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THE AIM OF EDUCATION

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HE little angel," "the little devil"—such expressions often burst from the lips of ecstatic or exasperated parents and teachers. The angelic and the devilish frequently emerge from the bubbling surface of the same alembic. Often enough his satanic majesty of the nursery and school-room evolves into a saintly priest or a zealous physician. Without much difficulty the angel can become the Morning Star of the underworld. It is all very perplexing to parents and teachers; most of all, to the modern educational theorists. They wish to integrate the child within himself and within his environment. The task should not be difficult; provide the right stimuli, and the response will necessarily follow, that is, if you are working on a behavioristic child.

However, children are not built on behavioristic lines. Their personalities undoubtedly need integration, but after all it would seem necessary to admit the existence of a personality before one attempts to integrate it. Modern educators are doing excellent work; they are, however, ignorant of one fundamental fact—the true nature of the child. We may be thankful that the mechanistic view of man, proposed by behaviorism, is gradually being rooted out of the educational field. The child is looked upon as a totality, not as a bundle of sensory and motor nerves. Personality has a chance to get a foothold in the new outlook on the child's nature. However, the foot slips. The integration of personality becomes the creation of personality. We are told that the personality of the child emerges by a pro-

cess of creative evolution, which is simply organic evolution in holiday attire.

The subject we are discussing is one in which we can start with Adam without running the risk of being laughed at. The narration contained in the book of Genesis has never been disproved. Therefore, that narration will be the basis of our exposition. Leaving aside all speculations on the possible states in which man could have been created, we will confine ourselves to a description of the historical condition of man, when the slime of the earth first stood erect and uttered the name of God.

Apart from the Incarnation, the creation of man was the most delicate piece of work ever produced. He had extended matter, but was not a stone. He had life, but was not a plant. He had feeling, but was not a beast. He had intelligence, but was not an angel. He was a man, compounded of all the universe, the bridge between matter and spirit. He possessed a soul, an intellect and will, which made him akin to the expensive infinity of the divine. He possessed a body, which made him akin to the compressing finiteness of the material. He was rational; yet he had all the impulses of the beast. He had a will, which should have been led by the guiding light of reason to complete subjection to God. This is the nature that man was endowed with. Obviously its fine balance could have been easily upset.¹

God, in His goodness, added certain gifts to the natural endowments of man. They are called preternatural gifts. They assure the more perfect functioning of human nature. They were caused, not by his nature, but by God; nevertheless, they fit his nature as the glass slipper fitted the foot of Cinderella.

The first of these preternatural gifts was the gift of immortality. The soul is by nature incapable of completely overcoming the corruptibility of the body. Death is natural to man. The gift of immortality enabled man to ward off death. Though he was still capable of dying, he was also capable of not dying. With proper precautions, he could preserve the union of his body and soul forever.²

The second gift was that of integrity. Man's intellect and will are spiritual. They tend toward spiritual good and spiritual delight. Like the brute, however, he also possesses a sensi-

¹ *Summa Theol.* I, q. 76, a. 1 and a. 3.

² *Summa Theol.* I, q. 97, a. 1.

tive nature, which is not attracted by spiritual delights, but which revels in the world of sights, and smells, and tastes, and touches, and which is drawn toward sensual pleasure. The will can not rule despotically over the lower appetites. The gift of integrity gave the will this power. With it man could suffer no unruly movements of passion.³

Finally, man was free from suffering and pain. He was perfectly happy, to the extent that a man can be happy outside the vision of God. Paradise was indeed a Garden of Delights.⁴

Immortality and integrity were the direct result of the gift of original justice. This gift made the human will entirely subject to God. As long as this subjection lasted, the will was able to rule over the passions, and soul was able to dominate the body.

These gifts were given to Adam, not as personal endowments, but as perfections, attached to his nature, which he was to transmit to his offspring. Every child born of Adam would possess the gift of original justice and the perfection which accompanied it, namely, immortality, integrity and happiness.⁵

God's goodness was not yet exhausted. With all these gifts man could still have failed. A purely supernatural gift was needed to complete the masterpiece of divine love. Moreover, these gifts would never have allowed man to attain a real intimacy with God. God decreed that the end of man was to be something beyond his natural capacity to attain, something beyond his merits, something beyond the demands of his nature, something that man could only reach for, never grasp. He made man's final end the vision of Himself, and He endowed Adam with sanctifying grace, the germ of the beatific vision and the immediate cause of the preternatural gifts.⁶

Thus came man from the hand of God, his nature strengthened by the three great gifts of original justice, immortality and integrity, his person resplendent with the glory of divine grace. A short period of probation would have ended with his admission to the bosom of God. But Adam fell.

Immediately he was deprived of God's grace. Original justice was stripped from him. With it went the gifts of immortality and integrity. He felt the first rebellious movements of

³ *Summa Theol.* I, q. 95, a. 2.

⁴ *Summa Theol.* I, q. 87, a. 2.

⁵ *Summa Theol.* I, q. 100, a. 1.

⁶ *Summa Theol.* I, q. 95, a. 1.

his flesh. Suffering and sorrow pierced his soul. Death loomed in the distance. This stripping of his nature affected not only himself and his wife but all his children till the end of time. His nature was wounded in all its powers. Ignorance in the intellect, malice in the will, concupiscence and weakness in the sensitive appetites—these took possession of him and disturbed the delicate balance of his nature.⁷

Was not this a harsh penalty for one sin? No, it was very light. Man's nature was not injured. The gifts that he was deprived of were entirely gratuitous. After the fall, man was in the same condition he would have been in had God not given him the preternatural gifts. The difference between the state of Adam after the fall and the state of pure nature is the same as that between the state of a man stripped of his clothing and the state of a naked savage in the African jungle. Those imperfections, which we called wounds of nature, are the natural result of the contrary principles that make up a man. So the punishment of Adam was negative. He was deprived of privileges that he had no right to; and, if we are honest, we must admit the justice of the punishment.

After the fall, however, man was not a purely natural being. He had been ordained by God to a supernatural end, and that ordination persisted. God still wanted to make man his intimate friend. Though he had lost grace by his sin, God had devised a means of restoring him.

When Lucifer fell, he found himself chained to the flames of hell. When Adam fell, he found himself chained to the cross. As his gaze traveled up its rough surface, he felt faith and hope reviving in his heart. Joy possessed him, and he leapt up to pluck the ruddy fruit upon that blood-stained tree, but it was beyond his grasp. Faith and hope were to be his share, faith and hope the share of those who sprang from him, until the coming of the woman clothed with the sun. Then bitter sorrow filled his heart and he repented his crime. At that moment a wonderful thing happened. Grace was restored to Adam, but a grace that came through the anticipated merits of the Man on the Cross.

What is the meaning of the Cross and what is its relation to human nature and human personality? We can look at the Cross and its Victim from two viewpoints. First, from our own.

⁷ *Summa Theol.* I-II, q. 85, a. 1 and a. 3.

To us it seems that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became man *in order to* die and save the sons of Adam. This is true. The motive of the Incarnation was a motive of mercy. Man had to be redeemed. His redemption could have been accomplished by a simple act of the divine will; some man of heroic virtue could have suffered for his fellow men, and his suffering could have been accepted by God as the ransom of man. But God willed that His own Son become Incarnate and by a sacrifice of infinite value atone for the sins of men. This is all true, but only in a definite sense. It is easy to see that this view makes the Incarnation subordinate to the work of Redemption.

So, if we try to look at the Incarnation from God's point of view, we will be startled by the grandeur of it, and more by the implications to be found in it. St. Thomas tells us that no cause can be assigned to the will of God.⁸ He never wills a means in order that He may attain an end. Thus He does not will to give us grace *in order that* He may give us glory. It is characteristic of the divine will that it wills the end first of all, and by the same act wills that the end be attained by certain means. Applying this to the Incarnation, we can say that God willed the Incarnation as the end, and permitted the fall of Adam as a means to this end. Thus we can understand the words of St. Paul, "For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son; that he might be the firstborn amongst many brethren."⁹ Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, the Redeemer of mankind, is the first-born of creatures. He is the end of all creation. The sin of Adam precedes the Redemption, which is ordained to remove that sin and all the other sins of man. And, in a nobler sense, sin is for the Redemption. After sin man is raised to a higher dignity, his end is to be made conformable to the Incarnate Son of God.

From all that has been said, it should be evident that the task of educating a human being is worthy of our noblest efforts. The end of education is the restoration of a human being to his rightful place in God's scheme of creation. This restoration is consummated only when the child is made conformable to the Incarnate Word of God. The question arises: What is the pro-

⁸ *Summa Theol.* I, q. 19, a. 5.

⁹ *Rom.* viii, 29.

cess of this restoration? I believe the whole process is contained in the following words of St. Thomas.

"Original sin is primarily and essentially an infection of nature, and it is only as a consequence that it infects the person, because the disposition of the nature has an influence on the person. Therefore the penalty of original sin is twofold. So far as it affects the person, the penalty for it is the loss of the beatific vision, for the beatific vision implies an act, and an act belongs to a person, since only the individual acts, as the Philosopher says . . . The other penalty, due to original sin inasmuch as it infects the nature, includes the necessity of dying, the capacity to suffer, the rebellion of the flesh and such like: all these are caused by natural principles and attend the entire species unless a miracle intervenes. Therefore we can say that baptism removes the infection caused by original sin so far as the infection of the nature has an influence on the person; thus baptism takes away the penalty of original sin that is due to the person, namely, the deprivation of the beatific vision. Baptism, however, does not remove the infection of the nature, precisely as it affects the nature; this will be accomplished in heaven, when our nature will be restored to perfect liberty."¹⁰

It would take more than this one article to develop the wealth of ideas that St. Thomas has stored up in these few lines. Let us attempt to extract at least some of their richness. According to St. Thomas, it was the personal sin of Adam that corrupted his nature. In his offspring, the corrupted nature infects the person. The grace infused in baptism removes the infection from the person but leaves the nature in a fallen state.¹¹

What is the meaning of this distinction between nature and person? In the abstruse development given to these notions by philosophy, there is always present the fundamental notions of ordinary speech. We are conscious that the "I" is something supereminent. To it we attribute all our actions. "I walk, I talk, I eat, I think, I will." We distinguish between a man and a stone, though they both possess independent existence. Wherein lies the preeminence of man? Is it not in his liberty, his domination over himself and his surroundings? This is the basic notion of personality—a substance that is reasonable and free, master of its actions, independent.¹²

¹⁰ *Comm. in Sent.* II, d. 32, q. 1, a. 2.

¹¹ *De Malo* q. 4, a. 4, ad 5.

We attribute everything to the person, even human nature. We say that a man possesses a human nature. However, we also say that a man does something because he has a human nature. While it is the person who thinks and wills, he thinks and wills because he has a human nature. In a word, nature is that by which a man acts, it is the person who acts. Personality includes the nature, all the essential elements of the nature, all the stable properties, all the transient qualities and actions which make up the totality that is man. The nature does not act, but persons act through the nature. The nature does not exist except as part of the whole. The person is the immediate subject of existence; since no one can perform an action unless he exists, it is evident that it is only the person that acts.

With these notions in mind let us return to St. Thomas. Adam's sin of pride was an act; hence it was done by him as a person. By that act he lost the many gifts that God had attached to his nature. Henceforth, he, the person, had to perform actions by means of a nature deprived of many wonderful perfections. The parents are the dispositive cause of the nature of the child they generate. Hence, all of Adam's children possess a nature that is deprived of many gifts, which, though they were not owing to it, did possess the power of perfecting it. This corrupted nature infects the person of the newly-born child. Because of the corrupted nature, the child is born without the crowning gift of sanctifying grace. Since sanctifying grace is the germ of the beatific vision, the principle whereby we merit eternal happiness, the new-born child is virtually deprived of this vision, because he is deprived of grace.

The waters of baptism confer grace on the soul and thus restore to man the means to attain his final end. They do not restore the preternatural gifts to his nature. These will be given to man only in heaven. Despite the presence of grace, the corrupted nature still infects the personality and is the true cause of the disintegration of personality. The integration of personality consists in the effort to overcome this corruption of nature. Recall that the wounds of nature are threefold. First, the body is no longer subject to the soul. Death is inevitable; no efforts on our part can overcome this defect. Secondly, the lower appetites rebel against reason. Obviously, the natural powers of the human soul, aided by grace, can eradicate to a

¹² *Summa Theol.* I, q. 29, a. 1 and a. 2.

certain extent this defect. Thirdly, the will is no longer docile to the commands of God. Training and the grace of God can go far to remedy this corruption. But note that this restoration is the result of personal activity and the grace of God.

What, then, is the relation of the teacher to the integration of personality? As said above, personality consists essentially in freedom. The child possesses a radical freedom. He is endowed with an intellect, which can contemplate the infinite Being, Truth, and Goodness of the Divine. Entranced by this vision, the will can always find some deficiency in any good outside God. It is never forced to choose a thing that does not completely satisfy it. Yet experience teaches that the human will is very fickle. It is strongly allured by the world of sense. It is the task of the teacher to foster the real freedom of the child. Freedom does not consist in the capacity to betray one's own personality. The free man is one whose will can be subject to God without being enticed away from Him by the fatal lure of sensuality. This is the real meaning of character training. This would have been the only ideal of education, had Christ not been the first born of men.

The Incarnation is now the aim of education, in the sense that man must be made conformable to the Incarnate Word of God. Who is Christ? He is the God-Man. He possesses a human nature, a divine nature, a divine personality. He does not possess a human personality. His human nature is united to His Divine Personality.¹³ So, paradoxically, the integration of human personality is accomplished by the substitution, as far as possible, of the Divine Personality for the human personality. There is no pantheistic merging of the human and divine personalities. Man preserves his independent existence. But from the personality flow acts of intellect and will. The more a man renounces his own thoughts, his own desires, his own volitions, and the more he assimilates all his actions to the divine will of Christ, the more truly integrated becomes his personality.

The teacher has a mighty task on his shoulders. All the resources of nature and grace must be tapped, if he is to succeed. Catholic teachers are liable to understress both these elements. They are unwilling to appeal too much to natural motives, lest they seem to neglect supernatural motives. But do they make sufficient demands on the supernatural resources of

¹³ *Summa Theol.* III. q. 2.

the child? Baptism has conferred on the child sanctifying grace, the theological and moral virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. We should not be afraid to make the child use these divine powers. It is only by a harmonious development of nature and grace that the integration of human personality can be attained.

The teacher is the coworker of Jesus Christ. If Christ, by dying on the Cross, had saved but one soul, He could still have said, "Consummatum est." If the teacher, during his whole career, produced but one saint, the real type of integrated personality, he could reecho humbly and joyfully the "Consummatum est" of his Divine Master.