



Book Review on Comenius's School of Infancy

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Abstract

The author of the book *School of Infancy* is John Amos Comenius, a distinguished Czech educator. As for the purpose of the book, Comenius points out in his another book *The Great Didactic*: “As educators, we should write a handbook for parents and put their responsibilities in white and black, and put them in front of them. This handbook should give a brief description of the various subjects that children should learn, and should point out the most appropriate time to teach each subject, and instill the best words and gestures that they should use. The name of this book is the *School of Infancy*”. In the book *The School of Infancy*, Comenius discusses the value of preschool education, the responsibilities of parents, and the transition from preschool to school education, which is not the usual sense of school, but it means to educate by the mother's side. The book also has a special illustrative subtitle: on the careful education of children under 6 years old. This shows that this is a monograph on children's family education. There are ten chapters in the book. Comenius emphasizes the nature of children in the first four chapters, and chapter five to nine focus on children's physical education, intellectual education, and moral education. The following chapters also discuss how parents should help their children prepare for school. In this book, Comenius proposes that through encyclopedia-like enlightenment education for children, the most preliminary foundation of various aspects of knowledge can be laid for children.

Subject Areas

Philosophy, Education

Keywords

Boom Review, Comenius, Preschool, Education

Introduction

Comenius emphasizes the nature of children in the first four chapters of this

book and proposes that children are the most precious gift of God, a treasure that cannot be compared with anything else. Therefore, great care must be taken. “Although there is a certain religious color in the literal sense, it is essentially a kind of refutation to the feudal religious consciousness. Because the dominant ideological concept in Western Europe during the middle ages is the doctrine of Christianity, in the sense of life is the so-called life is guilty of sin that is take the baby with the” original sin into the world, life must continue atonement, children, of course, also become the lamb of sin. A variety of physical and mental torture is continuously added to them. But Comenius says the opposite: “The child is a creature created by a committee of the three bodies of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and by God’s own hands [1].” He also proposes that children should be more beautiful and valuable to their parents than gold and silver and pearls and precious stones, which are unspiritual things. It is only dust trodden on by human feet, only dust a little more refined and refined, and the child is the living image. Comenius also goes on to repeatedly illustrate the idea that children are priceless, both for parents and for the state, with numerous examples. For parents, he holds, the child is born out of our substance itself, a part of our substance, born as a seed of purity, and preserved in virtue of modesty, goodness, harmony, and affability. On the other hand, for a nation, children are bound to grow up and become future learned scholars, philosophers, and scientists, as well as national leaders. So children are the future of the country. From this point of view, Comenius demanded that parents should double their love for children and that the state should pay more attention to the growth of children. Comenius’ views on the importance of early childhood education were put forward under the specific historical times and social conditions in which he lived. When Europe is in a critical period of feudalism and capitalism alternately, as a member and leader of the protestant denominations of feudalism, Comenius constantly exposed and criticized feudal decadent and dark, to condemn the feudal nobles and the church’s all sorts of crimes, his pursuit of the cause of the feudal moral from the hearts of the corrupt, so hope that through education, development of new human nature to treat the survival of society, the country, and the church to get improved. And this kind of education should start from early childhood. Comenius, this consideration has its reasonable factors, namely, standing on the position of the rising bourgeoisie, sought to secular culture and harmonious development of education instead of medieval theological education, with attentive right infant family education to replace the feudal autocratic aristocratic family education, to the bourgeois culture there is knowledge, have the ability.

Comenius attaches great importance to the physical education of children. In the fifth chapter of this book, he specifically discusses “how to develop children’s health and strength”. He believed that it was possible to educate children only if they were alive and healthy. Therefore, he earnestly asked that every mother should be concerned about the protection of the health of their children. Com-

Comenius believes that the protection of children's health should start before the baby is born. First of all, since the day of pregnancy, in order to make her baby born into the world in a healthy way, a woman should take care of herself, pay attention to maintain physical and mental health, and do not make the baby suffer any damage. Comenius has put forward many specific and useful suggestions and advice on the health of pregnant women and fetuses. Such as pregnant women in moderation, do not eat much, do not drink, to avoid collisions and falls, do not do untimely fasting because these things will harm their own body and strength and are not conducive to the growth of the fetus. In addition, pregnant women should strictly control their emotions and avoid panic, distress, and anxiety. Because if not prevented, not only can these effects affect the emotional temperament of the newborn, but sudden fear and overstimulation can lead to miscarriage or the birth of a weak baby. To this end, he asked pregnant women to maintain a calm and happy mood and to do some housework and moderate activities, advised them not to sleep too much, too lazy, this is good for the body and mind. Reasonable feeding is the main problem after the baby is born. Comenius demanded that mothers should breastfeed their children and not take them away from them; He denounced as a deeply ingrained and harmful custom the preference of aristocratic women of the day to nurse a dog rather than carry a baby and to preserve their beauty, their physique, and their ease of life, rather than look after their own children. We cannot remain silent and let it spread. Baby weaning after the diet to rich nutrition, weight to moderate, also not eat and drink too hot and thick spicy things. In addition, Comenius specifically warned parents not to give their children random drugs, as this is tantamount to giving them poison. He also emphasized that children should eat natural foods, soft foods that are easy to digest. These are very insightful, nutritionally, medically scientific views.

Comenius also emphasizes the importance of developing children's intelligence, which is stated extensively and in many aspects in Chapter 6 to Chapter 8 of this book. After the book *The Great Didactic*, Comenius in the book *School of Infancy* praises human wisdom again, and thinks that wisdom is more valuable than jewels [2]. In her right hand holds eternity and happiness, and in her left holds wealth and honor, her path is a good path, and her path is a safe one, but it must be obtained by diligence, effort, and study. Therefore, he thinks it is wise for parents not only to make their children live a healthy life, but also to make every effort to fill their minds with wisdom so that they can become truly happy people. He also rightly points out that adults should not assume that children can develop their intelligence by acquiring knowledge on their own without much effort, but that parents should do their best to inspire young children to develop habits of study and to give them an initial intellectual education. This is the responsibility of parents. About the content of children's preliminary intellectual education, Comenius stipulates that it is divided into three aspects: to help children accumulate the initial concept of the external world (nature, hu-

man society, and family life) through the senses. Develop language skills; Practice the initial skills of your hands. Through these three aspects of education and training, so that children get the bud of many aspects of knowledge. To this end, Comenius in this book detailed enumeration of children “encyclopedic” enlightenment education learning subjects. Ask children in physics, astronomy, geography, optics, chronology, rhetoric, mathematics and economics, and other aspects, year by year to understand, master some preliminary concepts. Although he used many big words of scientific departments here, in terms of its specific content requirements, what he wants children to learn is only the most common, the most popular and the initial shallow content in these disciplines, such as learning physics, just teach children some about water, fire, rain and snow, flowers and trees, common animals and other small knowledge. In optics, these include knowing what is light and dark, and being able to distinguish between several common colors. Geography means knowing cradles, houses, courtyards, the city or country where one lives, knowing mountains, rivers, forests, fields, roads, etc. Chronology is a preliminary understanding of spring, summer, autumn and winter, year, month, day, week, tomorrow, yesterday and other seasons, the concept of time. The economics category is concerned with family names, the names of furniture and cutlery, and the household management that is visible in a young child’s daily life. In addition, since Comenius was deeply religious, he also required children to learn to sing catechisms and hymns. It is understandable that religious education was included in the curriculum of children’s education for its historical and social reasons in Europe at that time.

Comenius specifically discussed how to help children prepare for school and put forward many helpful suggestions. He believes that young children need more care from their mothers. Under the protection of their mothers, they naturally seem to use games to learn. When a child reaches the age of five or six, his bones and brain development are gradually completed. In this regard, Comenius advocates that children after the age of six should go to school to continue learning what they have started. Because at this stage, children can easily learn what needs to be learned at home. If the children are not sent to real schools immediately, then they will undoubtedly become accustomed to useless leisure and even develop shortcomings similar to crudeness, and once such shortcomings are developed, it is difficult to eradicate them in the future. At the same time, Comenius also pointed out that enrollment at the age of 6 is not an absolute requirement. Starting from the different situations of children’s individual ability development, it is also allowed to delay or advance the enrollment time by six months to one year. He proposed to determine whether the child already knows what should be known in the maternity school; second, whether the child has the ability to concentrate, think and judge; and third, whether the child has the desire to continue learning. Before a child enters school, Comenius requires parents to carefully prepare for school. He hoped that his parents would encourage children to go to school and tell him that going to school is a very en-

joyable thing. It is like going to a market or harvesting grapes to make people happy; there will be other children studying and playing with him in school. You can show the children the school supplies prepared for him, praise the kindness and knowledge of the children's future teachers, arouse the children's feelings of trust and love for the teachers, and so on. It can be seen that in his warnings to his parents, he reveals the importance of children's emotions, which is consistent with the scientific law of children's psychological development.

Comenius' thoughts on early childhood education in the book *School of Infancy* have the characteristics of encyclopedic enlightenment education, which is an important part of his whole educational theory system, which reflects the progressive nature of new humanism thought everywhere. It embodies the innovative spirit of breaking the old tradition of feudal education and exploring new methods of early childhood education. When he deals with problems of aspects of early childhood education, not only widely absorbs the beneficial achievement of the development of the ancient education thoughts at that time after, but also tries to at the time can reach the level of scientific development, as well as his personal understanding of children's physical and mental development scientific level, to strive to demonstrate the requirements of the early childhood education, attempting to preschool education based on a certain science. This is very valuable. At the same time, it is undeniable that this book also has a strong religious color, which is determined by the author's historical background and his world outlook at that time. Nevertheless, Comenius' wisdom on early childhood education in this book is still a classic of the times, which can be regarded as a very precious historical and cultural heritage-style great work in the history of world education.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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