

A book review by Aleister Crowley from the October 1917 edition of The International.

Philistine and Genius by Dr. Boris Sidis. Boston, Richard G. Badger.

This essay on education appears certain to become a classic. With extraordinary acumen Prof. Sidis discovers the primary cause of all our evils to be the violation of the biological law which provides for variation. Variation is the means of evolution. Our whole educational system is directed to stamping out every departure from type. What we really do is to place the most stupid, the most bound, the most cowardly, upon a pedestal. Procrustes is our ideal educator. We cramp genius, we punish originality, we stifle inquiry, we place our children in Rooms of Little Ease where they can neither stand, sit nor lie with comfort. Our sex taboo, our religious taboo, our social taboo are omnipotent. We deliberately crush out all originality by these three engines of torture.

Prof. Sidis does not mention it, but one of the reasons why such genius as we have is so enormously removed from the common level is that the genius, in order to develop at all, must be originally endowed with almost superhuman moral strength. The gap between him whose spirit has not been broken and him in whom "education" has been a success grows constantly wider with the perfection of our methods for suppressing him. It is quite true, as Prof. Sidis says, that every child has latent genius. The doctrine of the New Aeon is "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law," which is explained by stating that, "Every man and every woman is a star." The trouble arises from the forcing of these stars into collisions by the distortion of their orbits.

The business of the educator is to discover the true will of the child, the purpose for which he was born upon this planet, and to assist him to develop that will to the highest possible point; to remove the restrictions

from that will so far as possible. Our present method is the precise contrary of this. No sooner does a child manifest tendency towards and capacity for any given investigation than the teacher takes alarm. It is the old fable of the "Ugly Duckling."

We hope that Prof. Sidis will not rest upon his oars.