

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

In: National Parent-Teacher. Vol. XXXV, No. 8, April 1941, S. 24-26.

Education to Peace.

Mann, Klaus

April

Nutzungsbedingungen

Bei zahlreichen Dokumenten auf monacensia-digital.de sind die Urheberrechte bereits abgelaufen. Sie sind gemeinfrei und dürfen ohne weitere Rücksprache mit der Monacensia weiterverwendet werden.

Bei den Dokumenten, bei denen noch Urheberrechte bestehen, müssen für eine Weiterverwendung stets die Rechteinhaber*innen angefragt werden sowie eine Publikationsgenehmigung der Monacensia eingeholt werden. Das Zitatrecht bleibt hiervon unberührt.

Zur Erteilung einer Publikationserlaubnis wenden Sie sich bitte an:

Monacensia im Hildebrandhaus

Literaturarchiv

Adresse: Maria-Theresia-Straße 23, 81675 München

E-Mail: monacensia.literaturarchiv@muenchen.de

Terms of use

The copyrights for numerous documents on monacensia-digital.de have already expired. They are in the public domain and may be reused without further consultation with Monacensia. In the case of documents for which copyrights still exist, the copyright holders must always be contacted for further use and publication permission must be obtained from the Monacensia. The right to quote under copyright law remains unaffected by this. To obtain permission for publication, please contact:

Monacensia im Hildebrandhaus:

Literaturarchiv

Address: Maria-Theresia-Straße 23, 81675 München

E-Mail: monacensia.literaturarchiv@muenchen.de

Education to Peace

AS TIME proceeds and humanity grows wiser, it may be able to obtain the kind of peace which the world will find lastingly possible. Even today some few are courageous enough to venture what kind of education can lead to such peace.

PEACE is not just the absence of war; it is a virtue, an achievement, a way of life which must be worked for and can only be maintained by even more work, reason, faith, and fortitude. So taught the great philosopher Spinoza some two hundred and fifty years ago.

This doctrine may have sounded rather startling to a society which, while it accepted and praised such notions as "virtue," "fortitude," and "faith," connected these finer qualities of the human spirit with the exploits or the sufferings that result from war. But today at last it is being

KLAUS MANN

slaughter and cruelty—the Iliad, the Nibelung saga, and the legend of Gilgamesh. So do the heroic ballads of the Middle Ages and the fairy tales loved in childhood. The terrific clatter of weapons resounds through the pages of the Old Testament, an accompaniment to the chronicles of explorers, kings, adventurers, and reformers. Those exceptional few who did not want to kill for the sake of their ideals had to die for them. Human history, indeed, would seem to be an unending



Eternal Peace Monument, Gettysburg.

© H. Armstrong Roberts

received as a word of wisdom, sorely needed.

The art of outwitting, humiliating, exploiting, killing one another—in short, the much-vaunted art of waging and winning wars—has been practiced with pride through the long years of recorded history. All the early epics glorify

tale of martyrdom, each step toward the higher planes of civilization having cost an appalling amount of human blood. Men have dreamed of independence and equality and justice and have made many of their dreams come true—but always accepting it as an axiom that no significant

social, religious, or political reform or reorganization could ever be carried out unless millions of human lives were sacrificed.

The triumphs of modern science have been no less spectacular. The achievements of scholars and engineers and skilled technicians have virtually transformed the surface of our globe. But they recorded many a bloodless victory without disturbing the deeply-rooted belief that brute force is, and must always remain, the only instrument with which to hold together great bodies of people whose divergent interests made them tend to fly apart. True, the voices that dared to question that murderous superstition grew more numerous, and perhaps a little more influential, during the nineteenth century. Yet, even in the comparatively peaceful epoch following the terrific ordeal of the Napoleonic Wars, those who called themselves with passion and conviction "pacifists" were but a powerless minority of enlightened individuals.

This was, in fact, the general state of affairs as recently as 1914. The vast majority of men and women all over the world did not question the moral value or the political wisdom of wars. They took it for granted that there would always be wars, just as there would always be thunderstorms, plagues, unhappy love affairs, slumps on the stock market, and other only-too-familiar tribulations. Wars were accepted as an act of God. A few bold intellectuals came out in opposition. But they were punished, ridiculed, and silenced—ruthlessly and swiftly. Public opinion did not tolerate them.

IT IS futile to deny that the First World War was popular, at least in its early stage—in spite of the burden of desolation and despair. Only in the years following 1918 did it become evident that a transformation great and decisive was in progress. People began to grasp—gradually and reluctantly—the utter absurdity, the heinous immorality, of modern warfare. They realized, at last, that twentieth-century science and twentieth-century philosophy leave no place for the primitive and brutal concept of martial heroism. The ideas of "conquest," "victory," "revenge," are utterly incompatible with the ideas of growth and health and learning and cooperation by which we have come to set great store. The conviction has increasingly gained ground that war, at this advanced state of human civilization, is likely to destroy everything—while deciding or improving nothing whatsoever.

"The people," I have said, finally grasped these things. But that is only partly true; or rather, it is true only for certain parts of the world. The absolute disapproval of war did become general

after 1918—but only among the victors. In France, Great Britain, and the United States (and, of course, in those small democratic countries that had not participated in the hostilities) the anti-war mood grew steadily and strong. An influential organization of French schoolteachers declared that they would refuse to take arms, even if their homeland were to become the victim of an unprovoked attack. The same solemn announcement came from students at Oxford University. Labor groups and liberal intellectuals, clergymen and columnists, college boys and even generals, vied with one another in emphasizing their fundamental abhorrence of war in all its forms. This was the spirit in New York and London, in Paris and Washington and Geneva—in Cambridge, England, and in Cambridge, Massachusetts. But in Italy, Japan, Russia, and Germany—there the story was different.

I WAS a pupil in German schools in the years following the First World War, and I have known the German universities. The German children of that generation were brought up in the spirit of revenge and hatred and nationalistic arrogance. This is no guesswork or exaggeration on my part, but the sad and disastrous truth as I have experienced it myself. Post-war Germany in its early years failed to encourage or to enforce a thoroughgoing renovation of the educational system. Of all the mistakes made by the democratic German governments, this was perhaps the most fundamental and the most fatal. Small wonder that Hitler and Goebbels proved able, only too quickly and too completely, to allure and to confuse, to hypnotize and to enthral, the bulk of Germanic youth.

In the last analysis, the whole phenomenon of Naziism is a problem of education and for educators. In saying this I do not overlook the vast economic, political, and ideological implications of the tremendous crisis we are passing through. Yet it is my belief that the deplorable lack of a reasonably planned universal system of education is one of the most deeply fundamental reasons for the present calamity. The discrepancy between educational aims and methods as, on the one hand, cherished in the democracies, and, on the other, practiced by the totalitarians, had indeed become untenable. Here were Hitler Youth, formidably trained in the goose step and in the vociferous disparagement of democracy. Here were the French boys, urban, scholarly, and faithless, educated by the very men who had gone on record with their solemn refusal to defend their country. Two worlds were these, separated by a moral abyss. The clash had to come. Small wonder that when it did come, inevitably, the ruffians succeeded in licking the philosophers!

The implications of so drastic a lesson are obvious enough for anyone interested in or concerned with educational matters. Happily, American teachers and educators are still in a position to consider in the safety of peace the problems on which their British colleagues have to reflect under the murderous shower of bombs—the French, under the humiliating protection of Nazi bayonets. I am sure that any pedagogue earnestly aware of his vast responsibility is confronted now with more intricate problems, more staggering alternatives, than ever before in his career. For he has to realize that it is not only the German teachers who have made mistakes on matters of crucial importance. It cannot be denied that those responsible for education in the democratic countries have also failed signally, though in a different and perhaps less shocking way.

LET ME explain. The post-war trend of youth toward a reasonable and spontaneous pacifism was, to be sure, a most gratifying development. But it can hardly be set down to the credit of the professional educators. Rather, it was under the relentless pressure of historical events that both teachers and pupils arrived at those self-evident conclusions concerning the nature of war and its outcomes. The new attitudes and feelings were, however, none the less significant. Indeed, the fact that youth (in the democracies) had finally come to disparage the bloody romanticism of war, may be recognized by coming generations as the greatest moral and political event of this epoch. But the same judges may find that we have left the tremendous promise inherent in this development tragically unfulfilled. We who could have fostered a fine and healthy growth have thwarted it. For we have failed to give new, constructive ideas, new interpretations of value, to a generation that has seen through the illusions and abandoned the hollow slogans of an earlier day. It is true that youth, in its overwhelming majority, is no longer impressed by solemn twaddle and is consciously opposed to wicked, blighting prejudices. But the question that remains is this: Have they found any new and more real ideals to replace those which have become stale and rotten?

Surely the tragic example of France is proof sufficient that an education *against war* in not yet an education *for peace*. We should know by this time that “debunking” old ideals and traditions is not the same as creating a new faith; that the renouncing of nationalistic complacency is only the first step toward international cooperation; that the skepticism of youth can reach a point at which it becomes suicidal.

I hope and I believe that American teachers and American youth will not have to go through the

trial which has awakened the British people, young and old, and transformed their spirit. We are close enough, right here, to the breath-taking spectacle of this struggle, and our interest in it is so vital that its import for education should not escape us.

To declare our solidarity with a fighting people—the English—does not imply that we renounce the ideal of pacifism. The goal of a universal democracy as it was visualized and praised by the greatest American poet, Walt Whitman, must never be lost to sight. Nor does such declaration mean that we “approve” of this war—how could one “approve” of anything so ghastly?—or that we are inclined to admit that “it *had* to be.” It had *not* to be—if only the democracies could have shown more imagination and courage, more insight and intelligence. However, after certain mistakes had been made and certain opportunities missed, war did become inevitable. What we have to realize—and this at the present moment is paramount—is that only if and when the totalitarians are defeated will there be a chance after the war for world-wide peaceful reconstruction.

Paradoxical as it may sound, the catastrophe of this war may turn out to be the decisive contribution to the campaign for “education to peace.” For while the ordeal of 1914–1918 convinced the youth in certain countries of the wretched absurdity of modern wars, this new visitation may bring it home to youth *everywhere*—even in the now-totalitarian countries—that the abhorrence of war is not sufficient to guarantee the maintenance of peace.

TO EDUCATE young human beings “to peace” means to teach them responsibility, self-respect, and constructive thinking; to provide them with knowledge of the past and instill confidence in the future; to make them realistic in their outlook but not skeptical in attitude, tolerant but determined, independent but disciplined, energetic but not brutal. It means the opening of their eyes to the problems and the dangers and the infinite prospects which this century of sweeping transformations presents to a narrowing world. It means that there is kindled in their hearts an inspiring faith in that which is basic to Christian civilization as it emerges from the present turmoil.

We who are to plan and promote such education for the world of tomorrow must see to it that Christian civilization, with all that it holds for the development of personality and the enrichment of life, does emerge. For it is only as freedom, justice, peace, and good will prevail that youth can look forward to a fully lived, rich, and productive life.

This is the concluding article in the study course: This World of Ours.