

**EDUCATING  
FOR  
SEVEN LIVES**

**BY  
WILLIAM GEORGE JORDAN**

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# EDUCATING FOR SEVEN LIVES

BY WILLIAM GEORGE JORDAN, APRIL 1923



MAN does not live one life only in this world; he lives seven. He lives a physical life, a mental life, a moral and ethical life, a social life, a civic life, . an aesthetic and emotional life, and a spiritual life. These seven lives constitute all there is to living. They cover every possible relation of the individual-to himself, to those around him, to the world and to his God.

What of the vocational life? This is but a blending of two or more of these lives into a specialized activity. What of man's rest, leisure, recreation? This is not a life in itself. It means merely shifting the emphasis of intensity from some one of these lives to some other as when a man tired by the mental strain of business turns to the physical exercise of golf, the aesthetic pleasure of music or the drama, or the delights of the social life. As all men and women live all these lives, in varying degrees of intensity, and as every child begins early to live them, should not Education train the individual in each of them that he may live all of them at his best?

Education concentrates on the mental and fails hopelessly even in this one. The intellectual life is only a part of our living. We are all controlled more by our sentiments, feelings, emotions, affections and passions than by clear, calm, cold reason; therefore they too should be trained.

To see how miserable has been the failure of education, let us try a bold experiment. Let us forget absolutely that the world has now or ever has had any system of education. Suppose then, for the first time in human history, the brilliant idea occurred to the mind of some man that as we have to send our boys and girls out into life, to meet the problems of life and living, it would be a good thing to have some kind of public institutions to prepare them and to train them. This proposed process he would call "education."

Free as a lark from any hampering thought of tradition, authority or precedent, and not even concerned at first with problems of how it could be done, he would begin to expand his great idea, to make blue-prints of his new invention. He would dream out on paper his vision of what should be his ideal. He would think over his own mistakes and blunderings and the qualities, powers and abilities he needed and which he should have had, if "education" had been known when he was a boy.

His thought would turn lovingly and solicitously to the future of his boy and his girl, the children so dear to him. What was the training and preparation that would inspire and guide them to lead lives that would be best for themselves and for the world. Then he would write boldly at the top of his first sheet the heading: "What I Expect Education to Do for My Boy and My Girl."

*Physical.* They should have strong healthy bodies which they had been trained to respect, to nurture and to control. They should breathe, sit, stand, walk, run and eat correctly. They should know how the simple laws of hygiene and the simple physical exercises that would keep them well and strong under normal conditions.

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*Mental.* They should have each of their senses trained to highest efficiency. Their perception, observation, memories, judgment, imagination, reasoning, concentration, will, should be continuously and progressively exercised and trained. They should be trained to love their native language and be so exercised in it that they would think in it and speak it with clearness and force. They should be trained to order, thoroughness, accuracy and rapidity in thoughts and act. They should be exercised in conversation and every phase of self-expression. Their minds should be trained to be ready on the instant, not the next day.

*Moral and Ethical.* They should have a clear, simple, sound working code, based on honor, right, truth and justice. They should be so trained that living it daily would become a simple, natural automatic part of their living.

*Social.* They should be trained, by conscious exercise that would later become unconscious expression, in all the social conventions, civilities, and courtesies that would make them agreeable, companionable and dependable.

*Civic.* They should be trained for citizenship in all its phases. They should know the fundamentals and broad principles of the working of the government under which they live, trained to realize their duties, responsibilities and powers and be exercised in practice to meet them and to fulfill them so that they could become worthy citizens.

*Aesthetic and Emotional.* Their sentiments, emotions, feelings and affections should be called forth, explained, stimulated, appealed to and placed under their conscious control. They should be inspired by love and inspired to love the good, the beautiful and the true in all things. They should be trained to know, to recognize, to appreciate, and to love the beautiful in Nature, humanity, literature, music, painting, architecture, sculpture and the drama.

*Spiritual.* They should be trained to realize and to feel that the spiritual dominates and is superior to the material, that the universe is governed by eternal law, trained in the reverent knowledge and performance of the duties to God, trained to make the great truths of spirituality, not mere matters of belief but the very inspiration and atmosphere of their daily living.

Having set down in writing his ideal he would recall he had said nothing as to the knowledge to be acquired and he would put it thus:

“They should first be put in harmony with their immediate environment and given such knowledge as they could grasp, understand, assimilate and use, moving from this to progressively widening circles of information as their growing minds could feed on. They should have only such knowledge as they could digest and make truly their own. They should be trained specifically too in that knowledge that would enable them to know where to find out. Such a comprehensive plan of training as this would bring them in touch to a degree with all the sciences in the explanation of their environment, in the simple questions and details of everyday life. If their minds be trained thoroughly in harmony with their seven lives there need be no fear that they will not have or be able to acquire for themselves all the knowledge they could desire or assimilate.” With years of such training they could approach any subject or problem with trained minds.

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Having completed his outline and found it satisfying, he would then be rudely wakened by suddenly remembering that he had been misled in believing the world had no system of education. Then there would flash before him the memory of what our elementary schools, our high schools, were doing for the young. Checking up the work of Education, item by item, point by point with his own idea, he would find that she *fails consistently and completely in every single element*.

Dismayed and discouraged he might view his own plan as but a beautiful theory, utopian, visionary, impracticable, impossible. Then would come the glad glow of a real illumination. Such an education as he had outlined was not visionary, not impossible for it had been given in practically every detail in the training of the citizens of Athens, in the Golden Age of Greece, 2400 years ago!

This wondrous city, with a population about that of Akron, Ohio, in the seventy years of the life of Socrates, produced more great men, more supreme geniuses than the whole world has ever produced in any other equal period of time. The quality and powers of the citizenry, the common people, have never been approached, much less equaled, at any other place or in any other time in the history of the world. They had bodies trained to health, beauty and grace, minds keen, alert, clear and rapid in thought, unhesitating in action. They were intellectually anxious, wide-awake to new impressions, prepared and ready to challenge for themselves any new idea before admitting it into the mind. They were so trained to love their native tongue that the common people could speak it with the ease, grace, voice and fine discrimination in the use of words of their greatest authors.

Their ear was so trained that it was far more sensitive than ours to pitch and modulation. The ability to appreciate without difficulty quarter-tones in music was common. They were trained for citizenship, for character, trained in the social refinements and graces, trained to love the good, the beautiful and the true and have them dominate their lives. Their imagination, wonderously developed, was ever controlled by reason. Their spirituality was not a thing apart; it permeated all their living. They lead free, natural, joyous, active lives, from childhood to old age. No child in old Athens ever "crept unwillingly to school."

The education for their many-sided life was one of harmonious training of body, mind, heart and spirit, raising each to its highest power and all into finest co-operation. The curriculum of this education was so simple that we would smile at it today, but its wisdom was shown in its power to appeal to every faculty and process of the mind and to prepare for the fullest, freest living. This, too, was at a time when there was not a single book in existence, and before formal studies had been invented.

With the coming in of the Sophists, who shifted the accent from training to the acquiring of knowledge, the curriculum was soon widened to some semblance of modern education. The beginning of the great change was quickly felt, the people lost their fine character, their ideals faded, the common interests and purposes languished, their moral fibre weakened, their love of the beautiful, the good and the true no longer dominated their living, freedom waned, the great men became fewer and this glorious civilization slowly dimmed and dusked into night.

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When the system of education in Athens made training the individual for the full rounded activities of his seven lives its supreme aim and purpose, Athens reached her Golden Age, her zenith. She was the glory of the whole world of her time and she left to all the ages to come an undying heritage of influence and inspiration. When she changed her model by reversing her ideals, making the acquiring of knowledge her supreme aim and purpose and the training of the mind incidental and secondary, the glory of her civilization declined. The new model for education that we are seeking to present in this series, though worked out individually and independently, with no thought of Athens as a guide or inspiration, is in perfect harmony with the spirit of her training in the sun-lit mid-day of her greatest splendor and power. The education of today is in harmony with that of Athens in her period of decline. Which is the better model, Mental Training or Education?

Let those who doubt the possibility of realizing the vision of the new education we have outlined, who may say “it cannot be done” be silenced by the proof that, in its main lines it *has* been done. Their civilization differed from ours, their spirituality differed, their ideas and ideals and their living differed, but the *principles* that made their civilization great will make ours great. We do not need to do what they did in the way they did it but to cultivate the same spirit, the same attitude. We do not need to drink from their cup, but to dip our own cup into the fresh, living waters of the same fountain of inspiration.

We do not need to teach the Greek language, but to put into our own wondrous English language the love and spirit the Athenians put into their native tongue. We can have an education and a civilization all our own, a training that will prepare our children for living today, on the same broad base as did the Greeks of old. They never formulated the sevenfold view of life, perhaps even never thought of it, but we can convert this ideal into an actuality in the same free, inspired way that the ancient Greeks created an education in accord with their vision. We can make it a new great reality, transformed from a vision into a great pulsing force in our living.

Mental training has a clearly defined program—training for seven lives. It has a clearly defined model—training in harmony with Nature’s method in developing genius. This new ideal and revelation of method and process will be set forth in the next article in this series: “Modeling Education on Genius.” It is based on a supreme faith in the educability of the human mind. It believes that the method by which Nature makes her great successes is not only good enough for us, that it is not only a right and a proper method, but that this method of Nature is the only true one. Education, paradoxical and strange as it may seem, does not believe in the educability of the human mind. If she did she would not find her supreme aim and go in merely “storing the mind with knowledge.”

Man is not put into the world as a finished product, of a predetermined limitation of capacity and development. He is not branded or stamped like a jug with its limit, as “one-gallon” or “five-gallon.” There are no men thus predetermined as “one-talent” men or “two-talent” or “five-talent.” If man wishes to thus limit himself it is he who does it, not Nature. We know the potentialities of no child that was ever born. We arrogate much to our own ignorance when we thus seek to fix individual limits. The biographies of the world’s great ones have told this story thousands of times. sands of times. Nature has been speaking to man the same message in

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countless instances through the ages, but he has not heard, or if he has heard he has not comprehended. It is this finer message of Nature that mental training seeks to translate for man into a new revelation of the glorious possibilities of a new education, a new inspiration, a new model.

The question of how we can change our present system is too big to discuss here. The immediate question is not “how can it be done?” but “is it worth doing?”

Would it be good for the individual and for the world if it could be done? Is it the kind of education you would wish your children to have? Is it the kind of education you would want for yourself, if you could go back to school? Would it not have trained you in powers wherein you are weak today and which you have resignedly accepted in the belief that you “were born so and must so remain?” Would it not give you a broad, full, many-sided life that you do not have today? Would it not give you control of your mind and its powers? Could you imagine the world, after a generation of such training, going back to the old education, with its dullness and deadness, its cramming, its barren results, its fruitless effort and its untrained minds? Would it be a big worth-while thing to train the individual to live his seven lives at their fullest and best?

This new system is not proposed as an addition to our present one, but as a substitute for it. It would not only quicken the mind but would *build the brain itself* to higher powers, increasing the number of cells in any area and create them where none exist. Our leading scientists declare all this possible by proper exercises in training.

Elmer Gates<sup>1</sup>, of Chevy Chase, Maryland, trained dogs during the first year of their life to discriminate hundreds of the pitches or wave-lengths of each of the colors of the spectrum, to differentiate seven or eight- shades of these colors and of each one of the hues of these colors. In this training the dogs developed a mental power and ability along this line that no other dogs of this breed ever possessed. That this training actually produced increased cell- development in the cortex of the brain was shown by a subsequent autopsy. This revealed a far greater number of *well-developed* cells, as compared with small and immature cells, in the “seeing areas” of the brain, than other dogs of this species possessed.

A child under two years of age had been given by Dr. Gates a six months’ training in the discrimination of temperature and touch differences. The child later died of scarlet fever and in the brain areas of these senses were found over twenty-four times the number of large and fully developed cells, as compared with small, immature and mere beginnings of cells. He further says: “I have trained four generations of guinea-pigs in the extraordinary use of the visual faculty and their offspring of the fifth generation were born with a greater number of well-developed cells in the seeing areas of the cortex than other guinea-pigs not thus trained.”

These experiments prove that more and better brains, and more and more mental ability can by proper mental training be given to animals, that new characteristics can be acquired, and that despite what Weissman<sup>2</sup> and other scientists have *claimed these acquired characteristics can be inherited*. The fact that inheritance of these newly acquired structures implies that either new cells have actually been created or that new organic tissue has been created within the constitution of already-existing cells.

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True mental training, making all the cells of the brain more keenly active and alert because directly nourished and strengthened by *conscious* exercise, will perform seeming miracles in the development of individuals. The brain cells become larger because they have been stimulated to more complex internal structures and a more complex chemical constitution. The cells become larger also because of a more complex development of associative fibres and fibre tracts. This means that in mental training there is not only a building up of separate memory cells but an intensifying, vivifying, vitalizing and energizing of new lines of association between them. Mental training is thus brain-building. It means producing a better machine to turn out a finer grade of goods, and by making a finer grade of goods still further perfect the machine.

We do not inherit from the education of today. In some new method which consciously and consistently builds up the brain itself, changes its tissues and increases the number of cells, by direct exercise, may we not possibly be able not merely to increase the brain power of one generation but to pass this power directly to the generation that is to come? Whatever we may or may not do for posterity, there is no question about the marvels of development we can create in the present generation by proper training and exercise.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.ElmerGates.com](http://www.ElmerGates.com) for additional information on this fascinating inventor/mental researcher.

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Leopold August Weissman (Germany 1834, 1914) was a notable 19<sup>th</sup> century evolutionary scientist.