

Culture, Man and Education

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Japanese education—using the term in a broad sense to include society, school and family—can be said to have been beset by a series of problems, coming one upon the other, since the end of World War II. Those in charge of educational administration have generally dealt with these problems by using their authority to contain them or to cope with them through amendments to educational policy, or they have just sat back and looked on indifferently with folded hands. Within the schools, authorities have watched carefully to prevent problems from arising, while at home parents have for the most part concerned themselves with their children's grades. In a certain limited sense, this method of treating symptoms as they arise has been successful. But the increasing number of students who develop a phobia towards schools may render such symptomatic measures ineffective. I believe that unless education is radically reconsidered within the broader context of humanity and human culture, the real issues will never be grasped, and we will thus be prevented from taking necessary counter measures.

I think there are two issues which must be addressed. One is the concept of education which appeared with the onset of the modern age and which is still held by the general public. The goal envisaged in this concept is to

forge a new person through a system of public education, the aim being to eventually realize ideal conditions of some kind on a local, national, or world scale. The second problem is the result that derives directly from the first problem. Society today sets great store upon cultural and material affluence. We rely on social, economic, and political institutions to maintain and further that affluence. The role of the educational system becomes one of fostering those same values in students.

I believe that these two issues are found at the root of the various problems inherent in today's Japanese educational system. I have attempted in my analysis to confirm the points outlined above. As the concept or role of education seems to be deeply involved with human existence as such, I have drawn a brief sketch to illustrate the relation between man, culture, and education at various levels of society from the pastoral and hunting stage through the agricultural stage, up to the stage of modern technology. I have tried to show that it was not until the modern age that the aforementioned concept of education was firmly established and the emphasis came to be laid on the role of education. Furthermore, in examining the educational theories and practices of three educationalists, I have drawn attention to the fact that criticisms of their theories had appeared as early as the 1930's and 40's. I hope to have demonstrated the relevance that this view of education has for a truly human way of life.