

OUTLINES OF EDUCATIONAL DOCTRINE

BY

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PREFACE

THE reasons for translating and annotating Herbart's "Outlines" are, first, to present to the English-speaking public Herbart's latest, and also his most complete, work on education; and, second, to note to some extent at least the advances made in educational thought since Herbart laid down his pen.

Herbart's educational writings are distinguished by two marked characteristics: 1, their helpfulness in actual teaching; and 2, their systematic completeness. The thoughtful reader can see the bearing of each part upon all the others; the purposes of education are so completely correlated with the means, that, whether the topic under discussion be apperception or interest or methods of teaching or school government or moral training or the presentation of a particular study, the reader is never at a loss to see the relation of this part to the whole.

The eminent practicability of Herbart's thought depends upon his psychological point of view, which is always that of concrete experience. The moment one tries to apply rational psychology to actual teaching, one begins to rise into the clouds, to become vague

or, at least, general. The reason for this is that rational psychology deals with unchangeable presuppositions of mind. We may conform our work to these standards, but we cannot modify them, any more than we can a law of nature. But when we have to deal with an apperceiving content, we feel at home, for over this we have some control. We can build up moral maxims, we can establish permanent interests, we can reveal the unfolding of whole developments of thought and effort, we can fix the time order of studies and parts of studies; in short, we can apply our pedagogical insight with some degree of success to actual school problems. Though empirical psychology has in the last fifty years had as rapid a development as any other department of science, it has never departed essentially from the direction fixed by Herbart. New methods have indeed been applied, but the leading motive has remained empirical; it has had small tendency to drift toward rational psychology. This fact makes Herbart's educational thought, so far as psychological bearing is concerned, seem as fresh and modern as when it was first recorded.

In one important respect, however, Herbart's system needs modernizing. It is in relating education to conditions of society as it now exists. German society has never been that of English-speaking countries; much less does German society of the early part of the nineteenth century correspond to Anglo-Saxon society at

the beginning of the twentieth. Indeed, even had there been correspondence before, there would be divergence now. It is one of the main purposes of the annotation, therefore, to point out the social implications of various parts of the "Outlines."

The annotation has made no attempt to improve Herbart's prophetic vision concerning many important matters, or to elucidate self-evident propositions, or to supplement observations already complete, true, and apt.

Especial attention is called to the exactness and illuminating character of Herbart's diagnosis of mental weaknesses and disorders in children, together with his suggestions as to proper treatment. Students of child-study, moreover, will find in this work not only encouragement in their work, but also assistance in determining what is worth studying in the child. The reader is constantly reminded of the fact that, when written by a master, no book is newer than an old one.

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OUTLINES OF EDUCATIONAL DOCTRINE



INTRODUCTION

I. The plasticity, or educability, of the pupil is the fundamental postulate of pedagogics.

The concept plasticity, or capacity for being moulded, extends far beyond the confines of pedagogics. It takes in even the primary components of matter. It has been traced as far as the elementary substances entering into the chemical changes of organic bodies. Signs of plasticity of will are found in the souls of the higher animals. Only man, however, exhibits plasticity of will in the direction of moral conduct.

Had not the youthful mind the capacity to receive culture, education would be impossible. This educability of the young has rarely if ever been questioned in actual practice. Much philosophical strife, however, has raged about the various conceptions of WILL, and the consequent possibility of teaching virtue, or of training the moral character. The extremes have been *fatalism*, or the determination of conduct by means of forces lying entirely outside the power of the individual; and *absolute caprice of will*, or the determination of conduct

entirely by the individual himself without regard to outside influences. The doctrine of fatalism makes moral education mechanical ; that of volitional caprice makes it futile. Educational theory must therefore assume a middle ground, in which the self-activity of the individual and the moulding influence of education are both recognized.

2. Pedagogics as a science is based on ethics and psychology. The former points out the goal of education ; the latter the way, the means, and the obstacles.

This relationship involves the dependence of pedagogics on experience, inasmuch as ethics includes application to experience, while psychology has its starting-point, not in metaphysics alone, but in experience correctly interpreted by metaphysics. But an exclusively empirical knowledge of man will not suffice for pedagogics. It is the less adequate in any age the greater the instability of morals, customs, and opinions ; for, as the new gains on the old, generalizations from former observations cease to hold true.

In order to accept the statement that ethics points out the goal of education, we must conceive of ethics in a broad way. At some periods in the history of the world, the development of purely individual, or subjective, character would have been thought a worthy and adequate conception of the final purpose of education. Other-worldliness was the ruling ideal. At present, however, we regard that man as most fit for the world to come who best performs all his functions in the world that now is. Ethics must therefore be conceived to embrace an estimation of the value of a man's conduct in every department of

life. Not only must it estimate the worth of pious feeling, but it must embrace a consideration of every action in its relation to the actor's social, economic, and political environment. A man having a praiseworthy character must be a good citizen of state, nation, and community; he must be public-spirited, law-abiding, given to honest dealing. Every child should be trained to be a useful member of civilization as it now exists. Piety alone is insufficient; it must be accompanied by honesty, industry, patriotism, public spirit. Non-social, or purely individualistic, conceptions of character as the goal of education must give way to those social ideals through which alone the highest welfare of both individual and community are to be conserved. Without such conceptions an industrial state, such as now exists, becomes a human jungle in which men enter upon a fiercer struggle than do the beasts of the real jungle. Social coöperation is essential when we wish to transform a struggle of mutual destruction into one of mutual helpfulness.

3. Philosophical systems, involving either fatalism or its opposite, pure caprice of will, are logically shut out from pedagogics, because the notion of plasticity, implying as it does a transition from the indeterminate to the determinate, cannot by such systems be brought in without inconsistency.

Common sense overcomes the logical difficulties of even the worst systems. Herbart's remark has, therefore, no practical significance. The philosophy of Spinoza might easily be described by an opponent as "fatalistic," since it leaves no room for special providences in the physical universe; yet Professor Paulsen, who holds substantially to Spinoza's view, is one of

the most eminent promoters of the theory of education in the university of Berlin. Herbart thought Kant's doctrine of transcendental will one of absolute volitional caprice, yet the followers of Kant have been among the most energetic promoters of mental and moral training. Herbart thinks he sees in this remark a chance to put his philosophical opponents out of court, to the benefit of his own system. If one philosopher develops a system of "fatalism" and another one of "absolute free will," the one may be charged with making education impossible and the other with making it futile. In either case, since we know that education is neither impossible nor futile, the presumption is that both systems are defective. This paragraph and others like it are mere indirect methods of defending Herbart's system of philosophy: they have no real significance for the theory of education itself.

4. On the other hand, the assumption of unlimited plasticity is equally inadmissible; it is for psychology to guard against this error. The educability of the child is, to begin with, limited by his individuality. Then, too, the possibility of determining and moulding him at will through education is lessened by time and circumstances. Lastly, the established character of the adult develops by an inner process which in time passes beyond the reach of the educator.

5. Education seems thus to find a barrier, first, in the order of nature, and later in the pupil's own will. The difficulty is indeed a real one, if the limitations of education are overlooked: hence an apparent confirmation of fatalism as well as of the doctrine of absolute free will.

Modern scientific evolutionary study of anthropology and history tends to confirm the hasty thinker in the idea that the circumstances of the environment completely determine the character and destiny of men, since their debt to the moulding influences of society and physical surroundings becomes more and more apparent; yet however powerful the environment may prove to be in fixing the direction of mental growth in the race, it cannot rightly be conceived as creating the growing forces. All the sunshine and warmth in the world will not cause a pebble to sprout; so no external influences whatever can develop mind where there is none to develop. The exigencies of Herbart's metaphysics drove him into a crusade against Kant's doctrine of innate freedom, or transcendental will; all the freedom that Herbart would admit was that psychological freedom which is acquired through instruction and training. The quarrel belongs to eighteenth-century metaphysics, not to modern psychology, nor to education; for however potentially free an infant may be, nobody thinks of making it responsible, except so far as growing experience gives it insight and volitional strength.

NOTE.—Many thinkers fluctuate constantly between these two erroneous extremes. When looking historically at mankind as a whole, they arrive at fatalism, as does Gumpowicz in his "Outlines of Sociology." Teacher and pupil alike seem to them to be in the current of a mighty stream, not swimming,—that is, self-active,—which would be the correct view, but carried along without wills of their own. They arrive, on the other hand, at the idea of a perfectly free will, when they contemplate the individual and see him resist external influences, the aims of the teacher very often included. Here they fail to comprehend the nature of will, and sacrifice the concept of natural law for that of will. Young teachers can hardly avoid sharing this uncertainty, favored as it is

by the philosophies of the day ; much is gained, however, when they are able to observe fluctuations of their own views without falling into either extreme.

6. The power of education must be neither over- nor under-estimated. The educator should, indeed, try to see how much may be done ; but he must always expect that the outcome will warn him to confine his attempts within reasonable bounds. In order not to neglect anything essential, he needs to keep in view the practical bearings of the whole theory of ideas ; in order to understand and interpret correctly the data furnished by observation of the child, the teacher must make constant use of psychology.

7. In scientific study concepts are separated which in practice must always be kept united. The work of education is continuous. With an eye to every consideration at once, the educator must always endeavor to connect what is to come with what has gone before. Hence a mode of treatment which, following the several periods of school life, simply enumerates the things to be done in sequence, is inadequate in a work on pedagogics. In an appendix this method will serve to facilitate a bird's-eye view ; the discussion of general principles, arranged according to fundamental ideas, must needs precede. But our very first task will necessarily consist in dealing, at least briefly, with the ethical and the psychological basis of pedagogics.



THE DOUBLE BASIS OF PEDAGOGICS



CHAPTER I

THE ETHICAL BASIS

8. THE term *virtue* expresses the whole purpose of education. Virtue is the idea of inner freedom which has developed into an abiding actuality in an individual. Whence, as inner freedom is a relation between insight and volition, a double task is at once set before the teacher. It becomes his business to make actual each of these factors separately, in order that later a permanent relationship may result.

Insight is conceived as the perception of what is right or wrong. This perception is founded on the spontaneous, or intuitive, feeling that arises in the mind when certain elementary will-relations are presented to the intelligence. The unperturbed mind has a natural antipathy to strife, malevolence, injustice, selfishness; it has a corresponding approval of harmony, good-will, justice, benevolence. These feelings arise, naturally, only when the appropriate ideas are present. Insight, therefore, is a state of feeling or disposition arising from knowledge, or ideas.

When volition has come into permanent accord with edu-

cated insight, virtue has been attained. Conscience approves every virtuous act ; it disapproves every deviation from virtue. Inner freedom, therefore, is marked by approving conscience ; lack of it, by accusing conscience. The development of virtuous character is not so easy, however, as might appear from these simple statements, for virtue has a shifting, not to say a developing character. Elementary as the fundamental ethical ideas may be when presented in the home or in the kindergarten, they are not elementary when met with in modern civilization. At times virtue has been of a military character, as in Sparta and Rome ; at other times it has been ecclesiastical, as in the Middle Ages. At the present time, in addition to all that it has ever been from a purely Christian character, it is civil, social, industrial. Virtue in a modern city has a content quite different from that in a pioneer mining camp. Furthermore, virtue is uneven in its development. The race has, for instance, been trained long and hard to respect unprotected property, so that we may fairly say such respect has become instinctive ; yet when unprotected property comes into new relations to the individual, as in the case of borrowed books, we may find only a rudimentary conscience. What scholar is not a sufferer from this form of unripe virtue ?

9. But even here at the outset we need to bear in mind the identity of morality with the effort put forth to realize the permanent actuality of the harmony between insight and volition. To induce the pupil to make this effort is a difficult achievement ; at all events, it becomes possible only when the twofold training mentioned above is well under way. It is easy enough, by a study of the example of others, to cultivate theo-

retical acumen; the moral application to the pupil himself, however, can be made, with hope of success, only in so far as his inclinations and habits have taken a direction in keeping with his insight. If such is not the case, there is danger lest the pupil, after all, knowingly subordinate his correct theoretical judgment to mere prudence. It is thus that evil in the strict sense originates.

It is helpful to give the pupil abundant opportunity to pass judgment upon the moral quality of actions not his own. The best opportunities are at first the most impersonal ones, for where the child himself is immediately concerned, the quality of his judgment may be impaired by intense personal feelings, such as fear of blame or punishment. Literature furnishes the earliest and most copious examples; later, history may be helpful, though there is great danger of taking partial or mistaken views as to the moral quality of historical deeds. A selection of literature is an artistic whole. All the relations can be easily perceived, but any given historical event is likely to be a small section of a whole too vast for the youthful mind to comprehend. It is for this reason that caution is needed when passing judgment upon historical facts.

To encourage the child to pass judgment in these impersonal cases is to sharpen his natural perceptions of right and wrong, and to influence his disposition favorably. One who has been led to condemn cruelty to animals in this way is likely to be more thoughtful himself, and less disposed wantonly to inflict pain. But every resource of authority and persuasion, as well as appeal to sensibility and conscience, must be employed to make virtuous action habitual, and to prevent the generation of evil.

10. Of the remaining practical or ethical concepts, the idea of perfection points to health of body and mind; it implies a high regard for both, and their systematic cultivation.

Perfection here means *completeness of efficiency*, rather than acquisition of holiness. An efficient will is strong, vigorous, decided; it is self-consistent in the pursuit of leading purposes, not vacillating or incoherent. Still, the idea of moral perfection is not a remote one, for, in order to be thoroughly efficient, a will must be in substantial accord with the ethical order of a rational society. All its deviations from established law and custom will be for their improvement, not for the destruction of what is good in them.

11. The idea of good-will counsels the educator to ward off temptation to ill-will as long as such temptation might prove dangerous. It is essential, on the other hand, to imbue the pupil with a feeling of respect for good-will.

Good-will is one of the three concrete virtues lying at the basis of social order. It is both *passive*, as in *laissez faire* attitudes of mind, and *active* as in thoroughgoing civic, business, and social coöperation. School training must seek to impress the mind with respect for the active rather than the passive type of good-will. So, too, must it ward off the dangers both of passive and active ill-will, as manifested in covetousness, malice, malevolence, envy, treachery, stinginess, cruelty, hard-heartedness. How these ends may be attained, will be considered later.

12. The idea of justice demands that the pupil ab-