THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ADOLESCENCE

BY

FREDERICK TRACY, PH.D.

Professor of Ethics in University College, University of Toronto

Author of "The Psychology of Childhood," etc.

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1923

EDITOR'S PREFACE

The books of this Series are designed to serve as manuals for teachers in the field of moral and religious education. The Series will comprise volumes on the Psychology of Childhood, the Psychology of Adolescence, the Psychology of Education, the Psychology of Religion, the Principles and Methods of Moral and Religious Education, Elementary and Secondary Moral and Religious Instruction, Religious School Organization and Equipment, etc. The books will be prepared by well known specialists. The following volumes will be included in the series: —

1. CHILD PSYCHOLOGY (*To be arranged.*)

2. PSYCHOLOGY OF ADOLESCENCE (*Ready.*)
Frederick Tracy, Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy, University of Toronto.

3. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS OF EDUCATION (*In preparation.*)
Stephen Sheldon Colvin, Ph.D., Professor of the Psychology of Education, Brown University.

4. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION (*In preparation.*)
Luther A. Weigle, Ph.D., Professor of Christian Nurture, Yale University.

5. CHARACTER BUILDING (*In preparation.*)
Edwin A. Kirkpatrick, M.Ph., Director of Child Study, Fitchburg State Normal School.

6. PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (*In preparation.*)
Luther A. Weigle, Ph.D., Professor of Christian Nurture, Yale University.

7. MORAL TRAINING IN THE SCHOOL AND HOME (*Ready.*)
E. Hershey Sneath, Ph.D., LL.D., Professor of the Philosophy of Religion and Religious Education, Yale University.

George Hodges, D.D., LL.D., Dean of the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge.

8. MORAL EDUCATION IN THE HIGH SCHOOL (*In preparation.*)
Frank Chapman Sharp, Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy, University of Wisconsin.

9. RELIGIOUS TRAINING IN HOME AND SCHOOL (*Ready.*)
E. Hershey Sneath, Ph.D., LL.D., Professor of the Philosophy of Religion and Religious Education, Yale University.
George Hodges, D.D., LL.D., Dean of the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge.
Henry Hallam Tweedy, M.A., Professor of Practical Theology, Yale University.

10. MATERIAL AND EQUIPMENT FOR MORAL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (*To be arranged.*)

PREFACE

That period of life technically known as Adolescence, untechnically as the time of Youth, and colloquially as the Teen Age, covering the years from the advent of puberty to the attainment of maturity, and roughly identical with the days of high school and college education, has been widely and carefully studied, from every point of view, during recent years, and our knowledge of it has been correspondingly enriched. The purpose of the present work is not primarily to add to the number of those valuable records which embody the results of investigations into the adolescent mind from this or that point of view; but rather to survey the whole field, having in mind the leading facts, as presented in these psychological and biological researches, as well as the fundamental categories of valuation, as set forth in the philosophy of morals, of religion, and of education; and to place the results of this survey in the hands of the teacher, within the modest compass of a "handbook."

This being the end in view, it appeared neither feasible nor desirable to burden the pages of the book with elaborate details, or to occupy much space with the minutiae of individual cases; but rather to undertake the much more difficult task of obtaining, through a careful study of these individual cases, as intimate an acquaintance as possible with the average youth and maiden, and of passing on to the busy teacher the knowledge so gained.

Such observations as the author has made on his own account, though playing the chief part in determining his conclusions, have not for the most part been reduced to the statistical form, and do not appear in tables in the following chapters. They have been made in the course of many years spent in the teaching profession, during which he has had the privilege of intimate association with some thou-

sands of adolescents, of both sexes, chiefly in school and college life. If a lifetime spent in teaching has brought any insight into the nature of youth, and with it any vision of the supreme educational end, and if these have found clear expression in the pages that follow, then the publication of the book may be regarded as justified.

At the same time the author's indebtedness to other workers in the same field is greater than can be easily expressed. The appended bibliography, while by no means complete, will convey some idea of that indebtedness. It goes without saying that the books and articles mentioned there are not all of equal value; and it is in no invidious spirit, but as a matter of simple justice, that I make special mention here of the work of Lancaster, Hall, Starbuck, James and Coe, as pre-eminently helpful.

I am indebted to my friend Dr. Oswald C. J. Withrow, who kindly read the manuscript of Chapter III, and gave me some valuable suggestions, which I was able to adopt, with advantage to the book.

FREDERICK TRACY.

University of Toronto,
Jan. 24th, 1920.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ADOLESCENCE

CHAPTER I

A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

The author of this book is convinced of the necessity of combining analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, observation and interpretation, facts and theories, in any study of the kind here undertaken, if that study is to yield satisfactory results. The analysis of concrete totals into their constituent factors must go hand in hand with the constructive synthesis of those factors in the total. A whole can be rightly understood only in relation to its parts, and the parts only in relation to one another and to the whole. A fact is of little value except as apprehended in its setting; and this is interpretation which involves theory; while conversely, all interpretation must proceed on the basis of facts, and find its incentive and its justification in the purpose to know those facts more thoroughly; that is, to know them in their wider and deeper significance. Since observation is directed towards the particular, and interpretation towards the universal, the former of these without the latter (to speak in Kantian phraseology) is blind, the latter without the former is void.

He is further persuaded that the concrete total which is before him in the present undertaking is the individual human life, occupying its place in the world, played upon by multifarious forces from without, profoundly influenced by other forces that are within, moulded and shaped at every moment through those dispositions and native tendencies that are its inheritance from the past, and by those influ-

ences, material and social, that are all about it in the present; reacting incessantly to those influences; and developing, from the cradle to the grave, as an enduring identity, though these actions and reactions, both external and internal, are exceedingly diversified in their nature and complicated in their mode of operation.

Applying to the subject before us the principles here laid down, it becomes clear that no single period or stage in the life of the individual can be adequately dealt with except in relation to the whole life; that no single phase or capacity of the individual mind can be properly understood except in relation to its other capacities and phases; that no single reaction is intelligible except in relation to the total setting, of circumstance and stimulus, in which it occurred; and that no single personality can be fully accounted for except in its reciprocal relations with the other members of the social order.

The division of the span of life into periods is a convenient device, justified by the facts of growth, and highly useful for purposes of study; yet these periods do not stand apart from one another, separated by rigid lines of demarcation. Carried away by the relatively abrupt and pronounced changes that occur, for example, about the beginning of the teens, some writers have permitted themselves to speak of the years that follow as though they had little or nothing in common with the years that precede. The organic connection of the different stages or periods with one another is much obscured and minimized. Differences are emphasized at the expense of similarities. I recall one work in which the author says in substance: Nature has been busy, up to the age of ten or twelve, in building a body for the child; she then proceeds, during the next three or four years, to install his emotional nature; and after that to give him an intellect. There is of course a glimmer of truth here, but the statement is almost grotesquely false in that it ignores the continuity of individual development, and the identity of individual being throughout all the stages of that development.

It is extremely misleading to speak of the growth of a human being in terms that only befit the construction of a factory. Personality is not an artifact, that it should be described after this manner. The child is born, not made. And his development proceeds, not by additions from without, but by unfoldings from within; not by mechanical accretion, but by vital and dynamical self-realization.

It seems to me quite possible, moreover, to lay an exaggerated emphasis upon the differences between children and adults. It is quite true, of course, that these differences are great and striking, but they are differences of degree rather than of kind, and they are underlaid by far more fundamental identities. It is quite true that the babe and the man differ widely in respect of the relative size and weight of the various parts and organs of the body. It is quite true that the food taken into the system serves, in the one case, for the repair of waste, while in the other it goes also to the formation of new tissue and the augmentation of energy. It is also quite true that the mental attitude of a child seems in some cases to be such that adults have difficulty in understanding him; but this is because of the imperfection of the child's means of communication, and not at all because his attitude is really foreign to, or unthinkable by, the adult mind. The processes of association, of psycho-physical correlation, of sensori-motor reaction, of instinct, of attention, of apperception, and of habit, are identical in principle, differing only as the immature differs from the mature, that is, in the firmness and breadth of the associative connexions, in the volume and range of ideas, and in the degree of power and precision in volitional action.

If the child and the man were different sorts of beings, then our psychology of the adult mind would throw no light on the nature of the child mind, and our child study would help us not a whit in the understanding of the adult consciousness; but I hardly think that any competent psychologist would subscribe to propositions of that kind. Everywhere, not only between the child and the adult, but between one child and another, between one adult and another, be-

tween men and women, between men of one race and men of another race, we find the most striking differences; differences so striking, indeed, that often one individual is forced to say of another,—" His mental attitude is so foreign that I cannot comprehend it." This, however, does not make them beings of different kinds essentially. For great and important as the differences are, the likenesses are greater and more important still; for they are fundamental and essential, while the differences are incidental and accessory.

In sharp contrast, then, to the view sometimes expressed, that the various periods of life are so strikingly different from one another that there must be virtually a separate psychology for each, the position taken here is that there is only one psychology, because mind in its essential features is everywhere the same; that this one psychology has many chapters; and that it must be essentially developmental and dynamic in its spirit and method, never losing sight of the fact that it has to deal, not with *things* that can be described and inventoried once for all, but with living processes and forces that reveal new and striking features even while under the observer's attention.

The difference between this point of view and the other may be largely a difference of relative emphasis, or even of terminology, but the important thing is that in the study of a given child we have to do, not with several different things, one after the other, but with one individual, whose single nature is unfolding itself throughout the course of its history, whether in childhood, boyhood, youth, or manhood; that these are phases or stages of that single development; and that the division into periods is instrumental and methodological rather than fundamental and essential. The primal fact is that an individual life is running its course; the secondary fact is that this course falls conveniently into several stages, rather clearly marked by certain distinctive characteristics.

The justification of our divisions lies in the fact that, at certain stages there is an acceleration of development along

certain lines; powers and capacities that heretofore had remained in abeyance now move forward swiftly towards full-blown effectiveness, and whole areas of feeling and ideation come for the first time into clear consciousness. Yet these powers and capacities were there all the while, slowly gathering momentum beneath the surface, as the bud gathers momentum unnoticed, ready for the day when it shall burst open and reveal itself as the flower. Childhood, boyhood, youth and maturity are one continuum. The transition from any one of these to the next is not made by all persons at the same time of life, nor with the same suddenness. In all cases it is a genuine evolution, though in some cases it bears a close superficial resemblance to revolution.

Adolescence, then, is not a life by itself, but a stage in the total life. The attempt to study it by itself alone would inevitably end in misunderstanding. Striking and characteristic as its peculiar features are, they have their preparatory conditions in the preceding periods, and many of their effects persist unto the end of life. There is no characteristic of adolescence whose germ may not be found in childhood, and whose consequences may not be traced in maturity and old age. No adequate understanding of this period is possible unless one looks also beyond the period in both directions. They little know of adolescence who only adolescence know. Back of adolescence are boyhood and childhood, and back of childhood are the forces of heredity, and all about the individual are the diverse operations of the environment; while on the other hand youth develops into maturity and maturity is succeeded by senescence, decay and death. Nay, further, according to the prevailing view of our race, the individual was made to continue into a life beyond that which now is; and in the consideration of what he is, as well as of that which he should become through education, all these things should be taken into account.

A parallel remark is called for in reference to the so-called faculties or powers of the mind. These are not sepa-

rate from one another, but are bound together in the unity of the mental life. The time-honored division of the psychic powers into feeling, thought, and will, with the various sub-divisions falling under these, is of great importance and value, and cannot profitably be discarded; but these are distinguishable features, not separate things. The unity of the mental life is the one inescapable fact, the diversity of its operations is the other. Neither of these must be lost sight of. The individual is not to be thought of as now thinking, now feeling, now acting; but in any and every concrete expression of himself there are cognitive, affective, and conative factors, varying in all conceivable degrees of relative prominence or intensity. And none of these is what it is without the others.

Perhaps at no other time in the entire life is this intimate connexion among the various mental processes more evident than during the period of youth; though on the other hand, it must also be pointed out that this interconnexion is less steady and uniform than in the later, or even in the next earlier period. The relation between thoughts and feelings, and between each of these and conduct, though less mechanical than in boyhood, and less settled and defined than in maturity, is nevertheless exceedingly close and vital. And the aim of education, at all ages, but especially now, should be to bring about a healthy and vigorous correlation among all these powers, under the control of a cultivated intelligence.

The dominant convictions under which the following pages are written, may then be stated somewhat as follows:

The point of view throughout is teleological. The educational end, I trust, is never lost sight of, and ethical values are always in the forefront. Facts are prized chiefly because they help to clarify our vision of that educational end and of those ethical values, or throw light upon the means by which they may be realized. In the early days of the Child Study movement, one of its wisest exponents remarked that child study existed " primarily for the sake of the child,

secondarily for the sake of the teacher, and incidentally for the sake of science." This is the point of view adopted here. We study the nature of youth in order that we may be of some service to youth in its efforts to find itself and come into the full possession of its own moral and spiritual heritage. We may hope, through this larger understanding, to be helpful to youth in a positive and direct way, but certainly at least in a negative and indirect way. We may hope at least to understand when to stand aside, refrain from meddling, and let nature have her perfect work. The study of youth, like the study of childhood, should teach us to respect individuality and the sacred rights of personality, and to put no occasion of stumbling in the way of one of these little ones.

No apology should be necessary for laying emphasis on the vision of the ideal of human life, and of all ultimate values, such as comes through reflection on the problems of philosophy, and through study of the questions raised for us by ethics and religion. It is but natural, therefore, that the longest chapters in the book should be devoted to the consideration of the moral and religious life, and to the meaning and method of education. To these great topics all else may be regarded as tributary and contributory. Our supreme interest is in personal character and the means by which it may be most fully realized. What that realization would involve, could it be made complete, we do not of course pretend to know, but among the criteria by which we may get the measure of its attainment at any given point, there are two that seem worthy of being placed in the forefront in this preliminary survey, and kept continually before us throughout. And this, not because they are new, but because of their profound significance in educational theory, and their rich fruitfulness in educational practice.

The first of these might be expressed by some such term as "wholeness," "symmetry," or "balance." It was a favorite thought with the Greeks. A man's character could be judged by its symmetry. The highest type of

man was one in whose character there were no ugly excrescences and no glaring defects. Physically, the ideal was not a professional specialist, but an all-round athlete, in whose make-up no muscle was atrophied and none hypertrophied. Intellectually, the ideal was a man who could see truth in all its bearings and from every point of view; a type of mind which, in its highest form, became the "spectator of all time and all existence." Morally, it was a man whose desires and appetites were well co-ordinated and perfectly adjusted to one another and to the total requirements of his life. Of such a one the word "integrity" might be used, in its etymological sense of "wholeness." As the ideal state was the embodiment of justice, in the sense that all the social groups that made up the state were perfectly adjusted to one another, so that there was no friction in the operation of the political machinery; so the ideal individual was the incarnation of justice, in the sense that all his powers were in perfect and frictionless harmony with one another in the totality of his being.

It seems to me difficult to improve upon this conception of the human ideal. It is deep enough to cover all that is connoted by the profoundest terms in our Christian theology, and comprehensive enough to make room for the most ambitious program in religious education. Whatever might be said in the interests of that specialization which becomes a practical necessity in most adult lives, the true educational ideal for childhood and youth, as well as the best preparation for that specialization itself, is that which is expressed in such terms as we have used above, or in that fine old academic phrase, "a liberal education."

The second of the two criteria of personal development I would like to express by such terms as "control," "mastery," and the like. The idea of control and the idea of wholeness are closely connected. Neither can be fully attained without the other. The element of control belongs to the education of the will; but will itself is nothing other than the power of intelligent self-direction. And

so by control is meant that condition of the inner life in which all the psychic forces are in harmony, because they are all conformed to a dominant idea and purpose. Assuming, of course, that this dominant purpose is a wholesome one, then the real meaning of education, from this point of view, is the regulation and direction of every impulse and instinct, every desire and prompting, by this dominant purpose. It will readily be seen that this means harmony as well as control: harmony, indeed, through control. And that this is at least one way of stating the supreme purpose and meaning of education, will hardly be disputed.

CHAPTER II

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VARIOUS LIFE-STAGES

In the course of the average human life, that runs its normal course, there are three divisional points of more than ordinary importance. The first of these is marked by the birth of the procreative powers; the second by the attainment of full maturity in regard to all the powers of mind and body; and the third by the beginning of their deterioration. In the life of every organism there is a constant struggle between the forces that make for its upbuilding and those that make for its destruction. Up to the point which we call maturity the forces of construction prevail over the forces of destruction; during the period of mature life the battle may be said to be drawn; while the third point is marked by the beginning of the ascendancy of the forces of destruction.

This gives us, then, to begin with, four main divisions of life. The first extends from the birth of the body to the birth of the procreative functions. This period may be called the period of childhood, and it embraces, roughly speaking, about the first dozen years of life. The second extends from the birth of the procreative functions to the full maturing of all the powers. This is the period of youth, or adolescence, and it embraces, roughly speaking, about the second dozen years of life. The third extends over the whole time during which the individual continues to enjoy the unimpaired use of his powers. It is the period of manhood, and its extent may be indicated, very roughly indeed, as the third and fourth dozens of the years of life. The fourth period extends from the beginning of the decay of the powers to the consummation of that decay in the

fact of death. It is the period of senescence; and if we wish to assist our memories by continuing to reckon in dozens, its extent may be put down, still more roughly, as the fifth and sixth dozens of the years of life. Thus if an ordinary life lasts 72 years, we may divide that life into six equal parts, calling the first childhood, the second adolescence, the third and fourth maturity, and the fifth and sixth senescence. Or, putting childhood and youth together, we see that such a life falls into three equal parts, and that the first of these parts is consumed in the attainment of maturity.

The period of childhood is usually subdivided, for purposes of minuter study, into two or more parts. If the division is two-fold, the dividing line is drawn about the eighth year; and in that case the first eight years are known as childhood, and the next four as boyhood (or girlhood).

The period of youth may also be subdivided, and usually is, into two, or, by some writers, into three parts. In the latter case the divisions are known as early, middle, and later adolescence. I am not convinced of the value of a three-fold division; but it does seem clear that the first four or five years of the teens show characteristics sufficiently well marked to distinguish these years somewhat from those that follow, and so to justify a two-fold division. On that basis we shall speak of early and later adolescence, with the dividing line somewhere about the sixteenth or seventeenth year.

We may now try to indicate, somewhat more carefully, why these divisions are made, and what are the leading characteristics of each period.

Early childhod, then, or childhood proper, extends from birth to the time when the representative powers, memory and imagination, attain to effective control of the material provided by the senses. It is not, of course, denied that these powers are operative in the earliest childhood. No doubt the very first sensation experienced by an infant leaves behind it some faint traces of