

Biosophy and Character Education



By Frederick Kettner

The
Biosophical
Institute

character • peace • freedom • friendship

WHAT IS BIOSOPHY?

THROUGH an extensive study of philosophy, religion, ethics, science, art, economics and politics, Dr. Frederick Kettner became interested in the problems of character development and peace education. In the endeavor to solve these problems, the realization of a new science had its origin. This new science, Dr. Kettner called, "Biosophy". (Bios—Life and *Sophia*—Intelligence). He defines Biosophy as follows:

"Biosophy is the science and art of intelligent living based on the awareness and practice of spiritual values, ethical-social principles and character qualities essential to individual freedom and social harmony."(Inspired by Spinoza)

Statement of Purpose of The Biosophical Institute Inc.:

To work toward the unity of individuals to create a peace-minded society through the study and practice of Biosophical Principles. To utilize resources of the Institute by supporting individuals and organizations whose actions include character and peace education and spiritual development.

Objectives:

- ❖ To support and advance Biosophical Principles through outreach, study, grants, scholarships, character and peace education.
- ❖ To maintain a history of the Biosophical Institute, its literature and writings, through archiving and publications.
- ❖ To educate the public about Biosophy and the work of Frederick Kettner, PhD, through publications, newsletters, seminars, and web site.
- ❖ To work for the synthesis of religion, philosophy and science.
- ❖ To work with others who are aspiring to overcome religious, national, racial and social prejudices in order to create the growth of democracy and world peace.

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Requests for additional Literature will be honored.

Donations welcome.

About the Author



**Founder of Biosophy
Frederick Kettner Ph.D. 1886-1957**

FREDERICK KETTNER founded the Biosophical Institute in order to offer an environment and atmosphere conducive to the application of ethical-social ideals. He had taken the world's great ethical, religious and philosophical teachings out of the text books and the classroom and had brought them dynamically into the lives of human beings. Believing that character education is the basis for the creation of a new future for humanity, he had ceaselessly devoted himself toward this end.

Inspired by the writings of Spinoza, Kettner became the leading authority on the living significance of this great philosopher. In "Spinoza the Biosopher" Kettner has given an illuminating presentation of how the ethical teachings of Spinoza can be applied to greatest benefit in our present day world. He is the author of "Back to the Nameless One," a volume of biosophical poetry, and of numerous other booklets and pamphlets.

Kettner had been recognized by leading thinkers throughout the world as a man of rare creative powers who had made an invaluable contribution to world culture. Regarding Kettner's work with the Biosophical Institute, Prof. Albert Einstein had written:

“Your group is the embodiment of that spirit which Spinoza served so passionately.”

The Institute for the Advancement of Cultural and Spiritual Values was created by Kettner in cooperation with leading educators and thinkers in America to strengthen these foundations for a better world. In 1935 he inaugurated a movement for a Secretary of Peace in every government. He had toured the United States and delivered numerous lectures on behalf of this idea. In 1936 he brought the Secretary of Peace idea to the attention of the Inter-American Peace Conference in Buenos Aires where it was partially adopted.

We need Kettner’s biosophical ideas right now when everything seems to be out of proportion, when even the scientific world looks at spots and forgets to see the whole, which has the same etymological root as holy.

Kettner, like his great ideal, Spinoza, vigorously proves on purely human grounds the blessedness of meeting hatred with love. Kettner was a real disciple of Spinoza when he makes the plea of his great master to do good cheerfully. For the highest life consists in loving resignation to the supreme order. Both Spinoza and Kettner point out the fact that the impotence of people over their own passions is slavery, because from hate good never comes; but in the love of the highest, love that looks for no return, lies the only liberty.

BIOSOPHY AND CHARACTER EDUCATION

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“BLOODLESS SURGERY”

Dr. Alfred Lorenz, 78-year-old Viennese exponent and practitioner of “bloodless surgery”, is making his twelfth visit to America.

Dr. Lorenz first became generally known to Americans when he made a trip here years ago to treat Lolita Armour, little crippled daughter of the rich. Lolita was cured, grew to womanhood and was happily married. That was a celebrated case. But Dr. Lorenz used his skill on other afflicted children, obscure offsprings of tenement families.

“All my life I have been straightening limbs,” says Dr. Lorenz. “It is unfortunate that there is not also a method of straightening out the brains of men.”

Perhaps there is. Only through selfishness and stupidity its development is slow and needlessly difficult. Certainly social science is turning more toward the attempt to “straighten out the brains of men.”

It will be a great thing if American democracy shall discover and apply before it is too late, a “bloodless surgery” that will cure a crippled and now despairing society.

New York World-Telegram,

* * * * *

THE ONLY way to “straighten out the brains of men” is to teach people to overcome their “selfishness” and to strive to improve their characters. This has always been the chief endeavor of the Biosophical Institute. On the basis of this work we set forth in the ensuing essay the biosophical approach to a “ ‘bloodless surgery’ that will cure a crippled and despairing society.”

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PART ONE

OBJECTIVE OF BIOSOPHY

Improvement of the individual character and the realization of a new group life based on the understanding of a human being's essential nature.

PRINCIPLES

- a. Open-mindedness
- b. Otherness
- c. Mutuality
- d. Thought-relationship
- e. Unselfishness
- f. Group-consciousness
- g. World-unity

METHOD

I. Mind discipline:

- a. Discrimination between false, fictitious, doubtful and true ideas.
- b. The endeavor to act according to true ideas.

II. The overcoming of:

- a. Fears
- b. Hatreds
- c. Prejudices —
 - religious
 - national
 - racial
 - class

III. The realization of mental and emotional stability by means of:

- a. Changing the mental and emotional conflicts into problems
- b. Arriving at an impersonal attitude towards these problems
- c. Developing higher character qualities

IV. Study of each individual nature.

- a. The student is treated not only as a physical being, but also as an individual with an emotional, mental and spiritual nature.
- b. The students are encouraged to understand each other ethically and to regard each other's shortcomings as problems to be understood and solved.
- c. The biosophical education leads toward friendships based on unselfishness and the liberation of self from the blind emotions which enslave people.

PART TWO

We are living in an era of advanced civilization, reaping the benefits of scientific research and discovery. But we are not yet taking advantage of the discoveries which Biosophy has made. It is not difficult to understand why. Biosophy demands individual enterprise and effort and cannot be appreciated except by the active individual. In order to enjoy movies, the radio, or TV people do not themselves have to think biosophically. But in order to enjoy that ethical-social life, they must devote themselves to an understanding of the principles presented in Biosophy. Humanity is nevertheless on the way towards a new era, an era of creative individualism and higher culture. True, this new era is still but an ideal and not yet a reality. Yet it looms more imminent today than ever before.

The truly cultured society of the future will be founded on mutual understanding, unlike the civilization of today which seems to be founded on mutual misunderstanding. This latter situation exists because people know very little about the fundamental character of human beings, although very often indeed has the old saying "Know thyself" been quoted. People have learned to satisfy their physical needs. Why should they not seek to come to the realization of their spiritual needs? Such realization will serve as the basis for a new kind of life both individually and socially.

The so-called democratic life of today is based neither on true democracy nor on true life, because the education of the higher mind (integration) in people has been neglected thus far. There is neither fellowship nor friendship in human society because the existing economic-political order is not in harmony with biosophical principles. Our interests, in short, are centered only on things, while we continue to devise and create more and more things. But are we deeply interested in understanding the essentialities of life and

human nature? Are we concerned with the improvement of human character?

Human development that is not based on character improvement can scarcely be called true development. Humanity's interests have remained on the surface long enough. It is time to find out what human beings really are, and what their goal in life should be. Were such their interests, they would no longer desire to have only their daily bread but would also seek to gain their daily freedom from all the evils prevalent in human society today.

The world is in great need for a new kind of pioneer. It needs men and women who can dare to experiment with their mental misconceptions in order to purify and improve their minds. It is not enough that people have learned to extract wealth from the soil. They must also learn to seek in the depths of their own nature in order to uncover the wealth within their souls. As the root, so the fruit. The flowers in the garden can grow only in watered soil; the flowers of freedom only in the thinking mind.

The majority of people are motivated only by the instinct of making a living. They are concerned mainly with the objects of sense. But human beings are something more than mere sense creatures. They are thinking beings, and as soon as they realize the truth of this they become conscious of the fact that there are deeper realities in life.

Money, no doubt, is of value in our daily life, but certainly it is not one of the deeper realities. Our everyday life becomes miserable if we center all our thoughts and efforts on the accumulation of wealth. Money and the ordinary kinds of pleasure appear to be the highest goods. But appearance and reality are two different things. And to be in harmony with the highest quality—infinite reality or

true Life (Bios)—individuals must learn to make use of their deeper insight and their deeper convictions. In order to understand the highest reality they must make use of the highest kind of knowledge (Sophia). This is the chief aim of Biosophy. In the book “Spinoza the Biosopher” I define Biosophy as follows:

“Biosophy is the science of the inner life which has its roots in the eternal nature of the universe and of man, teaching us how to come to the consciousness and practice of cosmic principles, laws and qualities, which are essential to individual well-being and freedom and to the creation of an ethical-social fellowship.”

II

Biosophy concerns itself with mutual understanding and with the realization of ethical-social life—with the first, because mutual understanding is the means of making essential values practical; with the second, because true life is the sum total of real values. Our most difficult task as students of Biosophy is to find an adequate answer to the problem: What do we want? By putting a few words together it is simple to formulate this question. It is not easy, however, to answer it.

And yet the question: “What do we want?” must be answered if we are to understand Biosophy. An adequate solution, however, can be realized only through the courageous use of our intelligence or deeper mind. The great difficulty is that humanity seems to be inimical to the use of true intelligence. The popular course of action is contained in the popular expression, “Never mind.” In other words, “Never use your real mind. Do not act intelligently, but talk, talk, talk.” Is, then, the faculty of speech to remain the foundation of society?

Humanity has accomplished marvelous results in the field of technology. For instance, television, which had been an impossibility for many years, became a reality. But if we have been able to make technical impossibilities possible why should we not learn to make biosophical impossibilities possible? Why can we not learn to open our spiritual eyes and see the biosophical truth? Had people not opened their physical eyes, inventors would never have been able to create television. The world is not yet interested in wisdom, friendship and truth because people have not learned to open the eyes of the soul. What could we not see if we opened our hearts! To do that would make the impossible possible. For millions of people, for instance, is not friendship the greatest impossibility? What must we do, in order to realize such an impossibility? First of all, we must have the desire to improve our inward condition and disposition. To accomplish this we must learn to distinguish between two varieties of results: the finite, external and visible results, and the infinite, internal, invisible results. The former have to do with our false selves; the latter with our true nature. The former have to do with appearance; the latter with reality.

Appearances necessarily lead to false judgments. To consider the objects of sense as being of the highest value is to fall subject to the illusion (described in Buddhism) of considering painted forms as real men and women. The true value of anything depends on its content, and not on its surface. The biosophical or deeper understanding of reality brings us in contact with our inner nature and helps us come to a true appreciation of character values and of friendship.

But how many of us are willing to struggle for the highest kind of character values? We are ready to fight to the bitter end in the struggle for food, shelter and clothing. We usually surrender very quickly, though, if we encounter difficulties in striving for the

improvement of our character. In that case we remain satisfied with mediocre results. Benjamin Franklin, in his autobiography, tells of a man who, in buying an axe, desired to have the whole surface of it as bright as the edge. The smith consented to grind it bright on the condition that the customer turns the wheel. The man turned while the smith pressed the broad face of the axe hard on the stone, which made the turning very fatiguing. The man stopped every now and then to see how the work went on. At length he expressed the desire to take the axe as it was without further grinding. "No," said the smith. "Turn on. We shall have it bright by and by. As yet it is only speckled." "Yes," said the man. "But I think I like a speckled axe best."

III

We are all students in the school of life, but few of us understand the value of deeper realities, and very few live according to them. Our old habits hinder us. And these habits cannot be broken except by continuous thought-discipline. The child doesn't understand the nature of fire, and continues to burn itself as often as it puts its hand into the fire. How many adults understand the nature of their instincts and passions? We are no more protected from the injuries which arise from the conflicts in our emotional natures than the child is from the fire. We have learned to shelter ourselves from cold and heat, but we are still unable to protect ourselves from our passions. Spinoza says truly: "We are driven about by external causes in many manners, and, like waves driven by contrary winds, waver and are unconscious of the issue and of our fate." Do we not need that kind of understanding which can secure us against inner injuries? We have learned to purchase security bonds for the protection of our worldly goods. We must learn to create bonds of friendship based on character values to safeguard our inner goods. But let us not forget that these higher bonds can be secured only

through intelligence. We must strive to become more intelligent. But for that we need new mental equipment, which can be gained by learning the art of thinking. We have already learned to provide nourishment for our bodies in order to preserve and strengthen our physical constitution. No doubt we need physical strength. But we also need character strength in this world of confusion and conflict. We must therefore strive to improve our minds in order to understand deeper results.

But, many will ask, what practical value is there in understanding these deeper realities? Such understanding helps us to overcome our prejudices, superstitions, hatreds and limitations of all kinds. It enables us to avoid painful experiences by teaching us how to strengthen our minds through the use of ethical food. Our characters need ethical food and shelter; our thinking processes need the proper mind equipment for biosophical activity. Self-knowledge acquired through the daily practice of higher principles, higher motives, and higher thoughts is the best kind of ethical protection. Let us therefore become more interested in this kind of “life-insurance policy,” and let us inaugurate a new kind of politics and economics based on the deeper realities in life.

Does humanity have no higher destiny than the attainment of a certain degree of economic-political well-being? People can not realize a state of true well-being unless they understand the ethical side of their nature. This fundamental understanding can not be acquired, however, merely by reading books and papers. A more practical application is necessary. The conflicts that go on in a person’s nature must be recognized as problems. It is only when one is able to solve these problems—that is, overcome their selfishness and low-mindedness—that they shall reach their true destiny. Overcoming is the key to all of humanities problems, and leads individuals to the discovery of their inner consciousness and of the

world within.

The destiny of a human being is to become a thinking being, and not to remain a social animal. “To think or not to think” is the biosophical problem. People do not yet think clearly and adequately. How can they, when their mind is burdened with religious, national, racial and class prejudices? The destiny of the ethical person is to live together with other people on the basis of freedom and friendship. The destiny of humanity is to create, through biosophical activity, ethical-social relationships.

IV

The highest goal for an individual is to become more and more conscious of that part within them which is eternal. This hidden being, sometimes called soul, sometimes spirit, must be realized consciously. If it be true that a person's destiny is to discover the eternal part within themselves, they must sacrifice their falsities in order to discover that within them, which is hidden: the true character of a human being. And what is the expression of that true character? The realization of unity within and balance without.

There are many who say that they do not know what character or the nature of the soul is. But there have been others who have recognized and have understood these biosophical realities as the source of eternal life. All the teachers of the world's great philosophies and religions have introduced the ideal of the soul in man as the key to the kingdom of biosophical life.

Why is it difficult for people to affirm character as a reality? Because their minds are blinded by all manners of false, fictitious and doubtful conceptions. Yet there are moments in his life when people can be happy, when they can guide themselves according to

the principles of character and true intelligence. Indeed, what the world needs most are groups of human beings with the desire to discover their higher intelligence.

As we learn to guide ourselves more frequently during the day according to the needs of our true nature, which part of us can be discovered only as we follow the higher path-ways of life, we are able to practice ethical-social character improvement. But what is character? According to its Greek derivation the term originally meant an instrument used to mint coins, and also signified the actual impressions made on the coins. In the course of time it was introduced in psychology and ethics, and signified the different aspects of human nature. Character now is understood to include all the higher and more permanent human qualities.

The most important problem to be solved is whether character is a gift handed down to us through heredity, or whether it is a state into which we ourselves must mold our natures. We know on the one hand that habits and environment play a great part in the fashioning of characters. But if we begin to understand that people can make themselves independent of external influences and of effects of past experiences, we immediately realize that human beings possess the biosophical power of developing a noble nature. People are thinking beings. Thus, they can practice character improvement, because they can utilize the principle of self-control by making use of their true intelligence.

Chemists know that the air is composed of elements like hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen. But what constitutes character? From a biosophical viewpoint we can say that human character also is made up of elements. For character does not exist independent of ethical-social qualities such as kindness, hopefulness, trust, patience and modesty. It is necessary, therefore, to study people as being

more than merely physical creatures, for there is something in their nature beyond the pale of their senses. But we cannot discover this something unless we seek for it in an intelligent way.

The true purpose of character-education is to improve ourselves and others ethically, that is to practice mutual self-improvement. Education is either mutual, or it is not true education. Academic instruction is entirely different from biospherical education. The chief requirement for instruction is books. True character-education, however, cannot be acquired without the understanding of other human beings. We already have individuals with all sorts of college and university degrees. But where are the truly educated men and women? Only those can be called educated or cultured who understand and practice mutual education. Through true self-education we learn to develop the unselfish will to control our lower nature and become free; that we can possess the consciousness of true life, and the desire to become biospherical-minded.

People have already learned to use beauty parlors in order to beautify their external appearance. Why shouldn't we learn to beautify ourselves inwardly by practicing such qualities as nobility and generosity, which can lead us into the pathways of mutual understanding? Would it not be better, after all, not only for ourselves but for society and all the world, if we all were able to understand each other intelligently or biospherically?

People are trying to discover new economic-political factors which can bring about a radical change in our daily lives. But how can we change the routine of daily life unless we center our consciousness on a new goal—the goal of character-education? While driven about hither and thither by the instinct of self-preservation we cannot attain true freedom. Yet people will always

continue to struggle for the lower kind of self-preservation so long as they remain more interested in finance than in character. People have not yet realized that the foundation of their real life is the consciousness of reality and totality rather than the sum total of riches, fame, pleasures, superstitions and prejudices. The attainment of a higher degree of consciousness is the only means of bringing about biosophical character-emancipation. The struggle for mere physical existence brings wars and death. The struggle for biosophical self-emancipation brings peace and freedom.

