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Why, Through Application of Its Educational Principles, the New World Order Can Never Generate Higher Education

As the title of this article clearly indicates, my main aim in writing it is to make as precisely intelligible as I can why, *strictly speaking*, through its Enlightenment educational principles, the New World Order has never been able to, and *can never, generate higher education*, can at best generate a caricature of it and of any human education at all.¹

I take as my point of departure for this paper an essay written in 1941 by the great American educator Mortimer J. Adler entitled, “Are There Any Universal Principles on Which Education Should Be Founded?”²

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¹ For more about the New World Order, see Peter A. Redpath’s: “Justice in the New World Order: Reduction of Justice to Tolerance in the New Totalitarian World State,” *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*, no. 157 (2011): 185–192; and “The New World Disorder: A Crisis of Philosophical Identity,” *Contemporary Philosophy* 16, no. 6 (November/December 1994): 19–24.

² Mortimer J. Adler, “Are There Any Universal Principles on Which Education Should Be Founded?,” in Mortimer J. Adler, *Reforming Education: The Opening of the American Mind*, ed. Geraldine Van Doren (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1988), 53–65. For more about Adler’s approach to education, see, for example, Mortimer J. Adler’s: *The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1982); *Paideia Problems and Possibilities* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1983); *The Paideia*



Toward the start of this article, Adler claims that, like medicine—which he calls, “the art of using knowledge about the body to prevent and cure disease, to sustain and improve health”—education is a practical activity. Just as medicine is the art of using knowledge about the body to prevent and cure disease, to sustain and improve health, “so education is an art of using knowledge about the nature of man”—by which Adler means, man as an organizational whole comprised of organizational parts that harmonize to generate human action—“to prevent and cure ignorance to sustain and improve what one might call mental or spiritual health.”³

Such being the case, because whatever any human being’s goals are, they are, for him or her, foundational educational principles, Adler maintains that the educational principles that generate educational policy should be the ends aimed at “by anyone undertaking any educational responsibilities, for himself or others.”⁴

Nonetheless, Adler maintains, “The ends of education, the ends men should seek, are always and everywhere the same. They are absolute in the same sense that they are not relative to time and place, to individual differences and the variety of cultures. They are universal in the sense that they are invariable and without exception.”⁵

The chief reason for this is, as Adler explains, many philosophies of education among which we can choose according to our tastes and temperaments do not exist. Just as we human beings must accept as essential first principles of doing natural science the well-established rules of natural science “according to the weight of the evidence and the dic-

Program: An Educational Syllabus (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984).

³ Adler, “Are There Any Universal Principles on Which Education Should Be Founded?,” 56.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁵ *Ibid.*

tates of reason,” so, Adler claims, we must apply the same principles toward educational policy.⁶

In defense of his forceful assertion that *only one true educational philosophy exists*, Adler offers three propositions: (1) human nature is everywhere the same; (2) human nature is something not fully, perfectly, developed at birth; and (3) that the ends of education are two-fold: proximate and ultimate.⁷

Elaborating on his first proposition, Adler states: “My first and basic proposition is that human nature is everywhere the same. The universality and constancy of human nature, the same throughout history, the same in various cultures, the same in different individuals, is the source of the universal and absolute principles of education.”⁸ Once again, by human “nature” Adler means a specific cause intrinsically existing within each and every human being that inclines its parts harmoniously to organize and generate specifically-one, chief action, like all the parts of a symphony orchestra harmonize to generate symphonic music, not fighting fires or playing “rock and roll.” Hence, he adds, “By human nature I mean the nature of the human offspring has at birth—whatever it is that makes that all offspring something capable of growing into a man rather than a flea or a pig.”⁹

To this clarification, he emphasizes an essential property that “all human offspring have . . . [their] potentialities or capacities for growth and development.” His point in saying this “is simply that the offspring of papa and mama flea, papa and mama pig, does not have the capacity for becoming a man. Trying to make a baby pig into an adult man is

⁶ *Ibid.*, 57–58.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 58–59.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹ *Ibid.*

one miracle no educator has ever attempted, though some have tried, and almost succeeded, in making a man-child into an adult pig.”¹⁰

Consequently, when Adler talks about “the constancy and universality of human nature,” he means “precisely what a biologist means when he speaks of the uniformity in procreation of any animal or plant species.”¹¹ Whether or not a human species as a composite, organizational, whole has *evolved* from other species or other species have evolved from it, is irrelevant to the issue at hand. “So long as the human species endures on earth,” Adler states, “all members of that species will have the same specific nature, and it is the same specific nature which I say is everywhere the same.”¹² That is, so long as specific human nature exists as the organizational whole that its parts essentially and harmoniously generate (so long as a symphony orchestra is a symphony orchestra, for example), it is everywhere specifically identical.

Regarding his second proposition, Adler asserts that this “is a definition of education itself.”¹³ As Adler has described it, specific human nature existing within individual human beings, is an imperfectly-developed organizational, causal whole, an organizational whole that is not fully, maturely, perfectly existing at birth. Specific human nature only exists within individual human natures, is an essential cause uniting them into the same genus of rational animal. At birth, our specific nature causes us to come into existence as unequally developed in our natural powers and abilities, capacities, as an organizational whole. As we live, if properly exercised, our human powers, abilities, and organizational activities maturely develop, become increasingly more perfect.

Precisely because, at birth, all individual human beings have limited natural (organizational) abilities, capacities, to grow in strength,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

mature, Adler claims, “Education is the process whereby a man helps himself or another to become what he can be.”¹⁴

As just stated, Adler adds that his definition is not complete. We human beings can change for better or worse, to be a better or worse human beings. Hence, the specific difference of education properly understood must maintain it to be “the process whereby a man is changed for the better, whereby a man helps himself or another to become a good man, which is something he can be, though perhaps not as readily as being a bad man.”¹⁵

Adler then gives two reasons why education must be a process for human betterment, not for human corruption—(1) because education is everywhere and always recorded as a process of human improvement; for a person to ask why education must be for human betterment and not human corruption, he asserts, “is like asking why medical therapy aims at restoring or improving health rather than at spreading disease;” and (2) because, if education were not, in fact, for human betterment, Adler asks, how could contemporary educators “justify compulsory education?”¹⁶

The fact that contemporary, professional educators all tend to “approve, as just and wise, the laws requiring every potential citizen to submit to a certain minimum of education,” and the fact that most of them “would like to increase that minimum a great deal . . . indicate” to Adler that professional educators think that “education is good for men (just as we think health is good for them, and still make certain hygienic observances compulsory).”¹⁷

Regarding his third basic proposition, Adler states that it logically follows from his first two.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

“In light of the constancy and universality of specific nature, especially as a set of capacities for development, and in light of the definition of education as a process of developing those capacities to the best realization,”¹⁸ Adler states, he is able to “say that the ends of education are twofold: proximate and ultimate. The proximate ends of education are the moral and intellectual virtues. . . . The ultimate end of education is happiness or a good human life, life enriched by the possession of every kind of good, by the enjoyment of every type of satisfaction.”¹⁹

He then presents his reason for this distinction between the proximate ends and the ultimate end of education. Even though they are indispensable, more than good habits are required for happiness: “The educator is as educator not responsible for providing all the conditions indispensable to happiness, but only some, and those are the virtues, or good habits. That is why we speak of the virtues or good habits as the proximate ends of education, and we mention happiness as the ultimate end because it would be wrong to suppose that the virtues were ends in themselves—they are ends, but they are also means—means to happiness.”²⁰

Adler then identifies the intellectual and moral virtues as the proximate ends of education, good habits of knowing and thinking being the intellectual virtues; and good habits of desiring and freely acting being the moral virtues.²¹

Having done this, he states:

If specific human nature is everywhere and at all times the same in all men, then all men have the same powers or capacities to be

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

developed—though, as individuals, they differ in the degree or extent to which they possess these capacities.

If the powers or capacities just referred to are parts of human nature, they are natural capacities, and as natural each has a nature—a determinate character, by which he tends naturally toward a certain kind of development.

Therefore, habits, as developments of powers or fulfillment of capacities, can be said to be good if they conform to the natural tendency of the power or capacity which they develop.²²

For example, Adler states:

The power of knowing, shared by all men, is perfected by habits of knowledge, not by habits of error or by that privation of knowledge which we called ignorance. Similarly, the power of thinking shared by all men, is perfected by habits of thinking well, by the arts of thinking; it is not perfected, but rather wasted or ruined, by habits of thinking poorly or inartistically.

Hence I say that we call a habit good when it perfects a power, when it develops the capacity in the direction toward which that capacity naturally tends.²³

In light of his preceding argument, and because our specific nature and natural capacities are specifically the same, Adler concludes that the intellectual and moral virtues and the chief aim they naturally incline to generate (human happiness) are specifically the same for all human beings.

His proof thus having been completed to his satisfaction, Adler summarizes it thus: “If education must aim at the betterment of men by forming good habits in them, and if the virtues, or good habits, are the same for all men because their natural capacities are the same and tend naturally to the same developments, then it follows that the virtues, or good habits, as the ends of education, are the absolute and universal principles on which education should be founded.”²⁴

²² *Ibid.*, 61.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

He then immediately adds that his “conclusion follows logically: but it is true only if the premises—the two *ifs*—are true.”²⁵

He then claims, “The truth of these two premises is guaranteed by two propositions which I think cannot be denied by anyone: my first proposition about the constancy of specific human nature, and my second proposition, i. e., the definition of education as a process of betterment.”²⁶

And he maintains that if his premises are true and his reasoning is valid, his conclusion is inescapable.²⁷

According to Adler, for a person who professes to be an “educator” to disagree with his argument, that person would have to deny the reality of all intellectual and moral virtue: for example, the intellectual virtues traditionally known as “the liberal arts,” the possession of which better the individual human intellect and make one individual human intellect better than another; the reality of the liberal arts of logic, sound reasoning, and grammar: which contains linguistic rules for distinguishing between meaningful and meaningless utterances.

More. Adler maintains that rejection of his argument would require an “educator” to deny as an educational responsibility the existence of the moral “virtue of justice, a justice that is the same for all men everywhere, which should always be the aim of moral education to cultivate.”²⁸ If just forms of government are naturally good for a human being, naturally better than unjust, totalitarian, ones, Adler maintains, “Any educational system which trains men to be just in their dealings with other men is objectively better than one which prepares some men for slavery and others to use them as their tools.”²⁹

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 61–62.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

To conclude, Adler claims that legitimate educators must agree with him that some intellectual and moral virtues exist the same for all men everywhere and always are the natural ends of education. If they choose to disagree with him they must: (1) “make no appeals whatsoever to logic and grammar as canons of sound thinking and correct speech;”³⁰ (2) be willing to violate the intellectual principle of non-contradiction; and (3) claim that “there is no such thing as justice, that there is nothing wrong with tyranny and slavery, with medieval inquisitions or modern gestapos, and that anyone who says democracy is the best form of government is talking through his hat.”³¹

Having laid his cards on the table, Adler invites those who disagree with him to do the same.³²

Having done so, however, I think Adler has made a serious error of not showing all his cards. For, as anyone, like Adler, who has studied the teachings of Aristotle knows, Adler’s entire argument rests upon the existence of natural human powers, capacities, habits existing as properties caused by the existence of an intellectual soul, on human beings being essentially rational animals, hylomorphic-composite-whole-organizations of soul and body. Such being the case, to agree with Adler, contemporary educators would have to admit the existence of a human soul in which human faculties, powers, habits exist; and also the reality of ends, aims, in really-existing natures.³³

More. Because specific human nature and its essential properties, powers, and abilities are unequally possessed by individual human beings, contemporary, “Enlightened” educators would have to admit the existence not only of commutative justice, but also of contributive and

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 62–65.

³³ For more about man, see Mortimer J. Adler, *The Difference of Man and the Difference It Makes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).

distributive justice. Such admissions as the existence of a human, or any, nature; an intellectual soul; the reality of aims, ends, in things; and contributive and distributive justice essentially contradict the foundational principles of the Enlightenment understanding of reality and human beings. The Enlightenment considers human beings to be systems of feelings; real natures and aims not to exist; and justice to be determined by the sincere feelings of Enlightened emotional elites. “Enlightened philosophy of education” falsely-so-called is a caricature of real human education that Adler has brilliantly exposed for what it is. Shame that he folded his hand prematurely and did not take full advantage of exposing it to be the total fraud that it is.³⁴



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Can Never Generate Higher Education**

SUMMARY

This article defends the teaching of Mortimer J. Adler that human education must aim at the betterment of human beings by forming good habits in us; and that, if intellectual and moral virtues, or good habits, are the same for all human beings because our natural capacities are the same and tend naturally to the same developments, then what logically follows is that the intellectual and moral virtues, or good habits, as the ends of education, are the absolute and universal principles on which education should always and everywhere be founded. This being the case, it concludes that, because of its essential foundation in the essentially flawed Enlightenment understanding of human nature, the New World Order can never be a cause of higher education, can, at best, cause a caricature of it.

³⁴ For more about the dilemmas of modern education, see Peter A. Redpath, “Understanding the Current Revolution in Western Higher Education: How We Got Here and Where We Are Headed,” in *Sztuka i realizm [Art and Reality]*, ed. Tomasz Duma, Andrzej Maryniarczyk, and Paulina Sulenta (Lublin: PTTA, 2014), 703–720.

KEYWORDS

Adler, Aristotle, betterment, capacity, education, educator, good, happiness, harmonize, human nature, ignorance, justice, knowledge, liberal arts, organizational whole, perfection, potentiality, power, prudence, soul, teaching.

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