

THE TEACHING OF IDEALS

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New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1928

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Set up and electrotyped. Published September, 1927. Reprinted
January, 1928.

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

THE TEACHING OF IDEALS

TO
MY FATHER AND MOTHER
FOR THEIR
GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

PREFACE

THE development of character and personality has always attracted the attention and elicited the energies of men and women who have in any way felt responsible for educating children for citizenship. Yet, interestingly enough, the methods of fostering ideals employed by the home, the school, the church, and the state have been largely unconscious methods applied without objective examination or systematization. Some advantages should, therefore, be derived from a study of the plans which have been used most successfully. The procedures can be described and arranged in an orderly manner. A point of view can be presented from which to explain the principles underlying these methods, the conditions under which they seem to operate most effectively, and the limitations to which they are subject. To this problem we have given our attention for several years. Methods of teaching ideals have been gathered, examples of the use of procedures in school practice have been collected and evaluated empirically, and an attempt has been made to organize the methods and relate them to the principles upon which they depend.

As the author reread the manuscript before writing the preface, three impressions stood in relief. The outstanding impression is the paucity of scientific literature and of objective facts. The term "virgin soil" accurately characterizes this field. A small amount of pioneering labor has been performed in the measurement of traits, and a few studies of situations and trait actions have been carried out.

The remainder of the literature, which is huge in extent, deals with theories of character development or with empirical procedures worked out by individuals and organizations.

With this impression the second is closely associated. The text is a systematization of material much of which is trite. Some of the methods described, if not all of them, have been in use for centuries and have been presented in educational literature for generations. The reader may feel that he was familiar with all these methods before he read the book. However, the material is trite because it is fundamental, and the author feels that a contribution can be made by collecting the methods within the covers of one book and by organizing the material according to a plan. Moreover, the mere description of methods which a teacher uses unreflectively gives him an increasingly intelligent grasp upon them and helps him to make more efficient use of them in teaching. The collection of empirical methods is the first step in the scientific study of an art. Thereafter it becomes the function of research to evaluate and define these methods and to invent others which may have no counterpart in empirical practice.

The third impression arises from the wide geographical distribution of studies that are being made in the school-rooms of the nation. Every school-teacher feels some responsibility for the development of character, and without deliberation puts methods into practice; but in scores of schools in the United States teachers or faculties are studying the problem of moral development in more than a routine manner, and are organizing and publishing materials which in many cases have more than local significance. Through state departments and other agencies we have made a serious attempt to collect descriptions of all character-education experiments now in progress. Many illustrations

were secured from these sources, and samples of them have been used in the text. It is evident, however, that there are numerous other experiments in this field of which we failed to secure accounts, since new studies of this sort are frequently being called to our attention.

With a literature so scattered and so lacking in articles dealing with a systematic discussion of methods as methods, it is impossible to make specific acknowledgments of courses except as they occur incidentally in the body of the text.

A collection of the methods of teaching ideals presented in this book was begun by Mrs. Charters when she was teaching in Los Angeles. During the intervening years we have both worked on the material; and in the later years the direct attack and the selection of ideals, situations, and trait actions have been developed. In more than a formal manner I therefore wish to acknowledge Mrs. Charters' contribution to this work.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THERE are evidences on every hand that the specialized forms of knowledge which the schools impart on particular subjects of instruction do not supply the training of personality and of character which is needed to fit pupils for responsible and successful living. The demand is being voiced on many sides for more training which shall improve the morals of pupils and shall render pupils more competent to discharge their social obligations.

Very often sincere efforts which are made to supply instructional material for character-training fail because they deal with the matter in a vague and abstract way. Not infrequently there is a disastrous mixing of sentimentality and artificiality in the moral teaching undertaken by would-be reformers.

It seems obvious that the problem of providing proper lessons for character-training should be attacked systematically through a detailed analysis of many practical situations so that concrete cases and concrete modes of teaching may be discovered. Professor Charters has undertaken such an analysis. He brings to this task the technique of curriculum-making which he has employed successfully in the fields of industrial and commercial job analysis. He has availed himself of the experience of parents, teachers, and school administrators on a scale which provides him with a variety of cases and with a comprehensive series of plans for dealing with these cases. The statements in this book are consequently specific and concrete. They are free from the vague-

ness and remoteness which destroy the effectiveness of many of the plans for the character-training.

The book is not merely a series of suggestions on which specific teaching practices may be based; it exhibits a method by which teachers may become independent in their study of the individual needs of their pupils. The reader who secures a proper understanding of the purposes of the book will be led to undertake the extension of the plans here outlined. As a result, character education should develop into a progressive treatment of pupil needs. It should adapt itself to individual differences and to a great variety of situations. It will thus be saved from the formalism from which such education has often suffered in the past.

CHARLES H. JUDD

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THE TEACHING OF IDEALS

INTRODUCTION

The following four cases present the matter with which instruction in the development of character is concerned. They describe the problems as they arose, and the final solution or lack of solution resulting from the remedial treatment. The cases were selected at random from the literature, the first three being found in the Judge Baker Foundation Case Studies,¹ and the last in Reavis' *Pupil Adjustment in Junior and Senior High Schools*.²

CASE A. "Mr. and Mrs. Winthrop Standen, evidently thoroughly right-minded people, came for advice concerning their" fifteen-year-old son, Winthrop Standen, Jr. "To them he is a baffling puzzle. Except for him, every member of their families that they have heard of has had high standards of integrity and citizenship. For two years Winthrop has caused them anxiety through school misdemeanors and through repeated and serious dishonesty which began earlier in small ways. Recently he has been in court twice — once for burglary with a companion, and a few months later, while still on probation, he was arrested for breaking into a garage and driving off an automobile. The whole story of his delinquencies totals many instances of stealing and of

¹ Published by the Foundation, Boston. Case A — Series I, Cases 2 and 3, pp. 3, 50-a; Case B — Series I, Case 8, pp. 3, 31-a; Case C — Series I, Case 9, pp. 3, 27-a.

² D. C. Heath and Co., New York. Case D — pp. 264, 282-3.

taking automobiles, but it has been the boy's indifferent attitude that has disturbed the parents most."

Three years later we find that "he has stood high in his examinations and has had a splendid record for conduct. His parents tell us that when he came home last time on a furlough he was (at barely 18) almost 6 feet and weighed 175 pounds. They were well pleased at his success. His father now says, 'He is a son to be proud of.'"

CASE B. In December, 1917, four days after Olaf Kellman's hearing in court, this boy, aged fifteen, and his mother "kept their appointment made by the probation officer under instructions from the judge, who continued the case for further investigation concerning the facts of the alleged offense and for study of the boy himself. Olaf had denied participation in the theft of several fine overcoats from a clothing store, although another boy, when arrested, had accused him of it. But he frankly acknowledged frequent stealing with the crowd of which they were both members. His mother said in court that she was terribly worried about him, and indeed, had earlier filed a 'stubborn child' complaint in the court of their home district because of his persistent association with a group of boys well known to the police and his staying away from home with them; but nothing effectual had been accomplished with him. He had been sent away to the correctional school X., and after five months there came home and was now on parole."

Five years later the report on the case reads: "When he came home his pending case was called and he was placed on probation. . . . It was noted by all that his attitude seemed changed for the worse. For a while he tried to keep away from his old companions, spending much time with relatives in a suburb, living at home only part of the time. But soon he took to drinking and was twice in court for this. Then he disappeared, and when next heard from, he was in a reformatory in the middle west, where he still is."

CASE C. In July, 1918, the well-nigh distracted mother of Matilda Marden (aged thirteen) "was brought to us by the agent

of a certain welfare organization in charge of their work for girls. They had known the family for years. For the last few months Tillie had been very insubordinate, untruthful, and dishonest. She had stayed away from home over night several times. About all of this her mother had asked advice of the organization earlier. Just now the girl had returned after being away ten days, her whereabouts being quite unknown. What was best to be done for Tillie and with her? Her mother said she was willing to do anything we advised."

A few years later "Tillie came in to see us. She is now quite an attractive young woman, very neatly dressed, and courteous and friendly in manner. Her face has lost its sensuous look and is, indeed, rather strong; her eyes are merry, and she is in general quite vivacious. She speaks with enthusiasm of her work, of her family, and of her recreations."

CASE D. "Weekly reports soon indicated that Pupil *H* was not making satisfactory progress as a Freshman. Conferences with him brought out the fact that he was floundering in both Latin and mathematics. The Latin instructor claimed that he was immature and did not concentrate. He had made a very poor beginning and as a result was soon behind his class. His achievement was limited virtually to a small amount of vocabulary. He was unable to distinguish subjects of sentences or to read with any degree of accuracy. In mathematics he was also slow in getting under way. The instructor stated that he was inattentive and accomplished on the tests about half as much as the average of his class. He questioned the pupil's previous preparation, and predicted failure unless improvement followed promptly. The library-study-hall director thought that he was a 'slippery' boy both morally and mentally. She stated that he did not attack his work with vigor and seemed to resent supervision. Both sustained application and attitude in her opinion were very unsatisfactory."

In the middle of his junior year "according to the terms of the agreement which he had failed to keep he was requested to withdraw from the school. It was clearly evident that the stimuli of his present school environment were not strong enough to arouse

him to an earnestness of purpose necessary to succeed with school work. A change of schools might bring the desired results. At least, it was unprofitable and unwise to allow him to carry on as he had during the past year and a half.

"His credits were transferred to another high school in which he hoped to retrieve the opportunities which he had disregarded in the University High School. After a short residence in the second school, he was withdrawn and sent to a third school. His educational status at the date of this report is unknown."

These cases present the problem of character development in dramatic form. The four children were born with certain original tendencies and were admitted at birth into the life of the social group. This group lived according to certain rules, ideals, and objectives which, while evolved in the past and modified in the present, were rather definitely fixed. These guides to action exerted a profound influence upon the members of the group who played the game of life according to the rules. At birth the four children knew nothing about the rules. With the paternal aid of the members of the group, they began slowly to learn, as all children must; but unfortunately, in their cases they made what the group thought were failures at this task of learning — failures so serious that institutional attention had to be paid to some of them. Consequently they were taken in hand by interested members of the community with the hope that satisfactory adjustments might be made.

In the period between the first and last reports in the four cases mentioned something had happened which in two cases created a desirable change in character and in the other two resulted in failure.

When we proceed to analyze the instructional methods employed in securing modifications of behavior through the development of ideals, we find a theoretical statement of

methods to be a comparatively simple task. They may be organized around five principles which can be put into definite terms. It cannot be denied, however, that it is extremely difficult to apply these principles to specific teaching situations. To the task of elucidating the principles the material of this text is addressed with the feeling that a systematic analysis, though necessarily couched in general terms, helps appreciably to clarify those problems of instruction whose solutions may be chaotic in the minds of many teachers.

With the purpose of presenting a simple organization of the fundamental factors in character education we shall outline in this chapter five principles which must be considered in the teaching of all ideals. These are the threads which run through the succeeding chapters.

1. Diagnosing the situation. Whenever a person displays deficiency in the manifestation of a trait, it is necessary to make a diagnosis to discover the cause. One reason for doing this is that the causes for deficiency may be quite different in character. For instance, lack of self-confidence in three different persons may be due to three different causes. *A* was a young man, twenty-five years of age, possessing conscientiousness and mental brightness, but notably lacking in confidence in himself. The cause of his lack of confidence lay in the fact that his standards of accomplishment were too high. They were so rigorous that whenever he saw anyone perform a task better than he could do it himself, he became discouraged. He was a sort of Rogers Hornsby who led the league with a batting average of .410, but was discouraged and unhappy because it was not 1.000. *B* was a young woman of more than average ability. She lacked confidence because she was afraid she would fail in social situations. When she found it necessary to interview

an executive, she worried about what she would say and went into the conference expecting that it would not be successful. *C* was a young man whose lack of confidence was due to the fact that he had a record of failures behind him because he had originally been pushed into an occupation for which he was not fitted. Later when he separated himself from this occupation and tried two others without success, he became convinced of his inability to succeed.

The foregoing causes are simple and clear-cut. Usually, however, the situation is much more complicated. For instance, in a diagnosis of the fourth of the introductory cases mentioned above (Pupil *H*), the following seven contributory and complementary causes were revealed :

The diagnosis of his case was now fairly clear : (1) He was a boy of about average ability with a streak of genius in a certain direction ; (2) he had allowed his special hobby to bask in the focus of his attention to the exclusion of school requirements ; (3) to him school work had consisted very largely of lessons to be learned for the teacher, not for himself ; (4) certain will-temperament characteristics, such as impatience with routine, finality of judgment, lack of self-confidence, impetuosity, passivity in the face of opposition, and lack of perseverance, constituted for him an inherent handicap to school accomplishment ; (5) his lack of mastery of the principles of English usage also retarded him ; (6) he was further handicapped on account of having to depend for personal guidance at home on a doting mother who had reached the grandmother period of life ; (7) his methods of work and study continued to be faulty and ineffective in spite of specific corrective instruction.¹

Obviously, this is a very serious case. To cure himself Pupil *H* would have to improve in English and in methods

¹ REAVIS, W. C. — *Pupil Adjustment in Junior and Senior High Schools*. Pages 275-6.

of study; and this would be difficult because of the will-temperament weaknesses mentioned in (4): impatience with routine, impetuosity, a deficiency in confidence, unwillingness to fight in the face of difficulties, and lack of perseverance. Cases of spoiled children such as Pupil *H* are familiar to every teacher as almost hopeless problems; but a diagnosis shows the teacher exactly what he must do, difficult as the task may be.

We diagnose to discover difficulties; but we also make diagnoses to discover abilities, ideals, and interests. The latter purpose is fully as important as the former, because in developing character and personality we must discover incentives in the pupil by the use of which we may create a desire for the ideals we wish him to possess. As an example we may quote a case reported by Mr. A. Eleven young boys in the community were assigned to his Sunday-school class for a year, on parole from the judge of the court. His problem was to study these boys to discover what incentives might be used for creating in them a desire to become honest and law-abiding citizens. He discovered that his parole group had a high regard for athletic prowess and also thought that good boys were "sissies." Accordingly he arranged boxing matches between these boys and some members of his own church group who had skill in boxing. Fortunately it happened that the paroled boys were properly defeated, with the result that they learned that boys might be strong and still be reasonably good. The teacher thus used their interest in physical strength as a means for making them feel that obedience was respectable. He discovered also that, in common with other people, the paroled youths had a reverence for strength of character, and since he himself possessed the quality of personal leadership, he created in them the feeling that the ideals which he stood for were worthy ideals. The