

THE EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE "FOUR FREEDOMS"

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The Atlantic Charter with its pronouncement of the Four Freedoms may become as outstanding an event in modern American history as did some other events--the Bill of Rights, the Gettysburg Address--which influenced the thinking not only of contemporaries but of generations to follow. Many originally regarded these Four Freedoms merely as a promise to the people suffering under tyranny and oppression. Many others were inclined to believe that these Freedoms were already established in America and should only be extended to all the other people of this earth. However, enunciations of high officials and especially the report of the National Resources Planning Board, formulating nine supplementary rights, made it clear that these Four Freedoms must be regarded as an ideal goal toward which we must move. The Four Freedoms seem to form the basis for the development of democracy. We have as much democracy as we possess of these Four Freedoms.

We might pride ourselves in having established freedom of speech and expression and freedom to worship; but who really believes that we have freedom from want and freedom from fear? It will take political and economic developments to procure these Four Freedoms, but education is essential to supplement political and economical changes. One of the first necessary educational steps seems to be to make the public better acquainted with these Four Freedoms. Everybody has heard of them, but very few actually know them. It is amazing how few can even name them as yet. People must learn what the Four Freedoms are and must realize what they actually stand for. Thus, the importance of adult education with its informative service can easily be understood.

However, it is more essential which educational methods and goals are applied to children. Children grow up with a definite outlook. Any development toward social improvement depends

on the attitude of the new generation. Educators must study the implications of the Four Freedoms for their work with children if they want to make their contribution to the present struggle and give their best services to their community and their country. Let us consider each one of the Four Freedoms, let us analyze what each means from a psychological viewpoint, let us discover what should be done and how it could be done.

At first sight, only the last Freedom--the Freedom from Fear--appears to be mainly a psychological problem. While the Freedom from Want seems to belong in the field of economics, the Freedom of Speech and Freedom to Worship appear as exclusively political conceptions. Upon closer investigation we will find, however, that all of the Four Freedoms have definite psychological significance and should be considered carefully when we teach children how to think and how to behave.

Freedom of Speech and Expression is established in our constitution. But this established political right does not exclude the existence of confusing problems. How far should each individual enjoy this right when he uses it to harm others or even to destroy the right in itself? There must be somewhere a limitation to the Freedom of Expression. Where should it be? The demarcation line has never been defined clearly. Is it sufficient to ban merely incitement to illegal actions? Everybody can express his opinion anyhow whether he has the right to do so or not. He has only to take the consequences. Even under conditions of a very limited freedom of speech everybody can say what he wants if he does not mind being imprisoned or losing his head. It is clear that freedom of expression means freedom from unpleasant consequences. The increase of freedom is correlated to the decrease in unpleasant or punishing consequences for any opinion expressed. But freedom never means license. And

freedom never means one-sided privilege. Freedom must be limited by a sense of responsibility which respects the rights of others, and must include all members of the community alike; otherwise we would not call it freedom. Freedom of speech can only have one psychological meaning: that everybody has the right to express his opinion provided that he is sincere and does not intend to hurt others. A general conception of human relationship regulates what is considered to be harmful and insulting. To criticize a superior will be considered less or more harmful according to the degree in which freedom of speech is granted. The possibility of expressing one's opinion, even if it contradicts cherished convictions of others, requires freedom of speech based on tolerance and mutual respect. We in America have a great deal of these freedoms--perhaps more in the political life than in the daily routine within the community or within the family. We must recognize the necessity of bringing up our children in such a way that expressing their opinions is natural and does not require either rebellion or aggressiveness. Otherwise, only those children will express their opinions freely who are impertinent and hostile, who do not care whether they antagonize or provoke punishment. Often the "good" children are docile and submissive, while their spokesman is a child with less responsibility and less conformity. Parents and schools have a great responsibility in teaching the children not only the right but also the obligation of expressing their opinions and of taking a stand for what they consider right and advisable. We cannot start teaching democracy at a certain age after we first have suppressed with force and intimidation the natural inclination of the child to take a stand and express an opinion in a constructive and cooperative way.

Concretely, children should be instructed how to use sincere and constructive criticism, and children must be trained to respect criticism, not as a consequence of paternal or educational authority and power, but as the right

of human beings dealing with them. Children must be taught that the expression of a different opinion is neither an insult or disrespectful. In certain national groups and communities freedom of speech is little practiced, very often as a consequence of a particular national background. It is vital to educate children so that they bring this spirit of decent and courageous expression into their community life. It is possible to arrange discussion groups where mutual tolerance and mutual respect in expressing antagonistic opinions is practiced. Such groups can be used for demonstration to other children and to the grownups as well. There is no freedom of speech so long as talking frankly means hostility and so long as so many refuse to talk at all.

These are a few points which serve only to demonstrate the problem rather than to cover the field. It is necessary to study all the implications which the postulation of Freedom of Speech can have and actually has for our educational procedure. Schools will have to consider how much freedom of speech and expression they have established, and parents must become aware of how important the atmosphere of the family is for their community and for the whole country.

Freedom of Worship seems to be fairly well established. Everybody can believe what he wants. However, our daily practice again falls rather short of this generally accepted principle. The widely spread anti-Semitic inclination can be excused on assumed racial differences, which do not actually exist. But how can we speak of Freedom of Worship as long as the members of certain religious groups are not fully accepted and respected, as so often happens to Catholics in certain parts of the country? Much can be done in the direction of religious tolerance and respect by teaching the children to regard other religious groups not as enemies or as inferiors, but as people with equal decency and the same amount of truth to claim for their convictions. Religious tolerance cannot be tacitly presupposed.

It does not exist if it is not trained. It is not sufficient that educators refrain from expressing intolerant viewpoints. They must help the children to accept others who have different religious convictions as equally good and equally enlightened. We lack Freedom of Religious Thinking as long as so many are hypocritical in religious matters. Belonging to a certain church, unfortunately, does not necessarily mean possessing definite convictions. What a man actually believes is very often his personal secret, revealed only to his closest friends, if ever. Lip-service is more frequent than is deep and sincere faith. This statement cannot be regarded as exaggeration. How often are ministers obliged to issue such statements from the pulpit! This widespread lip-service indicates that church affiliations may be based on social pressure rather than on genuine religious convictions. In order to establish Freedom of Worship we must give our children the opportunity to know and understand the various creeds. They also should have a chance to choose. Without freedom to choose, religious worship is imposed, but not free.

Freedom from Want certainly is one of the fundamental requirements for peace and cooperation. But what can educators do in helping to establish it? The fact that people live without the bare essentials for life is not merely the consequence of economic conditions. Economic conditions themselves are influenced by attitudes and opinions of the majority of the people. Establishing freedom from want requires the general recognition of the fact that the want of our neighbor endangers our own security, that the destitution of our neighbors is our own responsibility. This feeling of responsibility for each other, this interest in the welfare of others, is an educational task of first order. There are many ways in which children can be made aware of the wants of others, can be made to understand them and stimulated to help. Instead of basking in the prestige derived from possessing more than the other one has, children can learn to enjoy the feeling of sharing. They

can learn to enjoy the compassionate desire to assist and to aid; they can learn to regard the needs of the other one not as a reason for ridicule and contempt but as a challenge to their own intelligence, tact, and social interest. How far from such attitudes is the gratification of "charity," which embodies the glorification of a moral superiority. "Charity" won't bring freedom from want. We should not teach children to be "charitable." As long as people do not feel the duty to share, the Freedom from Want never has a chance of being established.

Freedom from Fear: The deepest secret of human misery is revealed to those who conceive the Freedom from Fear as the basic element of human living together. Fear keeps people not only from happiness and enjoyment of life but also from being cooperative. Much can be said about methods of delivering people from fear. Psychologists, psychiatrists, and educators will have to work hard to devise methods and techniques of conquering its menace. Very few realize as yet that fear is very often not caused by real dangers; even death loses its terror for those who have developed courage, and no predicament can frighten them. This quality of courage, of confidence in one's own strength, is the only antidote for fear. Self-confidence and courage must be developed in our children if our citizens are to be without fear. Freedom from Fear cannot be accomplished by merely economic or political measures. We all are only too ready to fear dangers from without and from within, because we have not learned to trust ourselves and others. Persecution and oppression are consequences of fear as well as causes. Only frightened people suppress others. Worse than famine and disease is the fear of losing social status, of being less than the next fellow. This fear engulfs children competing with older and younger sisters and brothers and rebelling against parents who either pamper or oppress them. Bringing up children without fear might prove to be more important even than teaching them to read and to write. How much time we spend on the three R's because

we think too little about the fears which we instil in our children, actively or passively, by not recognizing their thoughts and convictions! A big job is ahead of us. Parents and educators must become aware of techniques, how to develop courage in their children; they must learn to avoid discouragement and humiliation. Those who have a glimpse of the conflicts of children must show them to others that they may learn to see. Those who see must discover proper ways for helping children out of the misery of their frightened existence, which so often is considered a paradise by adults who have forgotten their own childhood experiences. How far from developing freedom from fear are educators who deliberately use fear as an educational method; who are convinced that only fear of punishment, fear of humiliation, fear of the consequences can prevent children from misbehaving. They do not realize that the only power to make children act in the right way is a genuine desire to be nice and good, to take part in social life, and to be useful members. Only discouragement interferes with these instinctive tendencies of human society. Every educator must recog-

nize these, must know how to direct the children toward voluntary cooperation. Otherwise he wears only the title of an educator without being one.

Freedom from Fear is no Utopia, no more than are the other Freedoms. It is not yet established, but ways and means seem to evolve clearly which move us and mankind toward these goals.

Let us think earnestly and sincerely what implications these Four Freedoms have for each one of us and our work. The politicians and economists, the sociologists and technicians, they all will perceive different implications. The educators will recognize that these Four Freedoms are not merely a political postulate. They, as much as any other group, and perhaps a little bit more, have the responsibility for the task which is given to us. The soldiers fight for it on the battlefield, and the workers in the factories. The educators have for their adversary old and faulty traditions, and erroneous conceptions which govern the lives of our growing generations. They must instil in the children the love and the desire to participate in the fight for Freedom, and prepare them to live in Freedom.