

PART II

PAPERS PRESENTED TO THE FOURTH GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY BUT NOT READ

HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY AS INTEGRATING FACTORS IN THE MODERN CURRICULUM

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If comparative education is not to be a merely descriptive science it surely must involve the philosophical point of view in its methodology. It is insufficient to use only the method of comparison of existing curricula in various countries for the discovery of the characteristics of a modern curriculum. In addition, the main trends of modern life which have their deep philosophical roots, which are of decisive importance in the creation of a modern curriculum, must be added. Moreover, national and cultural traits also contribute to the point of view taken with regard to the problems of curriculum.

In this contribution I would like to concentrate on the common features of life and on their bearing on the curriculum in the contemporary world. I shall approach the whole problem from the philosophic dialectical point of view.

The questions I shall deal with are as follows :

- (A) What are the dominant features of contemporary life ?
- (B) How can the curriculum be built to direct people's education towards a deep comprehension of the dominant features of modern life ?

A. THE DOMINANT FEATURES OF MODERN LIFE

The dominant features of modern life include the following :

(1) A steady increase in the *dynamism* and *interdependence* of people in the world as a whole. Both these features are conditioned by human creative power in the sphere of technology. Human activity introduces dialectical tension in all social activity. It creates ever new contradictions between man and nature, man and technology, wealth and poverty, the educated and the uneducated, etc., all of which acquire ever new meanings in the dynamic structure of the world. These contradictions lead to continuity of development and create dynamism in the whole structure.

(2) The dominant contradictions of contemporary life arise from the dialectical tension between *integration* and *differentiation*. This tension is to be found in nations, states, the sciences, economic systems, social classes, cultures, etc., all of which are aiming, at one and the same time, at integration (co-operation, unity) and at differentiation (specialization, individualization).

The pressure *towards integration* arises from the nature of modern *technology* which leads to modern co-operation. The pressure *towards differentiation*

results from the rapidly developing state of *human knowledge*, and from the increasing *human need for self-realization*. The striving towards these two contradictory goals has deep *human significance*. A balance between them needs to be maintained which will be significant for the humanism of modern times. *The retention of individual creative power* depends on the appreciation of the need for individualization as well as integration.

(3) A further characteristic feature of modern life is the *increasing significance of the human being* as the most important source of dynamism in all structures, creating and overcoming contradictions in the social structure and potentially regulating the tensions in dynamic life.

B. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND MODERN LIFE

All these dominant features should be *incorporated* into the modern curriculum in order to ensure that people are educated to acquire an adequate methodological treatment of reality.

First of all, it should be stressed that a curriculum is not just a list of discontinuous subject matters and activities nor an amorphous amalgam of these. None of the dominant features of life can be conveyed in only one part of the curriculum. The *modern curriculum has a dynamic structure* with dominant features, and dominant contradictions, which should *become dominants* in the education of personality.

The dynamics of modern life can be understood only in historical perspective. The contradictions which are the sources of dynamism have their origin in history. Historical thinking should therefore be seen as a main route to comprehension of modern life and as a preparation for regulating life towards desirable human ends.

Historicism, *sui generis*, will be the dominant feature of the modern curriculum which will involve the idea of the changing world of today, with its main contradictions and continuities. I stress that I am speaking about historicism *sui generis*, about historicism which has a dialectical way of thinking. I am well aware that there are trends in modern curriculum development which, in contradiction to the above mentioned meaning, stress that history and historicism are an obstacle to comprehending the problems of modern life and the problems of technology. In the 'twenties, in the so-called reform movement which spread through Europe, initiated by the practice of the American school in a spirit of pragmatism (not by Dewey's theory), an underestimation of the role of history in the curriculum developed in school practice. It was a reaction against the classical liberal education. In the concept of liberal education, historicism was criticized as impractical education for the privileged in grammar schools and other kinds of *élite* secondary schools. History was taken to be a subject which concentrated the attention of children towards the past and not towards the present and the future, towards the humanities (arts) and not towards sciences, towards social problems and not towards

technology. It seemed that history had no practical meaning for the problems of contemporary life ; that it had only narrow cultural significance.

However this pragmatic concept is now being criticized in the very countries where it had its origin. For example, in the U.S.A., Theodor Brameld has criticized the American contempt for history : "Although history is taught in practically all American schools and colleges, it is too seldom regarded in any challenging way as the temporal dimension of culture within which the young are immersed. Rather it becomes for most students simply another course, separated from others and tolerated as a body of self-contained subject matters that must be absorbed for reasons concealed from the absorbers. By comparison, the sciences rank much higher ; here the stress is again more on the definite rule and the precise technique than on their integrative or normative significance for our contemporary culture". (*Cultural Foundations of Education*, by Theodor Brameld, New York 1967, p. 88).

There are two facts, in my opinion, which have altered the significance of history in the modern curriculum. First of all dialectical methodology will be introduced into historical investigations which enables us to see the developing contradictions and to understand changing human points of view in a historical process. We shall have more to say on this subject later on. Secondly, education will be seen as a whole-life process, not only as school education. In this concept more time will be given to the development of a real feeling for history, when in adult education it will be possible to reach an almost philosophical understanding of all of life's continuities. Both these facts will make it possible to change the role of history in the modern curriculum.

Only the historical point of view can explain the steady increase of contradictions in all spheres of our life and the need to overcome them. The historical point of view gives us a possibility of understanding the problems of the original unity of man and nature, and the problems of separating them, into two isolated parts, the problems of the original unity of all sciences and the problems of a growing differentiation which has tended towards separating arts and sciences, technology and social studies, etc. It also enables us to understand the modern unity of differentiating parts without losing the advantage of specialization.

The basis for history in classical liberal education was in the Greek philosophical concept of life. It was the idea of a harmonious universe, where all the phenomena had their particular place, and where movement was limited. In liberal education it was not made really clear that this was only one of the images of world which European people developed in their history.

Modern historicism, based on dialectical methodology, sees all the contradictions in the vertical as well as in the horizontal sense. Various systems of thought have arisen in history which have always represented the concept of distinguishing images of the world. A given concept has always influenced all men's thoughts and attitudes to reality as the basic determinant.

Jan Patočka, the contemporary Czech philosopher in his recent book, *Aristotle, his Ancestors and Heirs* (Prague, 1964), shows very instructively that the main principles of the changes in the image of reality which people have created at any given stage of their history, had its roots in different aspects of *movement*. On this basis the European concept of the universe was essentially changed three times.

From the harmonious picture of the universe where either constant relations between all the phenomena of nature and man can be found and can be mathematically stated (Plato), or are in motion (Aristotle) but in a motion which has limited extent, to the post-Renaissance picture of the universe, where the motion has its mechanical character (Newton) and has no creative power, because there are no contradictions in it, the picture of the universe arises from the investigation of different sciences. The distinguishing development of sciences leads to the post-Cartesian separation of natural sciences and human sciences and to a picture of the universe where the modern isolation of technology and man has its beginning.

Finally, a third prevailing concept of the world is developing, influenced by modern dialectical philosophy and by modern theoretical physics. For example where the point of view in respect to movement ceases to be mechanistic and changes are seen as having not only a quantitative character but also a qualitative one, contradictions of development become evident and new realities emerge. It is, as Patočka says, *ontological* movement, it is a real process. Here are the roots for the *modern concept of dynamism*. Here are the roots for the comprehension of the steady tension between integration and differentiation and for the treatment of these contradictions as well as for the methodology of realizing the modern unity of natural and human sciences, and of man and technology. Here are the roots for the comprehension of the importance of the personal, human part in historical development.

All branches of science have gone through essential changes in their treatment of reality; they have changed their methodology, and have helped to create a new concept of the universe, which seemed the only correct ones to certain cultures at certain points in history.

The dialectical way of thinking, as the result of an age-long process, overcomes this human self-confidence in the one and only true knowledge. This way has shown the relativism and, at the same time, the endurance of relativism in the development of scientific, social, economic, cultural and other systems, and has discovered their hidden links and contradictions.

Within the framework of each new concept, people saw many truths as stable ones, and it was only later that they discovered that in other frames their truths were untrue, and that there were other truths. This is true of various historical stages as well as in various cultural contexts.

All subjects in the curriculum co-operate in the construction of the modern contradictory, continuous, and changing picture of the world, and of the changing relations between nature, man, society and technology. History

points to all the changes in the past as well as in the present and thus points to the nature of future changes. In a study of history we can see the natural integrative moment for bridging the post-Cartesian gap between sciences and arts, between exact and philosophical methods, etc.

From this point of view integration and specialization of subject matters in the curriculum are seen in quite a different way than if regarded in a simplified pragmatic manner. Subjects need not be fused in some amorphous unity which is amalgamated from various scientific branches. Instead, they can be really integrated by a deepening philosophical view of reality. All subjects could be directed to the comprehension of the human role in history, to the role of consciously overcoming the contradictions of modern life.

Marx's words describing the decisive role of man as the factor linking the history of nature, man and his thinking, are relevant here and can be used profitably in the context of the curriculum :

"The nature which develops in human history — the genesis of human society — is man's real nature ; . . . History itself is a *real* part of *natural history* — of nature developing into man. Natural science will in time incorporate into itself the science of man, just as the science of man will incorporate into itself natural science : there will be one science." (K. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, p. 143, English translation by M. Mulligan, Ed., D. J. Struick, Lawrence and Wishart, London 1970).

The whole structure of the curriculum should aim at the education of the personality as the subject of conscious changes in reality. Through this function the curriculum is linked immediately with pre-school, extramural and out-of-school education, with adult education and with the position of the individual in society in general. Only when education is taken as a whole life process which does not begin with school attendance and does not finish with the leaving certificate can the curriculum fulfil its tasks.

To develop historical feeling, to develop human ability, to aim consciously at overcoming contradictions is the task of a lifetime. It can be successful in practice only when education becomes democratic, so that ever more and more people will get the opportunity to cultivate their historical sense. Consequently it is particularly important to develop the natural emotional and aesthetic treatment of children in the early years of their life and in pre-school days and to develop the imagination and the feeling of unity with one's environment the feeling of personal participation in life, making possible the deep experiences which are afforded by art and, later on, by travel and contacts with people.

Similar ideas were expressed by many educationists, for instance, by our own J. A. Komensky (Comenius) who expressed in the language of his own time, the 17th century, quite modern ideas on fostering a child's activity through art, and also, for instance, by Herbert Read, the modern English theoretician.

There are various means which lead to this desirable end. It is necessary to go on elaborating suggestions for education leading to the creation of such

tools (of a methodological kind) which people will be able to use during their life in the changing world.

The deep integration of arts and sciences (which is so important for modern life) can be achieved by people only as adults. There is no hurry for people to attain such philosophical conclusions in the early stages of their life. There are many problems which it is possible to postpone to the adult period. Therefore it will be profitable to see the school curriculum as only part of the whole life process, but one, of course, which provides the necessary preconditions for the successful philosophical integration of the arts and sciences in later life.

HISTOIRE ET PHILOSOPHIE COMME FACTEURS INTEGRANTS DANS UN PROGRAMME D'ETUDE MODERNE

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Les caractéristiques d'un programme moderne ne peuvent être déterminées que si les principales tendances de la vie moderne, vues en relation avec les traits nationaux et culturels sont comprises et mises en application. Les aspects caractéristiques de la vie moderne sont 1. une augmentation régulière du dynamisme humain et de l'interdépendance à partir desquels les contradictions entre l'homme et la nature, etc. mènent à une continuité du développement ; 2. les principales contradictions provenant de la tension dialectique entre des pressions vers l'intégration, issues de la nature de la technologie moderne, et vers la différenciation résultant de la croissance de la connaissance humaine et du besoin humain d'auto-réalisation ; et 3. l'importance croissante de l'être humain dans la vie dynamique. La meilleure façon d'introduire ces aspects dans la structure d'un programme moderne est de faire de l'historisme dialectique. Ceci permet de comprendre les changements historiques dans les façons de voir des hommes et les problèmes que posent les rapports de l'homme avec la nature ainsi que l'équilibre entre l'intégration et la différenciation. Une telle approche permettrait de mettre en lumière le relativisme de la pensée humaine, les liens cachés et les contradictions dans les systèmes scientifiques, sociaux, économiques, culturels et autres, orientant ainsi la nature des changements futurs. Tous les sujets pourraient viser à la compréhension du rôle de l'homme dans l'histoire et vers l'éducation de la personnalité qui est l'objet de changement conscient dans la réalité. Cette profonde intégration des arts et des sciences ne peut être accomplie que par une éducation conçue comme un processus qui se déroule pendant toute une vie et dont le programme scolaire doit viser à poser les fondations.