

THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE MAKING

A SUBJECTIVE VIEW OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT
WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS
AND TEACHERS

BY

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PREFACE

IN a recent work, "Genetic Psychology," the author has discussed the general principles governing the development of behavior and mind in animals and in the human race, giving special prominence to the objective facts. In this volume it is proposed to discuss the development of individual human minds only, and chiefly from the subjective point of view.

This volume is contrasted with the author's earlier book, "Fundamentals of Child Study," by its attempt to trace the development of a child's mind as a whole through various stages instead of discussing separately the various instincts and other phases of child-life. In other words the author attempts, figuratively speaking, to drive a twenty-four-horse team abreast, instead of first leading one, then another, over the course. The need that this shall be done is so great that the author attempts it, although he realizes that complete success can scarcely be expected at the present stage of the science.

The educator like the mariner needs a chart by which he may guide the child into the most favoring channels and past the most serious dangers that are found in each stage of development from childhood to maturity. The author cannot claim that the correctness of this incomplete chart of human development has been scientifically demonstrated. He can only say, that after a score of years spent in studying children, and much opportunity for observing various methods of teaching, he believes that the descriptions and suggestions herein given lead toward the truth. The ideas expressed are not given as final truth for the guidance of psychologists

and educators, but as a formulation of facts and principles to be corrected and completed by further scientific investigations and tested by practical educational experience.

The attempt has been made to make the treatment as scientific as the present state of knowledge will admit, and yet to make it sufficiently clear and concrete to be readable.

Part One is designed to give the genetic point of view, and present the general principles of development. Part Two, treating of stages of development, will be of interest to both parents and teachers, while Part Three especially concerns teachers. It is hoped that the work is sufficiently concrete and specific to be of interest and value to parents and teachers who have not received much training in psychology. It will be of most value, however, to those who have given considerable study to the subject, and have had a good deal of experience with children. For the benefit of those desiring to make a more extensive and thorough study of the topics from various points of view, a number of references are appended at the close of the book.

The author has in a way acted as an organizer and interpreter of the work of the many observers and experimenters cited in the references, to all of whom obligations are due. To one of these, the doer or inspirer of nearly all that has been done in America in studying children, Dr. G. Stanley Hall, special acknowledgments are gratefully made both for his writings and for personal inspiration. Special thanks are also due the author's wife from the author and his readers for eliminating abstract statements, complicated sentences and mechanical errors.

E. A. K.

FITCHBURG NORMAL SCHOOL, March, 1911.

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PART I

**GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF SUBJECTIVE
DEVELOPMENT**

THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE MAKING

CHAPTER I

THE PERSONALITY

The Germ of Mental Life. The ultimate standard of value among human beings is personality ; hence its development is of supreme importance. The germ of mental life in the human infant exhibits one of the most striking instances of evolution to be found in nature. Greater changes take place in the mind of an infant in a few years than in ages of plant or animal evolution. This germ of mental life is so constituted that it tends to develop according to inner laws, as does a grain of wheat, yet it is greatly modified in its development by its environment, physical and psychical.

The problem of the student of the genesis of personality is to describe the inner laws governing the development of a human being and determine how his development is influenced by the outer forces. In doing this it will be necessary first to consider briefly the nature of a conscious personality and then to discuss a mental state that is most closely identified with that development, i. e., interest. After this the stages of development may be described and their significance to the educator pointed out.

The Conscious Self. Each human mind is in a way a unity complete in itself. Many phases of the surroundings are mirrored in it and each portion of the

universe exists for it only as it comes within the circle of the individual consciousness. The consciousness of one person is separate and distinct from that of any other person. His mind is a mental world by itself—a distinct mental organism. Each mind has a life of its own, yet its vigor and health depend upon maintaining proper relations with the body, with the physical environment and with other minds, and upon a proper relation of its activities to each other. A mind in a weakened or disordered body is handicapped and the person who shuts himself off from sensory experiences, isolates himself from contact with other minds or allows one idea or passion to rule, becomes mentally abnormal and unhealthy.

The mental life is rooted in a physiological organism and really emerges as the result of the latter's activities in responding to the physical environment. In its germ the conscious self is merely an awareness of conscious states produced by physiological processes and sensory motor reactions. The infant has no control of its movements and may repeatedly scratch itself without knowing how to avoid the action. Its movements are partly of an indefinite, chance character and partly of more definite reflex and instinctive character. The infant is in somewhat of the condition of a man who should find himself in a shop where machines of all sorts were in motion. He would at first have no control over them. By noticing what happened after each motion and by pulling various cranks and levers he would learn to know what to expect at any moment and could ultimately control the various machines. In a similar way does the babe gradually gain control of his bodily movements. In the meantime the conscious states that are experienced are organized into a conscious self.

Independence of Mental Life. Although the mental life comes into existence through the activities of the physiological mechanisms and the action of the environment upon the organs of special sense, it attains a large measure of independence. After the higher cerebral centers are developed, so long as they remain in healthy activity, the mental life of thought may be carried on for long periods of time with little or no modification produced by lower centers or by outside stimulations of the special senses. One may remain at home and live mentally in a distant place or age, or on the other hand he may actually travel in distant climes and yet carry with him his home mental life. One of the most marked differences in individuals is the extent to which they become independent of their immediate environment and of moods physiologically initiated. This independence of consciousness of the immediate physiological and environmental influence is due in part to the fact that it may select for modifying itself, any portion of the environment.

By change of attention one can bring into the foreground any one of the many sensations resulting from physiological processes and sense stimulations; he may change objects or move sense organs so as to get different sensations and he may choose his future mental experiences by going where he will get new sensations, emotions and ideas, or he may engage in other activities. One can thus determine within pretty wide limits what his mental life shall be. Furthermore he not only can select objects for notice, but can modify the effects of what is noticed according to the nature of his mental life. The botanist, the gardener and the artist may select the same flower for notice, but each gets a different men-

tal experience from it, the botanist, its classification, the gardener, its use, and the artist, its beauty. In a similar way each object may appear different to the same person if he examines it with a changed purpose. A knife gives different impressions when observed for use as an article of commerce, a screwdriver, a pencil sharpener or a paperweight.

At birth, mental freedom is wholly lacking. Man does not inherit freedom, nor can it be given him; he must achieve it for himself. The degree in which it is attained is, in general, a pretty good measure of the degree of mental development and organization that has been reached by the individual.

Self-Government. Whatever amount and variety of knowledge and skill a human being may possess he is lacking in the essential characteristic of a human personality if he is not self-directing and self-governing. An individual who performs certain actions, when directed to do so, absolutely according to directions, may perform valuable service for society, but he is not in so doing, showing the essential elements of a human individual any more than is a type-writer or adding machine when fulfilling its mechanical functions. To be useful in certain lines a human being needs to become like a machine in some of his actions, yet the essential nature of human personality is not shown in such actions, but in the choosing of what he shall do and in directing his actions in accordance with his choices.

On the other hand, a person whose actions are directed wholly by the impulses of the moment is like a social group in a state of anarchy where there is little consistency in conduct. A self-governing person must

act in accordance with law just as much as the one who conforms absolutely to the directions given him. The only difference is that the law is an ideal within the individual himself instead of originating in some one else. All educational influences brought to bear upon human individuals are misdirected if they do not tend to produce a personality that governs itself in accordance with certain constant, conscious purposes or principles of conduct.

An individual is well developed only when he has had experience both in modifying things in accordance with his desires and in modifying himself in accordance with conditions or rules that he cannot change. A personality that seeks to impose its desires and wishes upon every thing and every body, if unchecked, becomes an undesirable member of society and an erratic, unhappy individual. For his own good and for the advantage of society he must realize that nature and society are stronger than he is, and instead of fretting or dashing himself against law he must learn to direct his actions according to rules and must change himself so that he will desire to conform to law. This development of personality may be produced to some extent by consistently enforced obedience but is better produced, where practicable, by having the individual engage in work and meet various social situations. These always require regulation of conduct and conformity to natural and social laws.

Unity of Personality. Not only should a well developed personality be self-directing, but it should at all times be an organized, consistent unity or be progressing toward such unity. This does not mean that one may not change his characteristics at different stages

of development but merely that at each stage there shall be unity and harmony rather than varied and conflicting tendencies.

Although ideals should be in advance of habits, yet if they are too remote to influence conduct in the direction of forming habits in accord with them, the individual is weaker, and therefore not so vicious or virtuous a person as he would be if his ideals and habits were in accord. In a similar way the formation of habits of one type under authoritative control, while at the same time holding opposing ideals of conduct, is weakening. If there is no great or long continued conscious repugnance to the directed action the tendency is, however, for one to become used to the action and finally to regard it with favor and pleasure. On the other hand, if the feelings are strong they are likely to modify the conduct either gradually as there is opportunity or in a sudden rebellion. It is very undesirable that the conflict between impulse and habit should be long continued with one, and then the other, in ascendancy.

Still worse in their ultimate effects may be the results of conflicts within the individual's own consciousness. Where one's own ideals are opposed by his desires there is war within the governing authority of consciousness. If the conflict can be settled by thinking about the matter and definitely deciding to give up one of the opposing tendencies and acting accordingly, the unity of the conscious self is restored. If this is done every time and the decision carried out without again opening the controversy, unity and strength of personality tend to be developed and established.

If on the other hand the conflict is not definitely settled one way or the other, but continually renewed,

or if it is settled by sheer force of will that merely compels action in one direction without changing the desire to do the opposite, the results are likely to be unfortunate. An impulse that is neither replaced by another nor given some sort of an outlet, may poison or paralyze as does a closed wound or a felon. Freud, Sidis, Prince and others have treated many cases of disordered personality caused by such suppression of impulses. There is good reason to believe that what are sometimes called "strangled ideas" and impulses are the sources of a large proportion of cases of hysteria, disordered personality, diseased will and insanity that are not mainly physical in their origin. It is therefore of supreme importance to the health and strength of the mental self that its various states shall be harmonized and unified.

This means that one must have some sort of a philosophy of life and a moral code as well as standards of truth, taste, value, etc. that are harmonized with each other and with one's conduct. When any one of these change it is necessary that the others shall change to harmonize with it, if a healthful unity of personality is to be maintained. An individual may therefore be dominated by quite different impulses and ideas at different times, and yet his nature at each stage be a harmonious unity. There is, however, some loss of efficiency if one stage does not prepare for the next, and much loss if it is of a character that hinders the fullest development of the personality at each stage.

EXERCISES

1. Name if you can anything that has a value independent of any relation to a person.

2. Is there such a thing as beauty without a person to see it?
3. Is a hermit life favorable to mental health? Why?
4. In the present world could a mind exist without a body with senses and muscles?
5. How nearly complete is your control of your own body? How may it be increased?
6. Write a list of a hundred words as quickly as you can. After doing so look them over and see how many have no relation to anything you see, hear or feel at the moment.
7. Illustrate individual differences in ideas aroused by the same objects.
8. Give an example of a person showing little self-direction and of one showing great independence.
9. Which is most likely to realize the necessity of conforming to law, a farmer or a speculator? Why?
10. What is the effect of changing one's mind often or of cherishing secret wishes opposed to one's ideals? Why?

CHAPTER II

INTEREST

Nature and Functions. With no state of consciousness is the development of the mental life so closely associated as with interest. The character and degree of one's interest at any time reveal what he is and indicate what he has been and is likely to become. Interest is to mental life what digestion is to the physical. It determines what of the surroundings shall become a part of the mental self and how all shall be organized and related in consciousness. Interest not only makes one sensitive, either for the moment or permanently, to certain kinds of stimuli and causes corresponding ideas to survive in consciousness, but it gives a bent to the mind, directs the organization of ideas and thus determines what the future mental states shall be. One who is interested in birds will hear and see them more readily than other persons, will approach them and note their relation to the surroundings, will seek confirmation of his observations from other persons and from books and will, to a considerable extent, organize his ideas of nature, books and people with reference to their power to gratify his interest in birds.

Interest is usually regarded as a feeling or affective state of consciousness that is associated with corresponding activities of attention and associated movements. Interest may also exist in the form of an unconscious tendency to respond to certain kinds of stimulation. Many natural and acquired tendencies to