

“MY PEDAGOGIC CREED” (1897)

Article IV: The Nature of Method

-John Dewey

I believe that:

1 -the question of method is ultimately reducible to the question of the order of development of the child's powers and interests. The law for presenting and treating material is the law implicit within the child's own nature. Because this is so I believe the following statements are of supreme importance as determining the spirit in which education is carried on:

2 -the active side precedes the passive in the development of the child-nature; that expression comes before conscious impression; that the muscular development precedes the sensory; that movements come before conscious sensations; I believe that consciousness is essentially motor or impulsive; that conscious states tend to project themselves in action.

3 -the neglect of this principle is the cause of a large part of the waste of time and strength in school work. The child is thrown into a passive, receptive, or absorbing attitude. The conditions are such that he is not permitted to follow the law of his nature; the result is friction and waste.

4 -ideas (intellectual and rational processes) also result from action and evolve for the sake of the better control of action. What we term reason is primarily the law of orderly or effective action. To attempt to develop the reasoning powers, the powers of judgment, without reference to the selection and arrangement of means in action, is the fundamental fallacy in our present methods of dealing with this matter. As a result we present the child with arbitrary symbols. Symbols are a necessity in mental development, but they have their place as tools for economizing effort; presented by themselves they are a mass of meaningless and arbitrary ideas imposed from without.

5 -the image is the great instrument of instruction. What a child gets out of any subject presented to him is simply the images which he himself forms with regard to it.

6 -if nine-tenths of the energy at present directed towards making this child learn certain things were spent in seeing to it that the child was forming proper images, the work of instruction would be indefinitely facilitated.

7 -much of the time and attention now given to the preparation and presentation of lessons might be more profitably expended in training the child's power of imagery and in seeing to it that he was continually forming definite, vivid, and growing images of the various subjects with which he comes in contact in his experience.

8 -interests are the signs and symptoms of growing power. I believe that they represent dawning capacities. Accordingly the constant and careful observation of interests is of the utmost importance for the educator.

9 -these interests are to be observed as showing the state of development which the child has reached.

10 -they prophesy the stage upon which he is about to enter.

-only through the continual and sympathetic observation of childhood's interests can

the adult enter into the child's life and see what it is ready for, and upon what material it could work most readily and fruitfully. 11

-these interests are neither to be humored nor repressed. To repress interest is to substitute the adult for the child, and so to weaken intellectual curiosity and alertness, to suppress initiative, and to deaden interest. To humor the interests is to substitute the transient for the permanent. The interest is always the sign of some power below; the important thing is to discover this power. To humor the interest is to fail to penetrate below the surface, and its sure result is to substitute caprice and whim for genuine interest. 12

-the emotions are the reflex of actions.

-to endeavor to stimulate or arouse the emotions apart from their corresponding activities is to introduce an unhealthy and morbid state of mind. 13

-if we can only secure right habits of action and thought, with reference to the good, the true, and the beautiful, the emotions will for the most part take care of themselves. 14

-next to deadness and dullness, formalism and routine, our education is threatened with no greater evil than sentimentalism. 15

-this sentimentalism is the necessary result of the attempt to divorce feeling from action. 16

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