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On education and discipline

Quintilian:

Let him therefore adopt a parental attitude to his pupils, and regard himself as the representative of those who have committed their children to his charge. Let him be free from vice himself and refuse to tolerate it in others. Let him be strict but not austere, genial but not too familiar: for austerity will make him unpopular, while familiarity breeds contempt. Let his discourse continually turn on what is good and honourable; the more he admonishes, the less he will have to punish. He must control his temper without however shutting his eyes to faults requiring correction: his instruction must be free from affectation, his industry great, his demands on his class continuous, but not extravagant. 6 He must be ready to answer questions and to put them unasked to those who sit silent. In praising the recitations of his pupils he must be neither grudging nor over-generous: the former quality will give them a distaste for work, while the latter will produce a complacent self-satisfaction. 7 In correcting faults he must avoid sarcasm and above all abuse: for teachers whose rebukes seem to imply positive dislike discourage industry. 8 He should declaim daily himself and, what is more, without stint, that his class may take his utterances home with them. For however many models for imitation he may give them from the authors they are reading, it will still be found that fuller nourishment is provided by the living voice, as we call it, more especially when it proceeds from the teacher himself, who, if his pupils are rightly instructed, should be the object of their affection and respect. And it is scarcely possible to say how much more readily we imitate those whom we like.

Comenius:

Now no discipline of a severe kind should be exercised in connection with studies or literary exercises, but only where questions of morality are at stake. For, as we have already shown, studies, if they are properly organised, form in themselves a sufficient attraction, and entice all (with the exception of monstrosities) by their inherent pleasantness.

If this be not the case, the fault

lies, not with the pupil, but with the master, and, if our skill is unable to make an impression on the understanding, our blows will have no effect. Indeed, by any application of force we are far more likely to produce a distaste for letters than a love for them. Whenever, therefore, we see that a mind is diseased and dislikes study, we should try to remove its indisposition by gentle remedies, but should on no account employ violent ones.

The very sun in the

heavens gives us a lesson on this point. In early spring, when plants are young and tender, he does not scorch them, but warms and invigorates them by slow degrees, not putting forth his full heat until they are full-grown and bring forth fruit and seeds. The gardener proceeds on the same principle, and does not apply the pruning-knife to plants that are immature. In the same way a musician does not strike his lyre a blow with his fist or with a stick, nor does he throw it against the wall, because it produces a discordant sound; but, setting to work on scientific principles, he tunes it and gets it into order. Just such a skilful and sympathetic treatment is necessary to instil a love of learning into the minds of our pupils, and any other procedure will only convert their idleness into antipathy and their lack of interest into downright stupidity.

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