

MAN-EDUCATION-INDUSTRY

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Three different topics are co-examined under the unusual title of this presentation. The links between bios, education and industry have been increasingly strengthened in the so-called 'modern times'. Bios and education were always related to each other in the frame of the need to prepare children for their future life. In the course of the twentieth century however, industry and the propagation of new products have had an increasing impact upon the education and habits of youth.

In ancient times, education of the young was the business of parents and individual schools. Later, the state was actively involved. Since World War Two, industry has intruded into young people's lives and thought.

Education prepares one for life, forms the spirit, and helps develop intellectual abilities; it defines an individual's behaviour and actions. It thus impresses itself in time and space. The child is the cell of education and part of a continuous chain, which integrates it more or less efficiently into the entity of 'Society-Nation-Humanity'.

How have educational systems evolved along with human thought? Each age is distinguished by men who give education another form and another dimension. Above all were the philosophers and priests with their knowledge and spirit. Although the number of their disciples remained limited, their know-how traversed centuries as an uninterrupted chain, providing humankind with the foundation which is called civilisation.

The expansion of knowledge and civilisation with schools of eminent personalities has been succeeded by the exclusive authority of the state to education, allowing for knowledge to be propagated among more people of lower social classes.

With education being left to the state, however, political leaders possessed a very efficient means to tackle the formation of people's attitude since childhood, so as to channel the future of people into desirable social concepts. There are numerous examples of such interventions.

After World War Two, industry took advantage of the mass media to address itself to young people. In the name of 'Progress and Welfare', the latter were encouraged to include, in their daily habits, the consumption and usage of toys, sweets, clothes, gadgets, and a whole series of useless industrial products, owing their existence only to artificially created and thoughtlessly accepted needs.

A major difficulty arose from the abusive exploitation of natural resources. In the name of 'Progress and Welfare', 'Mother-Earth' was required to render surpluses of the natural deposits and man attempted to exceed the limits of production by all possible means. Unable to foresee the consequences, man has activated the infernal circle of pollution, in all its various forms. He led the air-soil-water system and all the components of the Bio-circle to imbalance. People at every age have subscribed to slogans such as 'fashion' and 'trend', with no reaction or thinking and only for the benefit of the market.

As a result, nature is being dangerously harmed. The unthinking industrial policy poses a threat to the maintainance of balance in the universe, as well as to life and health. Since the fifties, authors such as Rachel Carson, Gunter Schwab, and Jean Dost, have sounded the signals of alarm from their writings. On their turn, industry has made efforts to minimise the danger for destruction and desertification of the environment.

However, the threats will become a reality unless fundamental changes occur in humankind's attitude toward what is considered to be 'wellfare'. Let's start with the children. The parents must realise that the consumption of colored, manipulated, chemical elements and useless gadgets causes harm to their children's physical and mental health. We must understand that, no matter how slow it could be, the response of nature to a positive or negative human activity is inevitable and unpredictable.

Children in our 'developed' countries should learn to live together with and not against the needs of nature. They should realise that no real progress is realised without respect for the need to preserve the functional balance of the Bio-circle. This may include:

Humanisation of thought. People must realise that if the predicted catastrophe is to be avoided, a fundamental reform of human thought, reasoning and action is necessary. This can only be achieved through proper education in the first years of life. The educational system must incorporate the identification of the real needs of human beings as well as those of the environment surrounding them. Furthermore, our consciousness should extend to the knowledge that the threats to the environment and all the forms

of life is due to the profit-oriented human activity.

Humanisation of the understanding, reflection and action towards life and all living beings. The latter should not be treated as inert objects to be manipulated according to the man's willingness, but as undissectable entities, subjected to a dynamic, life-conditioning evolution. He who intends to know life and feel its spirit, should be able to approach and conceive the Entire-All; to realise that the excessive analysis of life to its elements leads to the loss of real knowledge of life, as a unity and the discovery of only dead pieces. *Panta rhei!* This is what children should learn in order to understand the real meaning of life and the respect they own to it.

Humanisation of the educational system. The classroom should not be a pyramid with the teacher at the tip; it should be a circle of mutual communication between students and the teacher, who should explain, stimulate and direct. The curriculum should only be a proposal of targets to reach, not an imposed path to follow. As in the times of ancient Greek philosophers, teacher and students mutually learn how to develop critical thought and logical concepts. Parallel to personal experience, this would add to the formation of their personality.

We are still far from this educational model and a society with a mass of thinkers and a counter-developed criticism to slogans. However, this 'new man' must become a reality, in order to save the world.

Dr. **Stefan Klein** is a practicing medical doctor in Belgium. Since World War II, he has been involved in environmental affairs, such as WHO and CEC. In 1965 he became the founder and president of the Belgian Society for Protection of Life and in 1973 of the Society for Research on Civilization Diseases and on Environment in Luxembourg. He has published many papers on medicine and related subjects.