


1946

## UA3/2/4 The Aims of Education

Paul Garrett

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The aims of education have sometimes been listed as

Conservation of Health  
Worthy civic Life  
Worthy Vocational Life  
Worthy Home Life  
Information  
Worthy Use of Leisure  
Development of Ethical Character

I desire to center a good bit of what I shall say about these aims.

I pass over health with the observation that it is a fundamental aim of education and that it is a regrettable fact that too many people are but half alive and as a consequence never know the full joy of living. I hope that a mastery of health habits and a knowledge of your bodies and a firm resolve to take care of them may make and keep you the fine animals that you should be. It seems strange to me that some folks take better care of their automobiles which can be replaced than they do of the only bodies which they can hope to possess.

Worthy civic life or as an educational objective, the training of the individual member of society to take an intelligent part in the body politic of which he is a member is of course the fundamental justification for public education. When Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Jefferson disagreed so vehemently in the early days of our government as to the ability of the mass of the people to govern themselves, Jefferson based his faith in democracy on the training of voters through a system of public education. With the advent of woman suffrage the obligation was laid upon you girls to vote. Your education enables you to discharge that obligation more intelligently. I trust that you will remember that those less fitted to vote than you are zealous to get to the poles every time they are opened and to vote their convictions, which convictions have oftentimes been given them second hand by those who through money or other influence control them. I hope therefore that you will do your part to secure better government. I assure you that we have not yet reached an era of perfection in that realm.

Worthy vocational life is surely a worthwhile ambition. Society has a right to hope that each member may be able to sustain himself in ordinary times at least, at some gainful occupation. Despite present conditions statistics have always shown that education does pay in dollars and cents. This is not the side of education concerning which I wish to speak to you, but it is important; and I am happy to congratulate you on your increased opportunity for more of the material things of life as a result of your education.

Information aside from any material gain which may result from its acquisition interests me strongly and I hope it does you. You were born curious and have from your earliest entrance into the world been using all your senses to find out about things. Sad it is that to many learning becomes not an eager and thrilling adventure but a burdensome task. I confess to a guilty fear that our schools are not entirely innocent of responsibility for this change in some pupils. Our demands have been often so rigid and our unwillingness or inability to let the pupil follow his line of interest so repugnant to his tastes that we have killed his natural interest in learning.

I hope that over and above a thorough command of reading, writing, and arithmetic which are of course but tools to be used in the acquisition of learning but which many never acquire, and some knowledge of the subjects of your high school curriculum that each of you graduates has come to know the high joy which can come from the earnest and zealous pursuit and capture, if I may use the term, of knowledge. To the present you have studied to some extent the sciences, mathematics, history, literature and the languages, but you have as yet but glimpsed the great field of human knowledge. It stretches before you like an expanse of golden grain, yours for the harvest. The thoughts of the great minds of the past are yours to enjoy. Do not lose your inheritance through ignoring it. May the radiance from the millions of flickering lights by which scholars through the past ages have sought information lure you into the pleasant paths where their spirits will surround you with kindly and understanding sympathy as you seek to know.

Worthy home membership. In the golden opportunities which lie ahead of you I hold none more worth while than that you may become builders of worth while homes. In this era of much talk about self expression, and companionate marriage and no marriage and what not and of divorce so frequent as to tempt you to regard the marriage bond as a transient thing, I challenge you to a vision of the steady glow from the radiant fire of love and understanding from a real home as the saving influence in the lives of boys and girls in hours of temptation and peril and as the rightful heritage of children. In your lives of the present I would have you dream of now and then and consecrate yourselves to your homes of the future.

Worthy use of leisure. One result of education should be to guide you in using your spare time to advantage and in self-entertainment. The saddest spectacle I know is a boy or girl who is miserable when alone. Would I have you play? To be sure. Take part in every sort of clean and wholesome sport that will take your minds from the cares of life and so fit you to take them up with fresh strength anew. I have not time to mention many fields of recreation so permit me please to devote my attention especially to reading which I hold to be not only the cheapest but the richest use of leisure. Oh the magic in books. I hope you can say with Lang,

"One gift the fairies gave me  
The love of books, the golden key  
That opens the enchanted door."

or with McFarlane,

"When the dim presence of the awful night  
Clasps in its jewelled arm the slumbering earth  
Alone I sit beside the lowly light  
That like a dream fire flickers on my hearth  
With some joy-teeming volume in my hand  
A peopled planet, opulent and grand."

Memories of childhood come thronging back upon me and the welcome patter of rain drops on the roof giving promise of a day indoors with books. I see my mother in her later years finding rest and peace and entertainment in her books. Did you ever make the weary wait for a train a pleasant period by becoming engrossed in a book or magazine? How fortunate then are the old who while waiting for the boatman who ferries humanity across that stream which separates this life from the next, can make the waiting happy through books. But that voyage seems too far off to interest you. Let me rather speak to you of drab lonely days made golden through the companionship of the characters from the various forms of literature and of relaxation after work which they bring.

Jean Valjean in his testing hour-gray haired Lear in the storm on the heath-Cyrano of the big nose with his pleasing imaginings concerning means of access to the moon, the genial Pickwick, David Harum, the Son of the Middle Border, are but a few samples of the countless delightful personalities who can be gathered about you at your will to say nothing of the charms of philosophy, of general historical reading, of letters and humor. I have not time to discuss them but cannot pass on without suggesting to those of you who will not be able to travel widely the endless possibilities of vicarious travel to what point you will through the vast and fascinating library of books of travel. I doubt if it is necessary to call your attention to the mystery story, which possibly may serve a beneficial purpose if you do not let them crowd out the other fields of which I have spoken. Your duty to keep posted on current events through magazines and newspapers I hold to be self evident. I push on to speak a word for poetry.

The poet expresses for us who are inarticulate the thoughts we feel but cannot put into words. Unless you keep sensible to its charms through frequent contact with it you endanger through repression a fine and spiritual side of yourself and are likely to become as prosaic and practical as the brute who insisted that the snow image come in and sit by the fire. I am not unaware that McCaulay said, "Perhaps no person can be a poet or even enjoy poetry, without a certain unsoundness of the mind," but if the enjoyment of poetry denote madness it is surely a divine sort of madness which I covet for you.

An old history told the story that General Wolfe as he drifted down the river to the capture of Quebec quoted, "The boast of Heraldry, the pomp of power and all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave, await

alike the inevitable hour--the paths of glory lead but to the grave" and commented that he had rather to have written that poem than to have the honor of capturing Quebec on the morrow. Oliver W. Holmes said that if ones name is to live at all how much better that it live in their hearts than in their minds and suggested a good poem as a suitable agency for carrying ones name to posterity for said he, "It seems likely as if even in heaven King David might remember "The Lord is my shepherd" with a certain tinge of earthly pleasure. Personally it seems to me that a mortal could ask no more than to be able to write "The Marshes of Glynn". What did the poet say?

"Somehow my soul seems suddenly free  
From the weighings of fate and the sad discussion  
of sin  
By the length and the breadth and the sweep of  
the marshes of Glynn."

or again,

"By so many roots as the marsh grass sends in the sod  
I will heartily lay me ahold of the greatness of God:  
Oh, like to the greatness of God is the greatness  
within  
The range of the marshes, the liberal marshes of  
Glynn."

I wish I had time to discuss with you poems which I love. May I urge that you read poetry and that you memorize it that you may enjoy it without dependence on the printed page. I am anxious that the love of poetry be a part of your life that it may help to save your souls in a too practical age and that the halo of the poet's fancy may gild the natural world and earthly relationships for you.

In addition to characters from literature and poetry, store your memories with pleasant pictures that you may enjoy them in hours of leisure and as you work. All high school students know what Wordsworth said about the daffodils,

"I gazed and gazed--but little thought  
What wealth to me the show had brought:  
For oft when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude,  
And then my heart with pleasure fills  
And dances with the daffodils."

That is what I mean. Notice that the poet says he gazed and gazed and didn't just make a mark indicating "I have seen the daffodils" as some people check off paintings as they tear through an art gallery.

It takes time to make such things permanent possessions. I see a rural countryside in England and a spreading bay in France where the tides come in. I watch the ocean surge in angry beauty and walk in memory through peaceful Hollywood where many of Virginia's great now sleep, and I count myself blest that I have been able to make these pictures mine in the very slight opportunities for travel which have come to me; but they have no greater charm than the dreamy peacefulness which hangs over the Abbey of Gethsemane, or a sunset on the Ohio or Kentucky, or a sunrise on Herrington Lake or a winding hill road in Kentucky clad with redbud in the spring, or a brookside thicket where wild flowers grow or the star sprinkled heavens at night. Wherever you live a kindly creator surrounds you with beauty. Look for it--gaze and gaze when you find it that it may yield not only present but also future joy.

The same of course holds true for other experiences such as an opportunity to hear a great singer or musician or to see a great work of art or to hear a great speaker. Give up some more common pleasure and seize your opportunity that afterward the melody or the eloquence or the beauty of the painting may linger with you.

Man is either a beast or he is created in the image of God. I take it that you are willing to admit man's kinship with the Divine. How foolish is he then to so magnify the material side of life and to give so little heed to that finer side which is his very stamp of Godliness. It is because of my eagerness that you develop your spiritual natures that I have so stressed the worthy use of leisure, because I see in leisure and your use of it your chief opportunity to take advantage of your spiritual potentialities and to grow into something of what you were meant to be for mind you such spiritual development as comes during work is largely based on thought which has its origin in hours of leisure. The use of leisure largely determines what thoughts occupy ones mind in hours of employment.

There come crises in life when wealth and health and information and the like will fail. Then your reliance will be nothing unless spiritual values. The church is the only agency which devotes its time to magnifying those values. Give it your support--hear its message and in time of need the spiritual values for which it stands will be like a strong arm about you for strength and comfort.

I should like that you recognize your own importance. In ancient days a knight rode forth to deeds of valor to win the approval of his lady. In more prosaic ages since many a man has won success because some woman willed it. I am not suggesting that your aim in life is to inspire boys. The list of women who have achieved deserved fame in their own right is too numerous to mention. Now practically all pursuits are open to you, and I wish for you success in whatever field of endeavor you may choose, but I say again that I want you to recognize your importance; and I do covet for boys the inspiring influence which can come only from girlhood which does not undervalue itself.

I was interested in two little poems I came upon this winter in the Literary Digest which I pass on to you instead of going into a lengthy and more tiresome discussion of the folly of measuring happiness through wealth or possessions. I should like to turn your mind into lines of thought and pleasures which even depressions cannot destroy. The first poem deals with discouragement and strength:

"These things are strong, when other strong things fail:  
The urge that quickens grass, the deep still tides  
Of ocean; and, beneath a sweeping gale,  
The slender reed that bows, and still abides;  
The granite peaks of silence; and the tie  
That binds the heart of woman ages-long,  
To petal softness and a first frail cry  
Making her mother. These are the things most strong.

The strength of ships goes down before a storm,  
The strength of athletes meets the dust at last;  
But when familiar strong things crumble, warm  
Your confidence with sight of these, hold fast  
To these and sing; for these things, and a song  
That rises from discouragement, are strong."

The other has to do with one of those drab-looking little villages which Sinclair Lewis would scorn, and it goes like this:

"This is their world; this portion of the earth  
Means much to them--nay do not mock nor jeer;  
This spot has held the things to them most dear:  
Their earliest dreams, their sorrow and their mirth.  
Who enters it must never count the worth  
Of homes in terms of gold lest he appear  
As one whose heart is sadly out of gear--  
Who holds no reverence for their place of birth.

Evenings come gently, housewives turn to light  
Their lamps and spread the tables simple fare:  
Then comes the friendly clicking of a gate  
That marks the days soft blending with the night,  
And all the little houses seem to wear  
A peace unknown to mansions of the great."

May I in conclusion express a wish that you live true to the best vision of yourself that comes to you. I think it was Paracelsus who said, "I am a wanderer . . .

I have a firm confidence that God gives all men and will give to you here and there on your journey a vision of the city and that if you fail to live up to your glorious possibilities it will not be because you are denied the vision but rather because you forget it when the vapors blot it out.

I wish for you that you may discharge the practical obligations about which I have spoken to you and that you may know the perhaps less practical but very satisfying joys which I have recommended to you; that you may find time for friendship; that you may fulfill the fond expectations of your parents for your future and that you may be willing to render worthwhile service. The story is told that a French soldier had to have a leg amputated after battle and that a visitor sympathetically said, "I am so sorry that you lost your leg," when quick as a flash the lad replied, "I didn't lose it, I gave it." May your contribution to the world in the way of service be in that spirit. I wish for you much unselfish joy.