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FRANCIS of Assisi has inspired a whole philosophy of education although he himself ignored and even distrusted both speculative thought and the thousand prescriptions of formal pedagogy. Actually, it was this fear of a knowledge that "puffeth up" which produced an eminently sound science. For Francis was not suspicious of the true study which has for its synthesis the cross of Christ, but he did recognize the evils of a worldly system which tempts one to the frivolous acquisition of merely passionate book-learning. He preferred to train the soul; fortunately he could do so with the methods of genius.

Francis' program is as simple and as deeply noble as the Gospel. Its purpose is God. Its subject is the individual. True education must effect an absorbing intimacy between human soul and divine Source, by the former's surrender of his will to a sovereign Will—a renunciation not at all unnatural or starkly poignant but childishly simple since it is the happy return of a gift to a Giver. Nor is there an irrevocable loss, for the will is returned purified and detached from all that is worldly and enriched with love. In this objective of the Franciscan school is detected the principle of the primacy of the will which is concerned not so much with what is done as with how it is done. It is remarkably ironical that today, when the machine has superseded the individual in material worth, the learned in high places sit willingly at the feet of a brown-clad beggar to learn the greatness of personality which defies placement in a mould. Further, the individual is shown the virtue of poverty. Since the values of life are given their true significance, material poverty is taught to be far from hateful. Of more importance, poverty of spirit is proved to be the only way to liberty of soul for it is freedom to love in the sense that act and love are its essence. It causes a displacement of all other purposes other than the Christo-centric; from it spring spontaneously simplicity of intellect and joy of innocence.

Today, centuries after its inception, the Franciscan plan of education is pedagogically modern in approach and in application; it could not but be otherwise for it is the renewal of a life and example which found God through a study of human nature. In spirit it is still motivated by his warm and human principles. In an age of fearful confusion, it alone can enliven bitter reality with love, and color it with the glowing Idealism of the "Modern Saint."