

CHAPTER VIII

EDUCATION AND SEX IN MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD

The one thing we have to avoid, then, even while we carry on our own old process of education, is this development of the powers of so-called self-expression in a child. Let us beware of artificially stimulating his self-consciousness and his so-called imagination. All that we do is to pervert the child into a ghastly state of self-consciousness, making him affectedly try to show off as we wish him to show off. The moment the least little trace of self-consciousness enters in a child, good-bye to everything except falsity.

Much better just pound away at the ABC and simple arithmetic and so on. The modern methods do make children sharp, give them a sort of slick finesse, but it is the beginning of the mischief. It ends in the great "unrest" of a nervous, hysterical proletariat. Begin to teach a child of five to "understand." To understand the sun and moon and daisy and the secrets of procreation, bless your soul. Understanding all the way.--And when the child is twenty he'll have a hysterical understanding of his own invented grievance, and there's an end of him. Understanding is the devil.

A child mustn't understand things. He must have them his own way. His vision isn't ours. When a boy of eight sees a horse, he doesn't see

the correct biological object we intend him to see. He sees a big living presence of no particular shape with hair dangling from its neck and four legs. If he puts two eyes in the profile, he is quite right. Because he does not see with optical, photographic vision. The image on his retina is not the image of his consciousness. The image on his retina just does not go into him. His unconsciousness is filled with a strong, dark, vague prescience of a powerful presence, a two-eyed, four-legged, long-maned presence looming imminent.

And to force the boy to see a correct one-eyed horse-profile is just like pasting a placard in front of his vision. It simply kills his inward seeing. We don't want him to see a proper horse. The child is not a little camera. He is a small vital organism which has direct dynamic rapport with the objects of the outer universe. He perceives from his breast and his abdomen, with deep-sunken realism, the elemental nature of the creature. So that to this day a Noah's Ark tree is more real than a Corot tree or a Constable tree: and a flat Noah's Ark cow has a deeper vital reality than even a Cuyp cow.

The mode of vision is not one and final. The mode of vision is manifold. And the optical image is a mere vibrating blur to a child--and, indeed, to a passionate adult. In this vibrating blur the soul sees its own true correspondent. It sees, in a cow, horns and squareness, and a long tail. It sees, for a horse, a mane, and a long face, round nose, and four legs. And in each case a darkly vital presence. Now horns and squareness and a long thin ox-tail, these are

the fearful and wonderful elements of the cow-form, which the dynamic soul perfectly perceives. The ideal-image is just outside nature, for a child--something false. In a picture, a child wants elemental recognition, and not correctness or expression, or least of all, what we call understanding. The child distorts inevitably and dynamically. But the dynamic abstraction is more than mental. If a huge eye sits in the middle of the cheek, in a child's drawing, this shows that the deep dynamic consciousness of the eye, its relative exaggeration, is the life-truth, even if it is a scientific falsehood.

On the other hand, what on earth is the good of saying to a child, "The world is a flattened sphere, like an orange." It is simply pernicious. You had much better say the world is a poached egg in a frying pan. That might have some dynamic meaning. The only thing about the flattened orange is that the child just sees this orange disporting itself in blue air, and never bothers to associate it with the earth he treads on. And yet it would be so much better for the mass of mankind if they never heard of the flattened sphere. They should never be told that the earth is round. It only makes everything unreal to them. They are balked in their impression of the flat good earth, they can't get over this sphere business, they live in a fog of abstraction, and nothing is anything. Save for purposes of abstraction, the earth is a great plain, with hills and valleys. Why force abstractions and kill the reality, when there's no need?

As for children, will we never realize that their abstractions are

never based on observations, but on subjective exaggerations? If there is an eye in the face, the face is all eye. It is the child soul which cannot get over the mystery of the eye. If there is a tree in a landscape, the landscape is all tree. Always this partial focus. The attempt to make a child focus for a whole view--which is really a generalization and an adult abstraction--is simply wicked. Yet the first thing we do is to set a child making relief-maps in clay, for example: of his own district. Imbecility! He has not even the faintest impression of the total hill on which his home stands. A steepness going up to a door--and front garden railings--and perhaps windows. That's the lot.

The top and bottom of it is, that it is a crime to teach a child anything at all, school-wise. It is just evil to collect children together and teach them through the head. It causes absolute starvation in the dynamic centers, and sterile substitute of brain knowledge is all the gain. The children of the middle classes are so vitally impoverished, that the miracle is they continue to exist at all. The children of the lower classes do better, because they escape into the streets. But even the children of the proletariat are now infected.

And, of course, as my critics point out, under all the school-smarm and newspaper-cant, man is to-day as savage as a cannibal, and more dangerous. The living dynamic self is denaturalized instead of being educated.

We talk about education--leading forth the natural intelligence of a child. But ours is just the opposite of leading forth. It is a ramming in of brain facts through the head, and a consequent distortion, suffocation, and starvation of the primary centers of consciousness. A nice day of reckoning we've got in front of us.

Let us lead forth, by all means. But let us not have mental knowledge before us as the goal of the leading. Much less let us make of it a vicious circle in which we lead the unhappy child-mind, like a cow in a ring at a fair. We don't want to educate children so that they may understand. Understanding is a fallacy and a vice in most people. I don't even want my child to know, much less to understand. I don't want my child to know that five fives are twenty-five, any more than I want my child to wear my hat or my boots. I don't want my child to know. If he wants five fives let him count them on his fingers. As for his little mind, give it a rest, and let his dynamic self be alert. He will ask "why" often enough. But he more often asks why the sun shines, or why men have mustaches, or why grass is green, than anything sensible. Most of a child's questions are, and should be, unanswerable. They are not questions at all. They are exclamations of wonder, they are remarks half-sceptically addressed. When a child says, "Why is grass green?" he half implies. "Is it really green, or is it just taking me in?" And we solemnly begin to prate about chlorophyll. Oh, imbeciles, idiots, inexcusable owls!

The whole of a child's development goes on from the great dynamic centers, and is basically non-mental. To introduce mental activity is to arrest the dynamic activity, and stultify true dynamic development. By the age of twenty-one our young people are helpless, hopeless, selfless, floundering mental entities, with nothing in front of them, because they have been starved from the roots, systematically, for twenty-one years, and fed through the head. They have had all their mental excitements, sex and everything, all through the head, and when it comes to the actual thing, why, there's nothing in it. Blasé. The affective centers have been exhausted from the head.

Before the age of fourteen, children should be taught only to move, to act, to do. And they should be taught as little as possible even of this. Adults simply cannot and do not know any more what the mode of childish intelligence is. Adults always interfere. They always force the adult mental mode. Therefore children must be preserved from adult instructions.

Make a child work--yes. Make it do little jobs. Keep a fine and delicate and fierce discipline, so that the little jobs are performed as perfectly as is consistent with the child's nature. Make the child alert, proud, and becoming in its movements. Make it know very definitely that it shall not and must not trespass on other people's privacy or patience. Teach it songs, tell it tales. But never instruct it school-wise. And mostly, leave it alone, send it away to be with other children and to get in and out of mischief, and in and

out of danger. Forget your child altogether as much as possible.

All this is the active and strenuous business of parents, and must not be shelved off on to strangers. It is the business of parents mentally to forget but dynamically never to forsake their children.

It is no use expecting parents to know why schools are closed, and why they, the parents, must be quite responsible for their own children during the first ten years. If it is quite useless to expect parents to understand a theory of relativity, much less will they understand the development of the dynamic consciousness. But why should they understand? It is the business of very few to understand and for the mass, it is their business to believe and not to bother, but to be honorable and humanly to fulfill their human responsibilities. To give active obedience to their leaders, and to possess their own souls in natural pride.

Some must understand why a child is not to be mentally educated. Some must have a faint inkling of the processes of consciousness during the first fourteen years. Some must know what a child beholds, when it looks at a horse, and what it means when it says, "Why is grass green?" The answer to this question, by the way, is "Because it is."

The interplay of the four dynamic centers follows no one conceivable law. Mental activity continues according to a law of co-relation. But there is no logical or rational co-relation in the dynamic

consciousness. It pulses on inconsequential, and it would be impossible to determine any sequence. Out of the very lack of sequence in dynamic consciousness does the individual himself develop. The dynamic abstraction of a child's precepts follows no mental law, and even no law which can ever be mentally propounded. And this is why it is utterly pernicious to set a child making a clay relief-map of its own district, or to ask a child to draw conclusions from given observations. Dynamically, a child draws no conclusions. All things still remain dynamically possible. A conclusion drawn is a nail in the coffin of a child's developing being. Let a child make a clay landscape, if it likes. But entirely according to its own fancy, and without conclusions drawn. Only, let the landscape be vividly made--always the discipline of the soul's full attention. "Oh, but where are the factory chimneys?"--or else--"Why have you left out the gas-works?" or "Do you call that sloppy thing a church?" The particular focus should be vivid, and the record in some way true. The soul must give earnest attention, that is all.

And so actively disciplined, the child develops for the first ten years. We need not be afraid of letting children see the passions and reactions of adult life. Only we must not strain the sympathies of a child, in any direction, particularly the direction of love and pity. Nor must we introduce the fallacy of right and wrong. Spontaneous distaste should take the place of right and wrong. And least of all must there be a cry: "You see, dear, you don't understand. When you are older--" A child's sagacity is better than an

adult understanding, anyhow.

Of course it is ten times criminal to tell young children facts about sex, or to implicate them in adult relationships. A child has a strong evanescent sex consciousness. It instinctively writes impossible words on back walls. But this is not a fully conscious mental act. It is a kind of dream act--quite natural. The child's curious, shadowy, indecent sex-knowledge is quite in the course of nature. And does nobody any harm at all. Adults had far better not notice it. But if a child sees a cockerel tread a hen, or two dogs coupling, well and good. It should see these things. Only, without comment. Let nothing be exaggeratedly hidden. By instinct, let us preserve the decent privacies. But if a child occasionally sees its parent nude, taking a bath, all the better. Or even sitting in the W. C. Exaggerated secrecy is bad. But indecent exposure is also very bad. But worst of all is dragging in the mental consciousness of these shadowy dynamic realities.

In the same way, to talk to a child about an adult is vile. Let adults keep their adult feelings and communications for people of their own age. But if a child sees its parents violently quarrel, all the better. There must be storms. And a child's dynamic understanding is far deeper and more penetrating than our sophisticated interpretation. But never make a child a party to adult affairs. Never drag the child in. Refuse its sympathy on such occasions. Always treat it as if it had no business to hear, even if it is present and

must hear. Truly, it has no business mentally to hear. And the dynamic soul will always weigh things up and dispose of them properly, if there be no interference of adult comment or adult desire for sympathy. It is despicable for any one parent to accept a child's sympathy against the other parent. And the one who received the sympathy is always more contemptible than the one who is hated.

Of course so many children are born to-day unnaturally mentally awake and alive to adult affairs, that there is nothing left but to tell them everything, crudely: or else, much better, to say: "Ah, get out, you know too much, you make me sick."

To return to the question of sex. A child is born sexed. A child is either male or female, in the whole of its psyche and physique is either male or female. Every single living cell is either male or female, and will remain either male or female as long as life lasts. And every single cell in every male child is male, and every cell in every female child is female. The talk about a third sex, or about the indeterminate sex, is just to pervert the issue.

Biologically, it is true, the rudimentary formation of both sexes is found in every individual. That doesn't mean that every individual is a bit of both, or either, ad lib. After a sufficient period of idealism, men become hopelessly self-conscious. That is, the great affective centers no longer act spontaneously, but always wait for control from the head. This always breeds a great fluster in the

psyche, and the poor self-conscious individual cannot help posing and posturing. Our ideal has taught us to be gentle and wistful: rather girlish and yielding, and very yielding in our sympathies. In fact, many young men feel so very like what they imagine a girl must feel, that hence they draw the conclusion that they must have a large share of female sex inside them. False conclusion.

These girlish men have often, to-day, the finest maleness, once it is put to the test. How is it then that they feel, and look, so girlish? It is largely a question of the direction of the polarized flow. Our ideal has taught us to be so loving and so submissive and so yielding in our sympathy, that the mode has become automatic in many men. Now in what we will call the "natural" mode, man has his positivity in the volitional centers, and women in the sympathetic. In fulfilling the Christian love ideal, however, men have reversed this. Man has assumed the gentle, all-sympathetic rôle, and woman has become the energetic party, with the authority in her hands. The male is the sensitive, sympathetic nature, the woman the active, effective, authoritative. So that the male acts as the passive, or recipient pole of attraction, the female as the active, positive, exertive pole, in human relations. Which is a reversal of the old flow. The woman is now the initiator, man the responder. They seem to play each other's parts. But man is purely male, playing woman's part, and woman is purely female, however manly. The gulf between Heliogabalus, or the most womanly man on earth, and the most manly woman, is just the same as ever: just the same old gulf between the sexes. The man is male,

the woman is female. Only they are playing one another's parts, as they must at certain periods. The dynamic polarity has swung around.

If we look a little closer, we can define this positive and negative business better. As a matter of fact, positive and negative, passive and active cuts both ways. If the man, as thinker and doer, is active, or positive, and the woman negative, then, on the other hand, as the initiator of emotion, of feeling, and of sympathetic understanding the woman is positive, the man negative. The man may be the initiator in action, but the woman is initiator in emotion. The man has the initiative as far as voluntary activity goes, and the woman the initiative as far as sympathetic activity goes. In love, it is the woman naturally who loves, the man who is loved. In love, woman is the positive, man the negative. It is woman who asks, in love, and man who answers. In life, the reverse is the case. In knowing and in doing, man is positive and woman negative: man initiates, and woman lives up to it.

Naturally this nicely arranged order of things may be reversed. Action and utterance, which are male, are polarized against feeling, emotion, which are female. And which is positive, which negative? Was man, the eternal protagonist, born of woman, from her womb of fathomless emotion? Or was woman, with her deep womb of emotion, born from the rib of active man, the first created? Man, the doer, the knower, the original in being, is he lord of life? Or is woman, the great Mother, who bore us from the womb of love, is she the supreme Goddess?

This is the question of all time. And as long as man and woman endure, so will the answer be given, first one way, then the other. Man, as the utterer, usually claims that Eve was created out of his spare rib: from the field of the creative, upper dynamic consciousness, that is. But woman, as soon as she gets a word in, points to the fact that man inevitably, poor darling, is the issue of his mother's womb. So the battle rages.

But some men always agree with the woman. Some men always yield to woman the creative positivity. And in certain periods, such as the present, the majority of men concur in regarding woman as the source of life, the first term in creation: woman, the mother, the prime being.

And then, the whole polarity shifts over. Man still remains the doer and thinker. But he is so only in the service of emotional and procreative woman. His highest moment is now the emotional moment when he gives himself up to the woman, when he forms the perfect answer for her great emotional and procreative asking. All his thinking, all his activity in the world only contributes to this great moment, when he is fulfilled in the emotional passion of the woman, the birth of rebirth, as Whitman calls it. In his consummation in the emotional passion of a woman, man is reborn, which is quite true.

And there is the point at which we all now stick. Life, thought, and

activity, all are devoted truly to the great end of Woman, wife and mother.

Man has now entered on to his negative mode. Now, his consummation is in feeling, not in action. Now, his activity is all of the domestic order and all his thought goes to proving that nothing matters except that birth shall continue and woman shall rock in the nest of this globe like a bird who covers her eggs in some tall tree. Man is the fetcher, the carrier, the sacrifice, the crucified, and the reborn of woman.

This being so, the whole tendency of his nature changes. Instead of being assertive and rather insentient, he becomes wavering and sensitive. He begins to have as many feelings--nay, more than a woman. His heroism is all in altruistic endurance. He worships pity and tenderness and weakness, even in himself. In short, he takes on very largely the original rôle of woman. Woman meanwhile becomes the fearless, inwardly relentless, determined positive party. She grips the responsibility. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Nay, she makes man discover that cradles should not be rocked, in order that her hands may be left free. She is now a queen of the earth, and inwardly a fearsome tyrant. She keeps pity and tenderness emblazoned on her banners. But God help the man whom she pities. Ultimately she tears him to bits.

Therefore we see the reversal of the old poles. Man becomes the

emotional party, woman the positive and active. Man begins to show strong signs of the peculiarly strong passive sex desire, the desire to be taken, which is considered characteristic of woman. Man begins to have all the feelings of woman--or all the feelings which he attributed to woman. He becomes more feminine than woman ever was, and worships his own femininity, calling it the highest. In short, he begins to exhibit all signs of sexual complexity. He begins to imagine he really is half female. And certainly woman seems very male. So the hermaphrodite fallacy revives again.

But it is all a fallacy. Man, in the midst of all his effeminacy, is still male and nothing but male. And woman, though she harangue in Parliament or patrol the streets with a helmet on her head, is still completely female. They are only playing each other's rôles, because the poles have swung into reversion. The compass is reversed. But that doesn't mean that the north pole has become the south pole, or that each is a bit of both.

Of course a woman should stick to her own natural emotional positivity. But then man must stick to his own positivity of being, of action, disinterested, non-domestic, male action, which is not devoted to the increase of the female. Once man vacates his camp of sincere, passionate positivity in disinterested being, his supreme responsibility to fulfill his own profoundest impulses, with reference to none but God or his own soul, not taking woman into count at all, in this primary responsibility to his own deepest soul; once man

vacates this strong citadel of his own genuine, not spurious, divinity; then in comes woman, picks up the scepter and begins to conduct a rag-time band.

Man remains man, however he may put on wistfulness and tenderness like petticoats, and sensibilities like pearl ornaments. Your sensitive little big-eyed boy, so much more gentle and loving than his harder sister, is male for all that, believe me. Perhaps evilly male, so mothers may learn to their cost: and wives still more.

Of course there should be a great balance between the sexes. Man, in the daytime, must follow his own soul's greatest impulse, and give himself to life-work and risk himself to death. It is not woman who claims the highest in man. It is a man's own religious soul that drives him on beyond woman, to his supreme activity. For his highest, man is responsible to God alone. He may not pause to remember that he has a life to lose, or a wife and children to leave. He must carry forward the banner of life, though seven worlds perish, with all the wives and mothers and children in them. Hence Jesus, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" Every man that lives has to say it again to his wife or mother, once he has any work or mission in hand, that comes from his soul.

But again, no man is a blooming marvel for twenty-four hours a day. Jesus or Napoleon or any other of them ought to have been man enough to be able to come home at tea-time and put his slippers on and sit

under the spell of his wife. For there you are, the woman has her world, her positivity: the world of love, of emotion, of sympathy. And it behooves every man in his hour to take off his shoes and relax and give himself up to his woman and her world. Not to give up his purpose. But to give up himself for a time to her who is his mate.--And so it is one detests the clock-work Kant, and the petit-bourgeois Napoleon divorcing his Josephine for a Hapsburg--or even Jesus, with his "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"--He might have added "just now."--They were all failures.