

THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION AND INSTRUCTION From Letters and Diaries

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I.

The religious conception of life is the foundation of every human life. Man's whole life is arranged on the basis of religion, and all his activity is directed upon it, and so it is clear that education, that is, the preparation of men for life and activity, ought to be based on religion.

But with us, in our so-called civilized world, religion is not only not acknowledged as important and necessary among other subjects, but is also regarded as one of the last, most unnecessary subjects, which, as a survival of antiquity (in which no one believes seriously), for the sake of decency, is somehow taught in the schools. Naturally education under such conditions cannot be rational, but is perverse, and, speaking of education, we have to begin from the beginning.

At the base of everything ought to be religious teaching, such as would agree with the degree of men's enlightenment, without any distinction of nationalities and conditions.

As such religious teaching obviously can serve neither Catholicism, nor Orthodoxy, nor Protestantism, nor Mohammedanism, nor Judaism, nor Buddhism, which are all based on faith in certain prophets, but only a teaching which is justified by reason, by the sincere striving and experience of every man. And such a teaching is the Christian teaching in its simplest and most rational expression.

The religious basis of life consists in this, that our life has no other meaning than the fulfilment of the will of that infinite Principle, of which we recognize ourselves to be a part ; but the will of this principle is the union of everything living, which for men expresses itself first of all in their brotherhood among themselves, in their ministrations to one another.

But the union and the ministrations to one another form the meaning and work of life, because such is the will of that Principle which rules and guides the world and forms the basis of our existence.

The whole activity of education ought not only to be based on this foundation, but also to be guided by it: everything which in education contributes to the union of all the beings, the brotherhood of men, ought to be encouraged ; but everything which disunites them ought, on the contrary, to be removed. Everything which contributes to this end more freely ought to be put first, and

everything which contributes to it less freely ought to come later.

Now what is education, and in what does it consist ?

To answer this question precisely, it is necessary from a certain side to determine the properties of human activity in general.

The property of every human activity is such that, — the psychiaters know this well, — if a man is in the condition of hypnosis or idiocy, that is, if he has no internal motives for his activity, he submits to the first suggestion which acts upon him, for the most part in the form of imitating what he sees, or repeating what he has done: he is told to walk, and he will walk and will continue to move his legs against the wall, as though he were walking. A spoon is carried up to his mouth, and he will keep carrying a spoon to his mouth, until he is stopped.

Thus act hypnotized persons or idiots ; but also all sensible people have this property of submitting to the suggestion of another man or to their own. Repeat some word and be thinking of something else or have your attention diverted, and you will unconsciously be repeating the same word. The same is true of acts. This property, which presents itself as so pitiable in the idiot, is a very important and indispensable property in men.

If a man were to think of every act of his, he would not be able to abandon himself to the trend of his thoughts and to solve questions of science and of life. This ability to submit to another man's suggestion or to his own gives him the ability to think.

Every one of us does but a small part of his acts consciously, and acts according to his own suggestion or according to a suggestion from another person. The stronger a man is, the less he submits to a foreign suggestion and the more he follows his own, and vice versa. And so, in addition to a man's greater or lesser inborn spiritual strength, the older he is, the less he submits to foreign influences, and the younger he is, the more sensitive he is to foreign suggestions.

On this property of men education is based.

This ability to receive suggestions turns the children over into the full power of their elders, and so it is clear of what importance it is for the children to be subjected, not to false and bad, but to true and good, suggestions.

Everything of which the education of the children is composed, — from prayers, fables, mathematics, dances, to the valuation of other people's acts and of their own, recognizing some as good and others as bad, — all that is transmitted by means of suggestion.

Conscious suggestion is what is called culture ; unconscious suggestion is what, in the narrower sense, is called education, which I will call enlightenment, in contradistinction from the general conception of education, which includes both influences.

All efforts are in our society directed upon culture, but enlightenment is, in consequence of the fact that our life is bad, that is, unenlightened, necessarily neglected.

Educators either – what is most common – conceal their lives and the lives of adults in general from the children, by putting them under exceptional conditions (military schools, institutes, and so forth), or transfer what ought to take place unconsciously into the sphere of the conscious, – they prescribe religious moral precepts, with which it is necessary to add : " Fais ce que je dis, mais ne fais pas ce que je fais." From this results the phenomenon that culture has in our society advanced immeasurably far, while true enlightenment has not only receded, but is even entirely lacking. If at all, it may be found in poor labourers' families, when the members of these families are not subject to the vices that are peculiar to poverty. But of the two different influences upon children, the unconscious and the conscious, the first, that is, the unconscious, moral enlightenment, is incomparably more important both for separate individuals and for society.

The family of a stockholder, landowner, official, even an artist, or writer, living a bourgeois life, without drinking, without dissipation, without quarrelling, without offending people, and considering itself to be moral, wishes to give its children a moral education, but, in spite of its sincere wish and endeavour, such an education will never be successful. It will not be, because the immorality of the life led by this family, by not using in a brotherly way the extorted labours of other men, an immorality which is not perceptible to the adults, who are used to it, offends the pure children and corrupts their ideas of what is good. The children will hear rules about morality, about respecting men, but unconsciously they will not only imitate, but also make their own the rule that one set of men are called to get their boots and clothes dirty, and another – to clean them, some – to prepare food, and others – to eat it, and so forth. To inculcate upon children who live in such surroundings a true idea of morality is as impossible as to educate to temperance a child that sees everybody around him drinking and is himself given wine to drink.

The child feels the sequence and intrinsic weight of virtue and sees clearly – what his elders no longer see – that the brotherhood of men is the foundation of all virtue. But if this brotherhood is violated, when for money, which the others have not, they tear his nurse and chambermaid away from their families, making them serve him, a stranger's child, he dimly, but incontestably, decides that all the other virtues are not needed, and no longer believes in anything.

No religious or moral sermons will free the children of people, who live on money taken away from others and cause others to serve them, from the unconscious immoral suggestion, which remains with them all their lives, corrupting all their judgments concerning the phenomena of life.

Thus, in order that the most important, the unconscious suggestion, that is education, may be good and moral, it is necessary – it sounds strange to say so – that the life of the educators should be good. And it is not to be good, incidentally good, in certain details, but its foundations are to be good. The most unblemished life of murderers living on the fruits of their murders cannot produce any moral influence upon the children who are educated in their midst.

But you will ask : " What shall we call a good life ?" There are infinite degrees of goodness, but there is one common and chief feature of a good life, – it is the striving after perfection in love. If this exists in the educators, and the children are infected by it, education will not be bad.

For the education of children to be successful, the educators must continue to educate themselves and aid one another more and more to realize that toward which they are striving. There may be very many means for that, besides the chief internal means, – the labour of every man over his own soul. These means have to be found, worked out, applied, discussed. I believe that the criticism which is employed by the perfectionists is good.

. . . It is good, I think, to try to find most unfortunate men, who are physically and morally repulsive, and to try and serve them. It is good, I think, to try to cultivate the acquaintance of our enemies who hate us. I write this at haphazard, au courant de la plume ; but I think that this is a whole, most important sphere of science which is entirely neglected in our time and which is necessary for education. If we only recognized the importance of this side of education, we would work it out. (These are hints for one side of the work of education.)

So this is in general outlines what I think about education. And these are not general reflections, which remain nothing but reflections. If we recognize the justice of this, we shall certainly try with united forces to work out the practical methods of this constant perfecting of the educators, which is so necessary for the cause of education.

These methods exist, and we need only bring them together ; but, in addition to this, if we shall only agree to it that this is a most important science, we shall be able to find the means for establishing and developing it.

So much about education.

Now about culture.

This is what I think of culture : culture, or science in general, learning, is nothing but the transmission of what the wisest and best men have thought and expressed in the various branches of knowledge. Now wise and good men have always thought and expressed their thoughts in three different directions :

(1) In the philosophico-religious direction, – about the meaning of life in general and our own life (religion and philosophy).

(2) In the experimental direction, by drawing conclusions under given conditions (the natural sciences, mechanics, physics, chemistry, physiology).

(3) In the logical direction, by drawing conclusions from the propositions of our thought (mathematics and the mathematical sciences).

All these three kinds of science satisfy the criterion of the brotherhood of men, – they are all cosmopolitan and accessible for all men, and they are all real sciences, – such as you cannot pretend in, such as do not admit of half-knowledge, – you either know, or you do not know.

But all the sciences which do not answer these demands, such as the theological, juridical, and special historical sciences, are harmful and should be excluded.

Not only are there three branches of sciences, – there are also three methods for their transmission.

The first method, the most customary, is that of transmitting by word of mouth, in various languages, and so there appears a new science, – the languages, – again in correspondence with the criterion of the brotherhood of men. (Maybe there would also be a need of teaching Esperanto, if time permitted and the pupils so wished.)

The second method is that of plastic art, drawing, modelling, – the science of how by means of sight to transmit to another what you know.

The third method is music, singing, – the science of transmitting your mood, your sentiment.

Besides these six branches of instruction there ought to be also introduced a seventh, – the instruction of handicraft, which again answers the criterion of brotherhood, that is, such as all need, – carpentry, cabinet work, sewing.

Thus the instruction divides into seven subjects. What amount of time is to be used for each of these, in addition to the obligatory labour for one's work upon oneself, will be determined by the inclination of every individual pupil.

This is the way I think of it : the instructors arrange the hours for their own convenience, but the pupils are free to come or not.

However strange this may seem to us, who have so distorted education, full liberty of study, that is, the permission given to the pupil to come to study when he wishes, is a *conditio sine qua*

non of every fruitful instruction, just as it is a conditio sine qua non of nutrition that he who feeds should feel like eating. The only difference is this, that in material matters the harmfulness of a departure from freedom will show itself at once,— there will at once be vomiting or disorder of the stomach, — while in spiritual matters the harmful consequences will not appear so soon, maybe only in years.

Only with complete freedom can the best pupils be brought to the limits which they can reach, and not be kept back for the sake of the weak pupils, and it is these best pupils that are needed most. Only with freedom can we avoid the usual phenomenon,— the dislike for subjects which in their proper time and with freedom of instruction would be liked ; only under freedom is it possible to determine for what specialty a pupil has an inclination ; it is only freedom that does not impair the educative influence. Or else I shall be telling the pupil that violence must not be used in life, and shall be exerting most grievous mental violence against him. I know that this is difficult ; but what is to be done when you come to understand that every departure from freedom is pernicious for the cause of education itself ?

But then, it is not so hard, if you fully make up your mind not to do anything foolish. I think it ought to be like this : A gives from two to three o'clock a lesson in mathematics, that is, teaches what the pupil wants to know in this field. B — from three to five o'clock, drawing, and so forth. You will say: " And the youngest ? " The youngest, if things are run correctly, always themselves ask for and love accuracy, that is, submit to the hypnosis of imitation : there was a lesson yesterday after dinner, and so he wants a lesson to-day after dinner.

In general, the distribution of time and subjects presents itself to me like this: There are in all sixteen hours of waking. Half of these, with pauses for rest and play (the younger, the longer), I propose for education, in the narrower sense of enlightenment, that is, for work for themselves, their families, and others: cleaning up, carrying, cooking, chopping, etc.

The other half I give to study. I leave the pupil to choose among seven subjects what attracts him. All this, you see, is written at haphazard. God demanding, I will work all this out.

I want to add that I should not advise starting anything new, such as going to another place, or some theoretical predetermination what the school should be ; nor should I advise inviting teachers or pupils, but I should advise making use of present conditions, developing the rest, or, rather, letting the rest develop itself.

I will add also something about drawing and music.

Piano instruction is a flagrant example of falsely put education. As in drawing, so in music, the children should be taught, by always making use of the most accessible means (in drawing, by means of chalk, crayon, pencil ; in music, by means of their throats, to be able to render what they see and hear). This is a beginning.

If afterward – which is a pity – exceptional pupils should develop especial gifts, they may learn to paint with oil-colours and to play on expensive instruments.

I know that there are good, new manuals for teaching this elementary science of drawing and music.

As for the study of languages – the more the better – I think, French and German ought to be taught by all means, and English and Esperanto, if possible. They should be taught by giving them to read a book they know in Russian, trying to make them understand the general sense, here and there paying attention to the most important words, the roots of words, and grammatical forms.

1901.

IL I have thought a great deal about education. There are questions as to which one arrives at doubtful conclusions, and others as to which the conclusions arrived at are final, and we feel ourselves incapable of either changing them or adding anything to them. They are the following.

Education presents itself as a complex and difficult matter, only so long as we wish, without educating ourselves, to educate our children or any one else. But if we come to understand that we can educate others only through ourselves the question of education is made void, and only the question of life is left, " How must I live myself ? " because I do not know a single act in the education of children, which is not included in the education of oneself. How shall we dress, feed, put to bed, and teach children ? Just as we do ourselves. If the father and mother dress, eat, sleep with moderation, and work, and study, the children will do the same.

I would give two rules for education : not only live well yourself, but work over yourself, perfecting yourself all the time, and conceal nothing about your life from your children. It is better for the children to know of the weak sides of their parents than that they should feel that their parents have a life which is concealed from them, and another for show. All the difficulties of education arise from this, that the parents, far from mending their faults, or even recognizing them as faults, justify them in themselves and do not want to see these faults in their children. In this does the whole difficulty and the whole struggle with the children consist. Children are morally much more acute than adults, and they – frequently without saying so or even being conscious of it – see not only the faults of their parents, but even the worst of all faults, their hypocrisy, and so lose respect for them and interest in all their instructions.

The parents' hypocrisy in the education of their children is a most customary phenomenon, and children are sensitive and immediately notice it, and turn away and become corrupt. Truth is the first, most important condition of the actuality of spiritual influence, and so it is a first condition of education. That it may not be

terrible to show the children the whole truth of the parents' life, it is necessary for the parents to make their life good, or, at least, less bad. And so the education of others is included in the education of oneself, and nothing else is needed.

Education is the exertion of influence upon the heart of those whom we educate. But we can exert an influence upon the heart only by means of hypnotization, to which children are so subject, – by the infectiousness of the example. The child sees that I am irritated and insult people, that I make others do what I can do myself, that I pamper my greed, my lusts, that I avoid work for others and seek only for pleasures, that I am proud and vain of my position, that I speak ill of others, that I do not say the same thing of a man behind his back that I say to his face, that I pretend to believe in what I do not believe in, and thousands and thousands of such acts, or the opposite acts, such as spring from meekness, humility, industry, self-sacrifice, abstinence, truthfulness, – and he is infected by either a hundred times more powerfully than by the most eloquent and sensible of instructions. And so all or nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of education reduces itself to the example, the correction and perfection of our life.

So that, what we began with within ourselves, when we dreamed of an ideal, that is, of the good, the attainment of which is possible only within ourselves, is what we are brought to now in the external education of children. What we wished for ourselves, without knowing well why we wanted it, is now indispensably needed by us, in order that we may not corrupt our children.

Of education we generally demand too much and too little. It is impossible to demand that the pupils to be educated should learn this or that, should become cultured, – as we understand culture, – and it is equally impossible for them to become moral, as we understand the word. But it is quite possible for us not to be participants in the corruption of the children (and in this a husband cannot interfere with his wife, nor a wife with her husband), but with our whole life and to the best of our ability to act upon them, infecting them with the example of goodness.

I think that it is not only difficult, but even impossible, to educate children well, if we are ourselves bad, and that the education of children is only self-perfection, which is not aided by anything so much as by children. How ridiculous are the demands of people who smoke, drink, eat immoderately, do not work, and turn night into day, that the doctor should make them well, in spite of their unhealthy mode of life! Just as ridiculous are the demands of people that they be taught how, continuing to lead an immoral life, they may be able to give their children a moral education. All education consists in a greater and ever greater consciousness of our own errors and in our mending them. This anybody can do under all possible conditions of life. This is the most powerful tool given to man for the purpose of acting upon other men, among them upon his children, who are always involuntarily nearest of all to him. *Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra* refers most of all to

education.

I spoke yesterday about education. Why do parents send their children away from home to a gymnasium ?
It suddenly became clear to me.

If the parents kept them at home, they would see the consequences of their immoral lives in their children. They would see themselves in their children as in a mirror.

The father drinks wine at dinner with his friends, and his son is in a saloon. The father is at a ball, and his son is at an evening entertainment. The father does nothing, and so the son does nothing, But send him to the gymnasium, and the mirror in which the parents see themselves is veiled.

Living a corrupt, inabstemious, idle life, disrespectful of other people, the parents always demand of their children abstinence, activity, respect for people. But the language of life, of the example, is heard and seen from afar, and is clear to the old and the young, to our own and to strangers.

The thing is that, whether for the external success of the matter a loving (and not a violent) treatment of the pupils is advantageous or not, you cannot treat them differently. The one thing which may be said for certain is, that the good awakens the good in the hearts of men and certainly produces this action, even though it is not visible.

One such drama, that you will go away from your pupils, that you will weep (if they find it out), will leave in the hearts of the pupils greater, more important traces than hundreds of lessons.

Terrible is the corruption of the mind to which, for personal purposes, the authorities subject the children during their education. The reign of conscious materialism is explained only by this. Such nonsense is impressed upon a child, that afterward the materialistic, limited, false comprehension, which is not carried to its conclusions, of those who arraign the incorrectness of the comprehension presents itself as a vast acquisition of reason.

Every man lives only for the purpose of manifesting his individuality.

Education (the education of the present) wipes it out.

They were talking to-day about a boy with vicious inclinations, who was driven out of school, and that it would be well to send him to a school of correction.

It is precisely the same that is done by a man who lives a bad, unwholesome life, and who, when he is overtaken by disease, turns to the doctor to be cured by him and does not even consider that his disease is a beneficent indicator for him that his whole life is bad and that it ought to be changed.

The same is true of the diseases of our society. Every sick member of this society reminds us of the fact that the whole life of society is irregular and that it ought to be changed, but we imagine that for every such a sick member there is and ought to be an institution which would free us from this member or which would even correct him.

Nothing hinders so much the forward movement of humanity as this false conviction. The sicker society is, the more there are institutions for the cure of symptoms, and the less care is there for the change of the whole life.

It is terrible to look at what the rich people do with their children.

When one of them is young and foolish and impassioned, he is drawn into a life which is lived upon the backs of other people, is taught this life, and then, when he is tied hand and foot by temptations, – when he cannot live otherwise than demanding for himself the work of others, – his eyes are opened (the eyes open themselves), and – get out the best way you can : either become a martyr, renouncing everything you are used to and cannot live without, or be a liar.

Children are good for this reason also, that they have no business and are only concerned about passing the day well. It is thus that they ought to be educated ; but we hasten to teach them business, that is, instead of the eternal work before God and their conscience, to do the work which is established by certain people by agreement as play.

If I had to choose, – to people the earth with such saints as I am at all able to imagine, but with no children, or with such people as we have nowadays, but with constantly new accretions of children fresh from God, – I would choose the latter.

One needs but busy oneself with education in order to see one's shortcomings. If you see them, you begin to mend them. And mending oneself is the best means for educating one's own and other people's children and grown people.

I have just read N-----'s letter in which he says that medical help does not present itself to him as something good, that the continuation of many useless lives for many hundreds of years is much less important than the feeblest blowing upon the spark of divine love in the heart of another. In this blowing lies the whole art of education. But to fan it in others, we must first fan it in ourselves.

The teacher complained that A----- is a poor pupil, because he cannot explain in words and write out an arithmetical problem. I said that the demand for an explanation is a demand for a senseless memorizing, –

the boy has comprehended, but is not yet able to find words. He agreed with me, and said: " Yes, we teachers are obliged to make the pupils learn by heart the very form. For example, we teach that every discussion of a problem must begin with the word if y If I were told that this is the way they taught in Japan one thousand years ago, I should have hardly believed it ; but this is done among us by the fresh fruits of the university.

The word is one of the most natural, most widely diffused, and easiest ways for the transmission of thought. Unfortunately it is also the most deceptive, and so in education, where deception is most dangerous and the deception is always very easily discovered by the children, the most effective and best means, which excludes the possibility of deception, often involuntary deception, has always been and always will be the personal example of the educator's life. . . . The person's example and life includes also the word. The example teaches how to live and speak. But the word does not include the example.

To educate well, we must live well before those whom we educate. And so we must be as pure and truthful as possible also in relation to the question of sexual intercourse : if we consider sexual intercourse a sin and live chastely, it is possible for us and necessary to preach chastity to the children ; if we strive after chastity, without attaining it, we should tell the children so. But if we live unchastely and cannot and will not live otherwise, we shall involuntarily conceal this from the children and shall not tell them so. Even so people do.

The children say : " The parents say that their children torment them ; if they only knew how the parents torment their children : coquetry, and quarrels, and meanness, and inequality of love, and injustice, and all the vices of those who in the opinion of the children ought to be faultless." I have constantly occasion to interpret upwards now this, now that, utterance of the Gospel. Thus I just now esteem more especially the hint as to the sanctity of the children and as to our terrible sin of offending them, when, without noticing it, we make concessions, compromise with our soul, and do not repent, but even justify ourselves.

If we should make it our problem to mix up a man, so that he might not be able with his common sense to get away from the two opposite world-conceptions inculcated upon him since childhood, nothing more powerful could be invented than what is done to every young man who is educated in our so-called Christian society. On one side he is taught to weigh and verify everything critically, to take nothing on faith, and is shown how the superstitions of antiquity slowly melt before the light of science, how everything which a man knows must be based on reason, and side by side with that he is offered a faith which not only has no explanations whatever, but even offers an explanation the foundation of which, like the dogma of the Trinity and others, directly contradicts reason.

Public education, such as it is with us, is directly and very

artfully organized for the moral corruption of the children. And so I think it right to make all possible sacrifices so as not to subject the children to this corrupting influence. But with the present arrangement of the schools there is even no need of making great sacrifices, since the instruction in the schools is so bad that cultured parents can give more information in much shorter time. All this I say in cases where the parents are at one.

Our life, to be full, must by all means have two sides : the fulfilment of life itself for our own sake, and the influence upon people, – for the change of their false life, – the sermon.

You have both sides. I say and think, and people think of me, that I have an influence upon people by means of my preaching : they print and read me in all languages. But you have children who will take your whole soul into their hearts, will acquire all the thoughts of the best quality, and will for ever carry them into the world, transmitting them to others.

My activity is a loud one, and, therefore, external and doubtful, but yours – upon your children – is quiet, invisible, underground, but irrepressible, eternal, unquestionable, and invaluable. Only look upon them religiously ; remember that they are living divine looms, out of which you cannot chop with an axe what you have put into them. God has deprived me of this activity.

. . . The majority of men, not only removed from you, but even near to you in convictions, will not understand your life, will even condemn it ; but the children who have grown up with you, if only they always move in an atmosphere of love, will understand you, and in them you will get your reward. Only give them as much liberty and enlightenment as possible, of course, not gymnasium, but Christian enlightenment. I do not know how to do all that, because I have not experienced it myself, but I see the importance and significance of the whole matter. I see that it is more important to send into the world one live man than hundreds of books.

Education, the transmission of knowledge, is real when it transmits the important, necessary contents (moral instruction) in a clear, rational, comprehensible form (science), and so that it charms, infects, attracts by its sincerity him to whom it is transmitted (art).

But with us the moral religious instruction is transmitted without clearness and without sincerity, – our religious instruction ; science without moral contents is again given separately ; and art, – nothing but attractiveness, – again separately.

I cannot rejoice in the birth of children of the wealthy classes, – they breed drones.

Every child of the well-to-do classes is by his very education put in the position of a rascal who by means of a dishonourable life is to provide himself with at least five hundred roubles per year.

At first I thought that the ability to learn was a sign of dulness, a paradox, but I really did not believe it, because I myself did not study well ; but now I am convinced that it is the truth and that it cannot be otherwise. In order to receive other people's ideas one must not have any of one's own.

Somnambulists learn best of all.

It has for a long time been my opinion that, as it is not only useless, but even harmful, to fill the stomach which does not demand any food, so it is useless and always harmful to transmit knowledge by force, and not for the purpose of satisfying the demands of the learner.

This opinion long ago became an undoubted truth to me, and I am glad to find this fundamental truth in Schultz's teaching.

It is impossible to imagine anything more terrible than those crimes which are committed in these dens (the military institutions of learning). Here, in these places, are not only confirmed all these horrors, tortures, murders, robberies, which are committed in the world, but directly, in the most impudent manner and systematically, the souls of all adolescent young men are ruined.

Is female education good ? Yes. Are the university lectures good ? No. Why ? Because, like any school, they put men in a condition which is most susceptible of hypnosis. The true, not injurious education every man acquires by himself, that is, not by himself, but with the aid of God.

There are three pedagogical branches, because there are three kinds of reasoning: (1) the logical, (2) the experimental, (3) the artistic. The sciences, study, are nothing but the acquisition of what wise men thought before us.

Wise men have always thought in these three ways : they either made logical deductions from the propositions of thought ; or they observed, and, segregating the phenomenon under observation from all the rest, made their deductions as to the causes and results of the phenomena ; or they described what they saw, knew, and imagined. More briefly: (1) they thought, (2) observed, and (3) expressed. And so there are three kinds of sciences: (1) the mathematical, (2) the experimental, and (3) the languages.

III.

. . . When I received your letter, I immediately decided that I would try in the best way possible to answer your first question, which is of prime importance and which has interested me without cessation ; but various causes have so far kept me back, and I am only now able to satisfy your wish and mine.

From the time – beginning twenty years ago – that I came to see clearly how humanity must and should live happily, and how senselessly, tormenting itself, it ruins generation after

generation, I kept removing farther and farther the radical cause of this madness and this ruin : at first I found this cause in the false economic structure, then in governmental violence, which maintains this order ; but now I have come to the conclusion that the fundamental cause of everything is to be found in the false religious doctrine, which is inculcated by means of education.

We have become so used to the religious lie which surrounds us that we do not observe all the horror, stupidity, and cruelty with which the ecclesiastic doctrine is filled. We need only understand clearly what we are doing when we teach our children the so-called law of (rod, to become frightened at the terrible crime which is committed by such instruction. A pure, innocent, still undeceived and still not deceiving boy comes to us, men of years, who possess or may possess all the knowledge which in our time is accessible to humanity, and asks for those principles by which a man is to be guided in this life. What do we tell him ? Frequently we do not even answer, but only put aside his question, so that he may have a prepared inspired answer, when the question shall arise. We answer his questions with a gross, incoherent, often stupid, and, above all, cruel Jewish legend, which we give him in the original or, still worse, in our own words. We tell him, impressing it upon him as a sacred truth, what we know could not have happened and what has no meaning for us, namely, that six thousand years ago a strange, wild being, whom we call God, took it into His head to create the world, and actually created it and also man ; that man sinned, the evil God punished him and all of us for this, then redeemed us from Himself by the death of His son, and that our chief business consists in propitiating this God and freeing ourselves from those sufferings to which He has doomed us. It seems to us that that is all right and is even useful for the child, and we listen in delight as he repeats all these horrors, without considering that terrible transformation, which is unnoticeable to us because it is spiritual and which is taking place in the child's soul. We think that the child's soul is a tabula rasa, on which anything we please may be written. But that is not so : the child has a dim conception of what is the beginning of everything, that cause of his existence, that force, in whose power he is, and he has the same high, indefinite, and inexpressible conception, cognized by his whole being, of the beginning, which is proper for all rational men. Suddenly he is told instead that this beginning is nothing but some personal, conceited, terribly evil being, – the Jewish God. The child has a dim and correct idea of the purpose of this life, which he sees in happiness, attainable in a communion of love. Instead of this he is told that the general purpose of life is the will of the conceited God, and that the personal aim of every man is liberation from eternal punishments and torments, deserved by somebody, which God has imposed upon all men. Every child has also the consciousness of the fact that man's obligations are very complex and lie in the moral sphere. Instead of this he is told that his obligations lie chiefly in blind faith, in prayers, – in the enunciation of certain words at a certain time, in the swallowing of a sop of wine and bread, which is supposed to represent God's blood and body, to say nothing of the images, miracles, immoral Bible stories, which are

represented as model acts, or of the Gospel miracles and the whole immoral significance which is ascribed to the Gospel history. It is as though some one should form a complete doctrine out of the cycle of Russian bylinas, with Dobrynya, Dyuk, and others, with the addition to them of Eruslan Lazarevich, and should give this to his children as rational history. It seems to us that this is not important, and yet this instruction in the so-called law of God, which with us is given to our children, is the most terrible crime which can be imagined.

Torture, murder, violence committed upon the children would be nothing in comparison with this crime.

The government, the rulers, the ruling classes, need this deception ; with it their power is inseparably connected, and so the ruling classes always want this deception to be practised upon the children and maintained over the adults by means of an increased hypnotization ; but the people who do not wish for the maintenance of the false social order, but, on the contrary, for its change, and who, above all else, wish for the good of those children with whom they enter into communion, must with all their strength try to save their children from this terrible deception. And so a complete indifference of the children to religious questions and the rejection of all religious forms is still incomparably better than the Judæo-ecclesiastic instruction, even though in the most perfected forms. It seems to me that for every man who has come to understand the whole significance of the transmission of the false doctrine as sacred history there cannot even be any question as to what he should do, though he may not have any positive religious convictions to transmit to his child. If I know that a deception is a deception, I can under no condition tell the child, who asks me naïvely and confidently, that what I know as a deception is sacred history. It would be better if I could answer truthfully all those questions which the church answers in such a lying way ; but if I am not able to do so, I must still abstain from giving out a certain lie as the truth, being confident that nothing but good can come from my sticking to the truth. Besides, it is not true that a man has nothing to tell his child but the positive religious truth which he professes. Every sincere man knows that

•rood, in the name of which he lives. Let him tell that to his child, or life will show it to him, and he will do well and will certainly not do the child any harm. I wrote a little book, called *The Christian Teaching*, in which I wanted to say in the simplest and clearest form what I believe. If I had just now to give to a child the essence of the religious teaching which I consider the truth, I should tell him that we came into this world and live in it, not by our will, but by the will of that which we call God, and that, therefore, we shall fare well only when we shall do this will. But this will consists in this, that we all should be happy. For all of us to be happy there exists but one means : every one of us must act toward others as he would have others act toward him. In reply to the questions as to how the world originated and what awaits us after death, I should answer the first with a confession of my ignorance and the incorrectness of the question (in the whole Buddhist world this question does not exist) ; the second I should

answer with the assumption that the will of Him who called us into this world for our good leads us somewhere through death, no doubt for the same purpose.

December 13, 1809.