

# EDUCATION

A FIRST BOOK

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## PREFACE

THIS book furnishes an introduction to the study of education. It is, as entitled, a beginner's book. It will, I hope, prepare students in colleges and normal schools to see the significance of their more specialized studies in educational psychology and sociology, methods of teaching and class management, the history of educational theory and practice, and the applications of philosophy and ethics to education. It will also be of service to those whose study of the general facts and principles of education must be restricted to a brief course.

Ideally, a student of education should first know many facts of biology, psychology, sociology, ethics and the other sciences of man. But he also needs to know something about education in order to make his studies in these sciences theoretically and practically fruitful. So it seems desirable to have some brief, simple, untechnical account of the aims, means, methods and results of education, of the conditions set by the laws of human nature, and of the part that school education plays in American life. The account given in the present volume is necessarily very limited, but nowhere, I trust, inaccurate or misleading.

Teachers College,  
Columbia University,  
March, 1912.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE MEANING AND VALUE OF EDUCATION

#### § I. *The Meaning of Education*

Man changes the world in which he is. He changes the earth's form, whether he only scrapes out a hole in which to hide, or removes mountains to join oceans. He changes its living beings when he kills one bird or when he plants or destroys a forest. His fellow-men and his own nature are no less truly changed by what he is and does.

Its place  
amongst hu-  
man arts and  
industries.

The art of human life is to change the world for the better—to make things, animals, plants, men and oneself more serviceable for life's ends. Trees grow regardless of man's intent, but he prunes or trains them the better to satisfy his own wants, or plants others for the common good. Children, too, grow in part by inner impulses apart from man's direction, but man tries to change their original natures into forms which serve his needs. Each man singly tries, by producing certain changes and preventing others, to make the world of things and men better for himself; a group of men living together, so far as they possess wisdom, try to make things and men better for the group as a whole.

If human arts and industries are classified according to *what* is changed, education is grouped with government, hygiene, medicine, business administration, and the like, as one of the arts busied with the production and prevention of changes in *human beings*. There are no hard and fast barriers separating one of these divisions of human activity from another. The meanings of the terms—moral education and government, physical education and hygiene, industrial education and the direction of labor—overlap in the case of each pair. Education is not a word confined rigidly to specified occupations of man, but refers vaguely to more or less of human activity in the production and prevention of changes in other human beings. In the broadest sense, man is an educator in every act that changes any other man.

**Its place as a  
part of science.**

Education is the production and prevention of changes. Its facts are a selection from the changes that go on in the world. Science, or knowledge, in reporting the ways of the world, groups all these changes oftenest according to the objects which change. Thus in astronomy it reports the nature and changes of the stars; in chemistry, those of the atoms; and in biology, those of plants and animals. The objects whose changes we study under education are living animals, usually those of the human species.

The changes going on in any one object are of

many sorts. Thus a man is a mass of matter subject to laws of gravitation, electrical conduction, and the like, so that some of the changes in him are for physics to study; he is also a concretion of atoms of nitrogen, oxygen, hydrogen, carbon and the like, so that some of the changes in him are for chemistry to study; other changes in men belong under anatomy; still others, under physiology; still others are referred to the many specialized sciences of intellect and character.

Which of the changes that go on in an animal shall be studied under the heading *Education*, is for science a matter of useful selection rather than of absolute necessary appropriateness. Thought can be logical, systematic and fruitful, no matter where it draws the line between educational and non-educational. It is customary to include under education the changes in intellect, character and skill, and to exclude the changes in the body's gross physical and chemical properties, such as the rate at which it falls, or the depth at which it floats. But the exact selection from the facts of a man's life which shall be called his education, may be decided by convenience. A thinker about human education may choose his subject matter freely from whatever sciences concern man. Physiology, the science of digestion, excretion, circulation and the like; psychology, the science of intellect and character; sociology, the science of man's behavior with other men in a community; pathology, the science of disturb-

ances of efficient life; even parts of physics and chemistry—all may contribute to the science of education. No clear boundary separates man's education from the rest of his life. In the broadest sense his education is his life.

## § 2. *The Need of Education*

If all human beings save new-born infants <sup>live</sup> vanished to another planet, and if by a miracle the babies were kept alive for a score of years, preserving whatever knowledge and skill came from natural inner growth, and lacking only the influence of the educational activities of other men, they would, at the age of twenty-one, be a horde of animals. They would get a precarious living from fruits, berries and small animals, would easily become victims of malaria, yellow fever, small-pox and plague, and would know little more of language, mechanic arts or provision for the future than the monkeys. They would be distinguishable from other mammalian species chiefly by a much greater variety of bodily movements, especially of the hands, mouth-parts and face, a much quicker rate of learning, and a very much keener satisfaction in mental life for its own sake. They would consequently enjoy the remnants of civilization, using the books, tools, engines, and the like as toys, somewhat more intelligently than would apes, but they

To utilize  
the gifts of  
civilization.

would not read the books, repair the tools, or make of the engines more than spectacles for amusement, wonder and fear.

Whatever charms the life of a man left to his own original nature would have, it is certain that no wise man would choose that life for his children, and that the energies of men, so far back as we can trace them, have been spent in preventing that life by education.

So it is not enough to change the face of the world with cities, mines, farms and factories. Man must be taught to use them. Advantageous changes in the world's things produce their benefits only when accompanied by changes in the human natures who are to live with them.

**The need of better education.** Such education as man gives himself to-day prevents each new generation from stagnating in brutish ignorance, folly and pain. But far better education is needed to reduce the still appalling sum of error, injustice, misery and stupidity. Consider, for example, our present behavior toward war, labor and welfare.

**For national welfare.** Even the most civilized nations have not yet learned to settle international disputes by a court of expert judges, or to prevent national violence and law-breaking by an international police. Theft, arson and murder are still honored, provided they be done wholesale by a nation. And the wise opinion is that the only sure preventive of war is by educating men to think of it as a futile crime.

Even the most civilized nations also commit, year after year, the consummate blunder of not letting men work who wish to work and are able to work to the advantage of the common good. A President of this country is reported to have said when asked what should be done for the million unemployed, 'God knows.' But man must learn. Until man knows how to arrange national affairs so that no willing, capable worker shall be miserable in enforced idleness, education is incomplete.

**For personal happiness.**

In even the most civilized nations the majority of men are not rational even about their own welfare. They do not value absolute goods, taking satisfaction in proportion to the beauty, property, leisure, friends, and the like which are theirs. On the contrary, very many of their satisfactions and discomforts are caused by purely relative conditions,—being better-looking than Jones, not owning so large a house as Smith's, having to work more than other men. It is pitifully true that many a man would object to being twice as well off as he now is, if the condition were attached that every one else should be ten times as well off. And some men are so stupid in their envy that they can hardly see the difference between, on the one hand, adding a given amount,  $x$ , to the welfare of all other men and, on the other, subtracting  $x$  from their own personal store. There is perhaps no greater barrier to human happiness than this

irrational bookkeeping of welfare in terms of relative status, alone. For it, too, better education is the preventive and cure.

For control  
of nature.

Education, too, is the necessary basis of all the arts and industries whereby man changes his outside conditions for the better. To so change them he must in each generation change himself. He must acquire the knowledge and skill, or the crops will not grow, the bacilli which cause disease will not be killed, the houses will not be built, the poems, paintings and operas will not be composed, humane and rational laws and institutions will not be established.

Means of making  
education  
better.

Man improves education as he improves any other human activity—by open-minded thought about it, by learning the results of existing forms of it, by experimenting with other forms, and by clearing up and making reasonable our notions of what changes we should make in human beings and of how we should make them. Such impartial scientific study of man's efforts to change himself for the better has been receiving more and more attention within the last twenty years. In the case of school education, for instance, the actual changes wrought in boys and girls by this or that form of education are being measured, old and new methods are being tested by experiment in the same spirit of zeal and care for the truth that animates the man of science, and the educational

customs which have been accepted unthinkingly by 'use and wont' are being required to justify themselves to reason.

Such scientific study faces five problems or groups of problems, namely, those of :

1. The Aims of Education. What changes should be made in human beings by schools and other educating forces?
2. The Material or Subjects of Education. What is the original nature of the human beings whom we have to change? What are the principles or laws of human nature and behavior that we need to know in order to change men for the better?
3. The Means and Agents of Education. What forces are at our command in the task of producing and preventing changes in human beings?
4. The Methods of Education. How should these means and agents be brought to bear upon the subjects of education so as best to realize its aims?
5. The Results of Education. What have been the actual effects of different methods, means, and agents acting upon different kinds of human beings?

CHAPTER II  
THE AIMS OF EDUCATION

§ 3. *The Values of Life*

The value of any change in things or men is its value to somebody, its satisfaction of somebody's want. Things are not good and bad for no reason. Better and worse, worthy and harmful, right and wrong, have meaning only in reference to conscious beings whose lives can be made more satisfying or more bearable.

All values  
depend on  
wants.

A thing or event or act or condition is not, in the last analysis, desirable because it is valuable. It is valuable because it is desirable,—because it satisfies a want or craving or impulse of some man or other conscious being. Suppose, for instance, that all créatures had been, and now and in the future were to be, blind. The most beautiful painting would be no better than the ugliest; for it could have made or make no difference to anybody. Suppose that all beings, past, present and future, existed equally well and equally happily without as with food—that no one wanted food or drink. Temperance would be no longer a virtue, and gluttony no longer a sin. They

would simply be accidental qualities like the color of one's eyes. For the temperate man would satisfy no want of his own or any one else's, nor would the glutton's acts imply deprivation for anybody else.

**The values of human acts.**

Value or worth or the good means *power to satisfy wants*. One thing or act is more valuable or more worthy or better than another because it satisfies more wants or causes less privation. To discover the cause of, and a preventive of, cancer would thus be a very worthy act because it would add so much to and subtract so little from the world's sum of satisfaction and would abolish so many thwartings and deprivations.

Some acts, like the discovery of new truth about the world, or the production of a noble poem, are almost wholly good, since they are of enormous benefit to the world at large and need involve no sacrifice on the part of the one who does them. Some acts, like cruelty, useless worry or selfish idleness, are almost wholly bad, since they give little satisfaction to the one who commits them and none to any one else, and cause enormous amounts of misery.

Many changes in things and men possess elements both good and harmful, because, as the world is arranged, whatever is done in any given situation can hardly be best for everybody—a perfect satisfier for all. Even the mother's love for her child may make some unloved child, who

witnesses it, unhappier. If I work, there is probably somebody who would be more content if I remained idle with him. If I remain idle, somebody will have to go without what my labor would have produced.

#### § 4. *Improving and Satisfying Human Wants*

Human life would be most successful if men and women wanted only what was good and had all their wants satisfied. The aim of existence should be to make our wants better and to satisfy them. If by education we could abolish the craving to tyrannize and oppress, so that no living being would feel it, replacing it by the craving to see others happy, the world would be richer; for we should have got rid of a want whose satisfaction was always at the expense of others, in favor of a want whose satisfaction came as a free gift from the satisfaction of others. When education gives a child the power to read, it in so far enriches the world by making that child's craving for knowledge more satisfiable.

The aims of education should then be: to make men want the right things, and to make them better able so to control all the forces of nature and themselves that they can satisfy these wants. We have to make use of nature, to cooperate with each other, and to improve ourselves.

The first great element in making human wants better is to increase the good will—the disposi-

tion to care for others' welfare as well as for one's own—the 'desire to see the good wants of others satisfied. To wish the welfare of all men is one of the best of wants, for it is a want which every satisfier of all will satisfy.

**Increasing good will toward men.**

**Increasing the impersonal unselfish pleasures.**

The second great means of making human wants better is to cultivate the impersonal pleasures. Some satisfactions, such as the enjoyment of productive labor, health, good reading and study, are impersonal in the sense that for one to have the pleasure does not prevent anybody else from having it. They are unlike the pleasures of eating or owning or wearing things, where the pleasure of one man usually uses up a possible means of satisfying some other man. One of the most nearly perfect of all impulses is the impulse to advance knowledge of ourselves and the world in which we are to live. For this impulse is impersonal—all men may profit by the truth. It enriches everybody else's possibilities of satisfying the same want—the more knowledge man has, the easier it is to get more. It predisposes men against unsatisfiable wants—to know what the world really is prevents us from wanting what it cannot give. It leads to the satisfaction of all good wants—knowledge is power.

The third great means of making human wants better is the elimination of wants which must in the nature of things bring about a surplus of dis-