the universities and the colleges. Let them give up their unspeakably silly ambition to bespangle their lists of offices with these doctoral titles. Let them look more to substance and less to vanity and sham.

The third way lies with the individual student and with his personal advisers in the faculties. Every man of native power, who might take the higher degree, and refuses to do so because examinations interfere with the free following out of his more immediate intellectual aims, deserves well of his country, and in a rightly organized community, would not be made to suffer for his independence. With many men the passing of these extraneous tests is a very grievous interference indeed. Private letters of recommendation from their instructors, which in any event are ultimately needful, ought, in these cases, completely to offset the lack of the bread-winning degree; and instructors ought to be ready to advise students against it upon occasion, and to pledge themselves to back them later personally, in the market-struggle which they have to face.

It is indeed odd to see this love of titles -- and such titles -- growing up in a country of which the recognition of individuality and bare manhood have so long been supposed to be the very soul. The independence of the State, in which most of our colleges stand, relieves us of those more odious forms of academic politics which continental European countries present.

Anything like the elaborate university machine of France, with its throttling influences upon individuals is unknown here. The spectacle of the Rath distinction in its innumerable spheres and grades, with which all Germany is crawling today, is displeasing to American eyes; and displeasing also in some respects is the institution of knighthood in England, which, aping as it does an aristocratic title, enables one's wife as well as oneself so easily to dazzle the servants at the house of one's friends. But are we Americans ourselves destined after all to hunger after similar vanities on an infinitely more contemptible scale? And is individuality with us also going to count for nothing unless stamped and licensed and authenticated by some title-giving machine? Let us pray that our ancient national genius may long preserve vitality enough to guard us from a future so unmanly and so unbeautiful!

Afterword

As we bring this collection of essays to a close, it's evident that the ideas explored within its pages remain as relevant and thought-provoking today as they were when they were first penned. Emerson, Harris, and James, each writing from their unique vantage points in American history, grapple with fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of education, offering insights that continue to resonate across time.

Collectively, these essays serve as a testament to the enduring power of ideas and the role of education in shaping the future of society. They remind us that education is not merely a means to an end, but a lifelong journey of exploration and discovery. As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, may we continue to draw inspiration from the timeless wisdom contained within these pages, and may we never lose sight of the transformative potential of learning.

Edited with care by Elliot Bramham.