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### **Education to Peace.**

**Mann, Klaus**

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## Education to Peace

By KLAUS MANN.

The great philosopher Spinoza has said that Peace is not just the absence of war, but a virtue, an achievement, and a way of life which must be worked for and can only be maintained by even more work, reason, faith, and fortitude.

This he understood and formulated hundreds of years ago. It may have sounded rather startling to a society which accepted and praised such notions as "virtue", "fortitude", and "faith" almost exclusively in a martial, ~~exclusive sense~~ militant sense. The art of outwitting, humiliating, exploiting, killing each other - in short, the much-vaunted art of waging and winning wars was the first accomplishment and pride of the human animal. All <sup>epics</sup> early ~~epopees~~ of man are sadistic - glorifying slaughter and cruelty. The Iliad and the Nibelung Saga, the legend of Gilgamesh and the heroic ballads of the Middle Ages, fairy tales, tragedies and farces - all of them are overflowing with blood and tears. The cries of the wounded, the groan of agony, the terrific clatter of weapons resound through the pages of the Old Testament, to the chronicles of explorers, kings, adventurers and reformers. Those exceptional few who did not want to kill for the sake of their ideals (or of their career...) had to die for <sup>them</sup> it. Human history is nothing but a tremendous accumulation of martyrdom. ~~There is no great idea, no important vision and concept that was not paid for, lavishly, with suffering, death, despair.~~ Every religious creed and new social doctrine - each step from the jungle-like primitiveness of pre-historic ages toward higher forms of civilization cost an appalling amount of human blood. The ~~the~~ Greek concept of individual liberty and culture, the Roman law, the establishment and spread of Christianity, the foundation and maintenance of

Mohammedanism, the vast process of discoveries and world-wide colonization, the new scientific views of the Renaissance and the moral insurrection of Protestantism, ~~the outrages of~~ the Counter-Reformation and the Inquisition, the final overcoming of feudalism, the idea of the national state, the notions of liberté, égalité, fraternité, America's Independence, Napoleon's premature and tyrannic vision of a Europe united under his rulership, <sup>the abolition of slavery,</sup> the promise of a world "safe for Democracy", Karl Marx's appeal to "proletarians of all countries" to unify <sup>te</sup> ~~themselves~~ against their mutual enemy, "Capitalism" - all these tendencies and movements, Utopian hopes and realistic necessities had to be fought for, suffered for, died for. With an adamant obstinacy, ~~a~~ desperate blindness man abided by the axiom that no change of social, religious or political conditions - no inevitable reform, improvement, re-organization could ever be carried out - unless millions of human lives were sacrificed.

Even the staggering developments of modern technique - transforming the surface of our globe: almost eliminating the distances between nations and continents - hardly succeeded at first in shaking that atavistic, deeply-rooted belief - that brutal force is, and must always remain, the only pertinent method of ~~dealing with~~ ~~regulating~~ the co-existence of various collective bodies with divergent interests. True, the voices who dared to question that murderous superstition grew more ~~for~~ numerous, and perhaps a little more influential, during the Nineteenth Century. ~~Formerly, there had been only a few sporadic, inspired minds, such as Spinoza or Immanuel Kant, who contradicted - or rather, who refuted the stubborn faith in the ultimate inevitability of human mass butcheries.~~ 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 nothing but a powerless minority of enlightened individuals. The designation "pacifist" is revealing itself. The very term carries dreary overtones of an unrealistic hobby and tiresome <sup>a</sup>secterianism. ~~He is a pacifist....: this statement somehow suggests that the man in question adheres, with a certain pathetic obstinacy, to one of those well-intended but slightly ludicrous organizations which try to promote certain depressing diets or long-forgotten folk-dances. For the name, "pacifist", indicates that here is a group of peculiar people who differ from the bulk of their fellow-men through their fixed idea that wars are anachronistic, hideous, and unnecessary.~~

And this was, in fact, the general state of affairs, as recently as in 1914. The vast majority of men and women all over the world did not question the moral value and political wisdom of wars. They took it for granted that there will always be wars, just as there will always be thunderstorms, plagues, unhappy love, slumps on the stockmarket, and other only-too-familiar tribulations. Wars were accepted as an act of God. ~~The opinion prevailed that there was nothing to be done about it.~~ A few bold intellectuals - most of them left-wing or religious idealists - came out against the general frenzy of aggressive nationalism and militaristic slogans. But they were punished, ridiculed and silenced - ruthlessly and swiftly. Public opinion did not tolerate them. For, it is futile to deny the fact that the First World War was popular, at least in its early stage - in spite of the colossal mass of ugliness and destruction, boredom, madness, and death it imposed on the harassed peoples.

It was only in the years following 1918 that the great, decisive transformation of that slowly-reacting instrument, the average human mind, began to shape and to become evident. During the last two decades people <sup>began</sup> started to grasp - gradually and reluctantly - the utter absurdity and heinous immorality of modern warfare. They realized, at last,

<sup>that</sup> the conditions of Twentieth Century-life - the standards of our science and technique, our hygienics and philosophy, are, indeed, incompatible with the primitive and brutal concept of martial heroism and such reckless simplifications as the obsolete ideas of "conquest", "victory", "revenge." The conviction <sup>ed</sup> gained increasingly ground that war, at this advanced state of human civilization, is likely to destroy everything - while deciding or improving nothing what so ever.

... At this point I falter as I feel that I have to correct myself - that I should have been more precise. For, my statement - that "the people" finally ~~came at~~ <sup>ed</sup> grasping the stavistic character and destructive <sup>e/</sup>consequences of warfare in our time - is only partly true, or rather, it is true only for certain parts of the world. The absolute disapproval of war became general - 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 was growing, steadily and strongly. An influential organization of French school teachers 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 the students at the Oxford University. Labor groups and liberal intellectuals, clergymen and columnists, college boys and even generals vied with each <sup>other</sup> in emphasizing their fundamental abhorrence of war. ~~For whatever reason it may might be waged~~ This was the spirit in New York and London, in Paris, Washington, and Geneva, in Cambridge, England, and in Cambridge, Massachusetts. But in Italy, Japan, Russia, and Germany...

~~I may pass over the Russian problem: for the revolutionary aggressiveness of the Soviets, now adapted to the nefarious scheme of Hitler politics, has originally been very different from the traditional furor of expansive nationalism. I may also neglect the~~

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 were brought up in the spirit of revenge, hatred, nationalistic arrogance and reactionary obtuseness. This no guesswork or exaggeration but the sad and distasteful truth, as I have experienced it myself. The Republic of Weimar failed to encourage or to enforce a thoroughgoing renovation of the pedagogical system in Germany. Among all mistakes made by the democratic German governments, this was, perhaps, the most fundamental and most fatal one. The well-intentioned policy of Gustav Stresemann was doomed to fail as the young generation of the defeated Reich was educated in the spirit of Ludendorff - by no means in the spirit of Geneva. Small wonder that Hitler and Göbbels <sup>proved</sup> ~~were~~ able, only too quickly and too completely, to allure and to confuse, to hypnotize and to enthrall the bulk of Germanic youth.

In the last analysis, the whole phenomenon of Nazism, ~~the~~ Teutonic aggressiveness, and so forth, is a problem of education and for educators. I don't overlook, when saying this, 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 deepest <sup>s</sup> reasons for the present calamity. The discrepancy between the pedagogical aims and methods as, on the one hand, cherished in the Democracies, and, on the other, practised by the Totalitarians, had, indeed, become untenable. The Hitler Youth, formidably trained in goose-step, blatant Antisemitism and the vociferous disparagement of Democracy - and the French boys, urban, scholarly, and faithless - educated by the very men who had gone <sup>on</sup> ~~to~~ record with their solemn refusal to defend their country - these two worlds, separated from ~~each~~ one another by a moral abyss, could not exist side by side, in the long run. The clash had to come - inevitably. Small wonder that the ruffians <sup>proved</sup> ~~succeeded~~

*im*  
~~able to~~ lick *ing* the philosophers...

The implications of so drastic a lesson are obvious enough for any one interested in or concerned with pedagogical matters. Happily, the American teachers and educators still are in a position to consider in the safety of peace what their British colleagues have to think over 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, they have to realize that not only the German teachers have made the most *crucial* ~~distasteful~~ mistake as even the well-meaning ones among them acquiesced in the distasteful tendency of German youth toward intolerance and aggressive chauvinism. Undeniably, those responsible for education in the democratic countries have *also* *signally* ~~failed~~ - if in a different and less shocking way.

We can hardly credit the professional educators for the pleasing development of youth toward a reasonable and spontaneous pacifism! It was, indeed, under the relentless pressure of historical events that both teachers and pupils arrived at those natural feelings and self-evident conclusion<sup>s</sup>. We must not belittle the elating significance of this new attitude. The fact that youth (in the Democracies!) has finally overcome the bloody romanticism of war, may be recognized by coming generations as the greatest moral and political event of this epoch. But the same posthumous judges may find that we have spoiled, or at least partly frustrated, the tremendous promise inherent in this development. For we have failed <sup>to</sup> <sup>e</sup> giving new, constructive values and ideas to a generation that had abandoned the hollow slogans and obsolete illusions of former periods. It is true that Youth, in its overwhelming majority, is not impressed any more by solemn twaddle and consciously opposed to wicked prejudices. But the

question remains, <sup>place</sup> if they <sup>to</sup> have found any new and more real ideals, instead of those which had become stale and rotten.

The tragic example of France is apt to prove <sup>to</sup> us that an education against war is not yet an education for peace; that "debunking" old ideals and traditions is not tantamount to creating a new faith; that the renunciation of nationalistic complacency is only the prerequisite but not yet the accomplishment of international collaboration; that the supine scepticism of youth can reach a degree where it becomes suicidal.

I hope and I believe that American teachers and American youth will not have to go through the merciless trial which has transformed and awakened the spirit of the British people, young and old. We are close enough, right here, to the breath-taking spectacle of this <sup>struggle</sup> ~~current~~ - in fact, our share in it is vital enough to make us grasp the pedagogical impact of this enormous experience.

To declare our solidarity with a fighting people - the English - does not imply that we renounce the ideal of pacifism - which <sup>is</sup> in other words, the goal of a ~~war~~ universal Democracy as it was visualized and praised by the greatest American poet, Walt Whitman. Nor does it mean that we "approve" of this war - how could one "approve" of so ghastly a tribulation? - , or that we are inclined to admit that "it had to be." It had not to be - if only the Democracies (including the Republic of Weimar) could have shown more imagination and courage, more divination and intelligence. However, with certain mistakes having been made - certain opportunities having been missed, war became inevitable. The paramount thing we have to realize, at the present moment, is that only if and when the Totalitarians are defeated, there <sup>is</sup> ~~will~~ be a chance and realistic possibility for peaceful reconstruction on a world-wide scale.

The anachronistic catastrophe of this war may turn out to be the decisive contribution to the "education to peace" - paradoxical as this might sound. For, while the ordeal of 1914/18 has convinced the youth in certain countries of the abjectness and absurdity of modern wars, this new horrid collision may bring it home to youth everywhere - even in the now-Totalitarian countries; if they are defeated - 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 confidence in the future; to make them realistic but not sceptical; tolerant but determined, energetic but not brutal; to open their eyes for the intrinsic problems and postulates, the dangers and infinite prospects inherent in this century of sweeping transformations; to kindle in their hearts the inspiring faith in the basic tenets of Christian civilization as it should emerge from the present turmoil - as we <sup>must</sup> ~~should~~ try to make it.

Education to peace is, in short, the education to a fully lived, rich and productive life.