

Education as Direction

1. The Environment as Directive

We now pass to one of the special forms which the general function of education assumes: namely, that of direction, control, or guidance. Of these three words, direction, control, and guidance, the last best conveys the idea of assisting through cooperation the natural capacities of the individuals guided; control conveys rather the notion of an energy brought to bear from without and meeting some resistance from the one controlled; direction is a more neutral term and suggests the fact that the active tendencies of those directed are led in a certain continuous course, instead of dispersing aimlessly. Direction expresses the basic function, which tends at one extreme to become a guiding assistance and at another, a regulation or ruling. But in any case, we must carefully avoid a meaning sometimes read into the term "control." It is sometimes assumed, explicitly or unconsciously, that an individual's tendencies are naturally purely individualistic or egoistic, and thus antisocial. Control then denotes the process by which he is brought to subordinate his natural impulses to public or common ends. Since, by conception, his own nature is quite alien to this process and opposes it rather than helps it, control has in this view a flavor of coercion or compulsion about it. Systems of government and theories of the state have been built upon this notion, and it has seriously affected educational ideas and practices. But there is no ground for any such view. Individuals are certainly interested, at times, in having their own way, and their own way may go contrary to the ways of others. But they are also interested, and chiefly interested upon the whole, in entering into the activities of others and taking part in conjoint and cooperative doings. Otherwise, no such thing as a community would be possible. And there would not even be any one interested in furnishing the policeman to keep a semblance of harmony unless he thought that thereby he could gain some personal advantage. Control, in truth, means only an emphatic form of direction of powers, and covers the regulation gained by an individual through his own efforts quite as much as that brought about when others take the lead.

In general, every stimulus directs activity. It does not simply excite it or stir it up, but directs it toward an object. Put the other way around, a response is not just a re-action, a protest, as it were, against being disturbed; it is, as the word indicates, an answer. It meets the stimulus, and corresponds with it. There is an adaptation of the stimulus and response to each other. A light is the stimulus to the eye to see something, and the business of the eye is to see. If the eyes are open and there is light, seeing occurs; the stimulus is but a condition of the fulfillment of the proper function of the organ, not an outside interruption. To some extent, then, all direction or control is a guiding of activity to its own end; it is an assistance in doing fully what some organ is already tending to do.

Democracy and Education

This general statement needs, however, to be qualified in two respects. In the first place, except in the case of a small number of instincts, the stimuli to which an immature human being is subject are not sufficiently definite to call out, in the beginning, specific responses. There is always a great deal of superfluous energy aroused. This energy may be wasted, going aside from the point; it may also go against the successful performance of an act. It does harm by getting in the way. Compare the behavior of a beginner in riding a bicycle with that of the expert. There is little axis of direction in the energies put forth; they are largely dispersive and centrifugal. Direction involves a focusing and fixating of action in order that it may be truly a response, and this requires an elimination of unnecessary and confusing movements. In the second place, although no activity can be produced in which the person does not cooperate to some extent, yet a response may be of a kind which does not fit into the sequence and continuity of action. A person boxing may dodge a particular blow successfully, but in such a way as to expose himself the next instant to a still harder blow. Adequate control means that the successive acts are brought into a continuous order; each act not only meets its immediate stimulus but helps the acts which follow.

In short, direction is both simultaneous and successive. At a given time, it requires that, from all the tendencies that are partially called out, those be selected which center energy upon the point of need. Successively, it requires that each act be balanced with those which precede and come after, so that order of activity is achieved. Focusing and ordering are thus the two aspects of direction, one spatial, the other temporal. The first insures hitting the mark; the second keeps the balance required for further action. Obviously, it is not possible to separate them in practice as we have distinguished them in idea. Activity must be centered at a given time in such a way as to prepare for what comes next. The problem of the immediate response is complicated by one's having to be on the lookout for future occurrences.

Two conclusions emerge from these general statements. On the one hand, purely external direction is impossible. The environment can at most only supply stimuli to call out responses. These responses proceed from tendencies already possessed by the individual. Even when a person is frightened by threats into doing something, the threats work only because the person has an instinct of fear. If he has not, or if, though having it, it is under his own control, the threat has no more influence upon him than light has in causing a person to see who has no eyes. While the customs and rules of adults furnish stimuli which direct as well as evoke the activities of the young, the young, after all, participate in the direction which their actions finally take. In the strict sense, nothing can be forced upon them or into them. To overlook this fact means to distort and pervert human nature. To take into account the contribution made by the existing instincts and habits of those directed is to direct them economically and wisely. Speaking accurately, all direction is but re-direction; it shifts the activities already going on into another channel. Unless one is cognizant of the energies which are already in operation, one's attempts at direction will almost surely go amiss.

On the other hand, the control afforded by the customs and regulations of others may be

Democracy and Education

short-sighted. It may accomplish its immediate effect, but at the expense of throwing the subsequent action of the person out of balance. A threat may, for example, prevent a person from doing something to which he is naturally inclined by arousing fear of disagreeable consequences if he persists. But he may be left in the position which exposes him later on to influences which will lead him to do even worse things. His instincts of cunning and slyness may be aroused, so that things henceforth appeal to him on the side of evasion and trickery more than would otherwise have been the case. Those engaged in directing the actions of others are always in danger of overlooking the importance of the sequential development of those they direct.

2. Modes of Social Direction

Adults are naturally most conscious of directing the conduct of others when they are immediately aiming so to do. As a rule, they have such an aim consciously when they find themselves resisted; when others are doing things they do not wish them to do. But the more permanent and influential modes of control are those which operate from moment to moment continuously without such deliberate intention on our part.

1. When others are not doing what we would like them to or are threatening disobedience, we are most conscious of the need of controlling them and of the influences by which they are controlled. In such cases, our control becomes most direct, and at this point we are most likely to make the mistakes just spoken of. We are even likely to take the influence of superior force for control, forgetting that while we may lead a horse to water we cannot make him drink; and that while we can shut a man up in a penitentiary we cannot make him penitent. In all such cases of immediate action upon others, we need to discriminate between physical results and moral results. A person may be in such a condition that forcible feeding or enforced confinement is necessary for his own good. A child may have to be snatched with roughness away from a fire so that he shall not be burnt. But no improvement of disposition, no educative effect, need follow. A harsh and commanding tone may be effectual in keeping a child away from the fire, and the same desirable physical effect will follow as if he had been snatched away. But there may be no more obedience of a moral sort in one case than in the other. A man can be prevented from breaking into other persons' houses by shutting him up, but shutting him up may not alter his disposition to commit burglary. When we confuse a physical with an educative result, we always lose the chance of enlisting the person's own participating disposition in getting the result desired, and thereby of developing within him an intrinsic and persisting direction in the right way.

In general, the occasion for the more conscious acts of control should be limited to acts which are so instinctive or impulsive that the one performing them has no means of foreseeing their outcome. If a person cannot foresee the consequences of his act, and is not capable of understanding what he is told about its outcome by those with more experience, it is impossible for him to guide his act intelligently. In such a state, every act is alike to him. Whatever moves him does move him, and that is all there is to it. In some cases, it is well to permit him to experiment, and to discover the consequences for himself in order that

Democracy and Education

he may act intelligently next time under similar circumstances. But some courses of action are too discommoding and obnoxious to others to allow of this course being pursued. Direct disapproval is now resorted to. Shaming, ridicule, disfavor, rebuke, and punishment are used. Or contrary tendencies in the child are appealed to to divert him from his troublesome line of behavior. His sensitiveness to approbation, his hope of winning favor by an agreeable act, are made use of to induce action in another direction.

2. These methods of control are so obvious (because so intentionally employed) that it would hardly be worth while to mention them if it were not that notice may now be taken, by way of contrast, of the other more important and permanent mode of control. This other method resides in the ways in which persons, with whom the immature being is associated, use things; the instrumentalities with which they accomplish their own ends. The very existence of the social medium in which an individual lives, moves, and has his being is the standing effective agency of directing his activity.

This fact makes it necessary for us to examine in greater detail what is meant by the social environment. We are given to separating from each other the physical and social environments in which we live. The separation is responsible on one hand for an exaggeration of the moral importance of the more direct or personal modes of control of which we have been speaking; and on the other hand for an exaggeration, in current psychology and philosophy, of the intellectual possibilities of contact with a purely physical environment. There is not, in fact, any such thing as the direct influence of one human being on another apart from use of the physical environment as an intermediary. A smile, a frown, a rebuke, a word of warning or encouragement, all involve some physical change. Otherwise, the attitude of one would not get over to alter the attitude of another. Comparatively speaking, such modes of influence may be regarded as personal. The physical medium is reduced to a mere means of personal contact. In contrast with such direct modes of mutual influence, stand associations in common pursuits involving the use of things as means and as measures of results. Even if the mother never told her daughter to help her, or never rebuked her for not helping, the child would be subjected to direction in her activities by the mere fact that she was engaged, along with the parent, in the household life. Imitation, emulation, the need of working together, enforce control.

If the mother hands the child something needed, the latter must reach the thing in order to get it. Where there is giving there must be taking. The way the child handles the thing after it is got, the use to which it is put, is surely influenced by the fact that the child has watched the mother. When the child sees the parent looking for something, it is as natural for it also to look for the object and to give it over when it finds it, as it was, under other circumstances, to receive it. Multiply such an instance by the thousand details of daily intercourse, and one has a picture of the most permanent and enduring method of giving direction to the activities of the young.

In saying this, we are only repeating what was said previously about participating in a joint activity as the chief way of forming disposition. We have explicitly added, however, the recognition of the part played in the joint activity by the use of things. The philosophy of

Democracy and Education

learning has been unduly dominated by a false psychology. It is frequently stated that a person learns by merely having the qualities of things impressed upon his mind through the gateway of the senses. Having received a store of sensory impressions, association or some power of mental synthesis is supposed to combine them into ideas - into things with a meaning. An object, stone, orange, tree, chair, is supposed to convey different impressions of color, shape, size, hardness, smell, taste, etc., which aggregated together constitute the characteristic meaning of each thing. But as matter of fact, it is the characteristic use to which the thing is put, because of its specific qualities, which supplies the meaning with which it is identified. A chair is a thing which is put to one use; a table, a thing which is employed for another purpose; an orange is a thing which costs so much, which is grown in warm climes, which is eaten, and when eaten has an agreeable odor and refreshing taste, etc.

The difference between an adjustment to a physical stimulus and a mental act is that the latter involves response to a thing in its meaning; the former does not. A noise may make me jump without my mind being implicated. When I hear a noise and run and get water and put out a blaze, I respond intelligently; the sound meant fire, and fire meant need of being extinguished. I bump into a stone, and kick it to one side purely physically. I put it to one side for fear some one will stumble upon it, intelligently; I respond to a meaning which the thing has. I am startled by a thunderclap whether I recognize it or not - more likely, if I do not recognize it. But if I say, either out loud or to myself, that is thunder, I respond to the disturbance as a meaning. My behavior has a mental quality. When things have a meaning for us, we mean (intend, propose) what we do: when they do not, we act blindly, unconsciously, unintelligently.

In both kinds of responsive adjustment, our activities are directed or controlled. But in the merely blind response, direction is also blind. There may be training, but there is no education. Repeated responses to recurrent stimuli may fix a habit of acting in a certain way. All of us have many habits of whose import we are quite unaware, since they were formed without our knowing what we were about. Consequently they possess us, rather than we them. They move us; they control us. Unless we become aware of what they accomplish, and pass judgment upon the worth of the result, we do not control them. A child might be made to bow every time he met a certain person by pressure on his neck muscles, and bowing would finally become automatic. It would not, however, be an act of recognition or deference on his part, till he did it with a certain end in view - as having a certain meaning. And not till he knew what he was about and performed the act for the sake of its meaning could he be said to be "brought up" or educated to act in a certain way. To have an idea of a thing is thus not just to get certain sensations from it. It is to be able to respond to the thing in view of its place in an inclusive scheme of action; it is to foresee the drift and probable consequence of the action of the thing upon us and of our action upon it. To have the same ideas about things which others have, to be like-minded with them, and thus to be really members of a social group, is therefore to attach the same meanings to things and to acts which others attach. Otherwise, there is no common understanding, and no community life. But in a shared activity, each person refers what he is doing to what the other is doing

Democracy and Education

and vice-versa. That is, the activity of each is placed in the same inclusive situation. To pull at a rope at which others happen to be pulling is not a shared or conjoint activity, unless the pulling is done with knowledge that others are pulling and for the sake of either helping or hindering what they are doing. A pin may pass in the course of its manufacture through the hands of many persons. But each may do his part without knowledge of what others do or without any reference to what they do; each may operate simply for the sake of a separate result - his own pay. There is, in this case, no common consequence to which the several acts are referred, and hence no genuine intercourse or association, in spite of juxtaposition, and in spite of the fact that their respective doings contribute to a single outcome. But if each views the consequences of his own acts as having a bearing upon what others are doing and takes into account the consequences of their behavior upon himself, then there is a common mind; a common intent in behavior. There is an understanding set up between the different contributors; and this common understanding controls the action of each. Suppose that conditions were so arranged that one person automatically caught a ball and then threw it to another person who caught and automatically returned it; and that each so acted without knowing where the ball came from or went to. Clearly, such action would be without point or meaning. It might be physically controlled, but it would not be socially directed. But suppose that each becomes aware of what the other is doing, and becomes interested in the other's action and thereby interested in what he is doing himself as connected with the action of the other. The behavior of each would then be intelligent; and socially intelligent and guided. Take one more example of a less imaginary kind. An infant is hungry, and cries while food is prepared in his presence. If he does not connect his own state with what others are doing, nor what they are doing with his own satisfaction, he simply reacts with increasing impatience to his own increasing discomfort. He is physically controlled by his own organic state. But when he makes a back and forth reference, his whole attitude changes. He takes an interest, as we say; he takes note and watches what others are doing. He no longer reacts just to his own hunger, but behaves in the light of what others are doing for its prospective satisfaction. In that way, he also no longer just gives way to hunger without knowing it, but he notes, or recognizes, or identifies his own state. It becomes an object for him. His attitude toward it becomes in some degree intelligent. And in such noting of the meaning of the actions of others and of his own state, he is socially directed.

It will be recalled that our main proposition had two sides. One of them has now been dealt with: namely, that physical things do not influence mind (or form ideas and beliefs) except as they are implicated in action for prospective consequences. The other point is persons modify one another's dispositions only through the special use they make of physical conditions. Consider first the case of so-called expressive movements to which others are sensitive; blushing, smiling, frowning, clinching of fists, natural gestures of all kinds. In themselves, these are not expressive. They are organic parts of a person's attitude. One does not blush to show modesty or embarrassment to others, but because the capillary circulation alters in response to stimuli. But others use the blush, or a slightly perceptible tightening of the muscles of a person with whom they are associated, as a sign of the state in which that person finds himself, and as an indication of what course to pursue. The frown

Democracy and Education

signifies an imminent rebuke for which one must prepare, or an uncertainty and hesitation which one must, if possible, remove by saying or doing something to restore confidence. A man at some distance is waving his arms wildly. One has only to preserve an attitude of detached indifference, and the motions of the other person will be on the level of any remote physical change which we happen to note. If we have no concern or interest, the waving of the arms is as meaningless to us as the gyrations of the arms of a windmill. But if interest is aroused, we begin to participate. We refer his action to something we are doing ourselves or that we should do. We have to judge the meaning of his act in order to decide what to do. Is he beckoning for help? Is he warning us of an explosion to be set off, against which we should guard ourselves? In one case, his action means to run toward him; in the other case, to run away. In any case, it is the change he effects in the physical environment which is a sign to us of how we should conduct ourselves. Our action is socially controlled because we endeavor to refer what we are to do to the same situation in which he is acting.

Language is, as we have already seen (ante, p. 15) a case of this joint reference of our own action and that of another to a common situation. Hence its unrivaled significance as a means of social direction. But language would not be this efficacious instrument were it not that it takes place upon a background of coarser and more tangible use of physical means to accomplish results. A child sees persons with whom he lives using chairs, hats, tables, spades, saws, plows, horses, money in certain ways. If he has any share at all in what they are doing, he is led thereby to use things in the same way, or to use other things in a way which will fit in. If a chair is drawn up to a table, it is a sign that he is to sit in it; if a person extends his right hand, he is to extend his; and so on in a never ending stream of detail. The prevailing habits of using the products of human art and the raw materials of nature constitute by all odds the deepest and most pervasive mode of social control. When children go to school, they already have "minds" - they have knowledge and dispositions of judgment which may be appealed to through the use of language. But these "minds" are the organized habits of intelligent response which they have previously required by putting things to use in connection with the way other persons use things. The control is inescapable; it saturates disposition. The net outcome of the discussion is that the fundamental means of control is not personal but intellectual. It is not "moral" in the sense that a person is moved by direct personal appeal from others, important as is this method at critical junctures. It consists in the habits of understanding, which are set up in using objects in correspondence with others, whether by way of cooperation and assistance or rivalry and competition. Mind as a concrete thing is precisely the power to understand things in terms of the use made of them; a socialized mind is the power to understand them in terms of the use to which they are turned in joint or shared situations. And mind in this sense is the method of social control.

3. Imitation and Social Psychology

We have already noted the defects of a psychology of learning which places the individual mind naked, as it were, in contact with physical objects, and which believes that knowledge, ideas, and beliefs accrue from their interaction. Only comparatively recently has the predominating influence of association with fellow beings in the formation of mental and

Democracy and Education

moral disposition been perceived. Even now it is usually treated as a kind of adjunct to an alleged method of learning by direct contact with things, and as merely supplementing knowledge of the physical world with knowledge of persons. The purport of our discussion is that such a view makes an absurd and impossible separation between persons and things. Interaction with things may form habits of external adjustment. But it leads to activity having a meaning and conscious intent only when things are used to produce a result. And the only way one person can modify the mind of another is by using physical conditions, crude or artificial, so as to evoke some answering activity from him. Such are our two main conclusions. It is desirable to amplify and enforce them by placing them in contrast with the theory which uses a psychology of supposed direct relationships of human beings to one another as an adjunct to the psychology of the supposed direct relation of an individual to physical objects. In substance, this so-called social psychology has been built upon the notion of imitation. Consequently, we shall discuss the nature and role of imitation in the formation of mental disposition.

According to this theory, social control of individuals rests upon the instinctive tendency of individuals to imitate or copy the actions of others. The latter serve as models. The imitative instinct is so strong that the young devote themselves to conforming to the patterns set by others and reproducing them in their own scheme of behavior. According to our theory, what is here called imitation is a misleading name for partaking with others in a use of things which leads to consequences of common interest. The basic error in the current notion of imitation is that it puts the cart before the horse. It takes an effect for the cause of the effect. There can be no doubt that individuals in forming a social group are like-minded; they understand one another. They tend to act with the same controlling ideas, beliefs, and intentions, given similar circumstances. Looked at from without, they might be said to be engaged in "imitating" one another. In the sense that they are doing much the same sort of thing in much the same sort of way, this would be true enough. But "imitation" throws no light upon why they so act; it repeats the fact as an explanation of itself. It is an explanation of the same order as the famous saying that opium puts men to sleep because of its dormitive power.

Objective likeness of acts and the mental satisfaction found in being in conformity with others are baptized by the name imitation. This social fact is then taken for a psychological force, which produced the likeness. A considerable portion of what is called imitation is simply the fact that persons being alike in structure respond in the same way to like stimuli. Quite independently of imitation, men on being insulted get angry and attack the insulter. This statement may be met by citing the undoubted fact that response to an insult takes place in different ways in groups having different customs. In one group, it may be met by recourse to fisticuffs, in another by a challenge to a duel, in a third by an exhibition of contemptuous disregard. This happens, so it is said, because the model set for imitation is different. But there is no need to appeal to imitation. The mere fact that customs are different means that the actual stimuli to behavior are different. Conscious instruction plays a part; prior approvals and disapprovals have a large influence. Still more effective is the fact that unless an individual acts in the way current in his group, he is literally out of it. He

Democracy and Education

can associate with others on intimate and equal terms only by behaving in the way in which they behave. The pressure that comes from the fact that one is let into the group action by acting in one way and shut out by acting in another way is unremitting. What is called the effect of imitation is mainly the product of conscious instruction and of the selective influence exercised by the unconscious confirmations and ratifications of those with whom one associates.

Suppose that some one rolls a ball to a child; he catches it and rolls it back, and the game goes on. Here the stimulus is not just the sight of the ball, or the sight of the other rolling it. It is the situation - the game which is playing. The response is not merely rolling the ball back; it is rolling it back so that the other one may catch and return it, - that the game may continue. The "pattern" or model is not the action of the other person. The whole situation requires that each should adapt his action in view of what the other person has done and is to do. Imitation may come in but its role is subordinate. The child has an interest on his own account; he wants to keep it going. He may then note how the other person catches and holds the ball in order to improve his own acts. He imitates the means of doing, not the end or thing to be done. And he imitates the means because he wishes, on his own behalf, as part of his own initiative, to take an effective part in the game. One has only to consider how completely the child is dependent from his earliest days for successful execution of his purposes upon fitting his acts into those of others to see what a premium is put upon behaving as others behave, and of developing an understanding of them in order that he may so behave. The pressure for likemindedness in action from this source is so great that it is quite superfluous to appeal to imitation. As matter of fact, imitation of ends, as distinct from imitation of means which help to reach ends, is a superficial and transitory affair which leaves little effect upon disposition. Idiots are especially apt at this kind of imitation; it affects outward acts but not the meaning of their performance. When we find children engaging in this sort of mimicry, instead of encouraging them (as we would do if it were an important means of social control) we are more likely to rebuke them as apes, monkeys, parrots, or copy cats. Imitation of means of accomplishment is, on the other hand, an intelligent act. It involves close observation, and judicious selection of what will enable one to do better something which he already is trying to do. Used for a purpose, the imitative instinct may, like any other instinct, become a factor in the development of effective action.

This excursus should, accordingly, have the effect of reinforcing the conclusion that genuine social control means the formation of a certain mental disposition; a way of understanding objects, events, and acts which enables one to participate effectively in associated activities. Only the friction engendered by meeting resistance from others leads to the view that it takes place by forcing a line of action contrary to natural inclinations. Only failure to take account of the situations in which persons are mutually concerned (or interested in acting responsively to one another) leads to treating imitation as the chief agent in promoting social control.

4. Some Applications to Education

Why does a savage group perpetuate savagery, and a civilized group civilization? Doubtless the first answer to occur to mind is because savages are savages; being of low-grade intelligence and perhaps defective moral sense. But careful study has made it doubtful whether their native capacities are appreciably inferior to those of civilized man. It has made it certain that native differences are not sufficient to account for the difference in culture. In a sense the mind of savage peoples is an effect, rather than a cause, of their backward institutions. Their social activities are such as to restrict their objects of attention and interest, and hence to limit the stimuli to mental development. Even as regards the objects that come within the scope of attention, primitive social customs tend to arrest observation and imagination upon qualities which do not fructify in the mind. Lack of control of natural forces means that a scant number of natural objects enter into associated behavior. Only a small number of natural resources are utilized and they are not worked for what they are worth. The advance of civilization means that a larger number of natural forces and objects have been transformed into instrumentalities of action, into means for securing ends. We start not so much with superior capacities as with superior stimuli for evocation and direction of our capacities. The savage deals largely with crude stimuli; we have weighted stimuli. Prior human efforts have made over natural conditions. As they originally existed they were indifferent to human endeavors. Every domesticated plant and animal, every tool, every utensil, every appliance, every manufactured article, every esthetic decoration, every work of art means a transformation of conditions once hostile or indifferent to characteristic human activities into friendly and favoring conditions. Because the activities of children today are controlled by these selected and charged stimuli, children are able to traverse in a short lifetime what the race has needed slow, tortured ages to attain. The dice have been loaded by all the successes which have preceded.

Stimuli conducive to economical and effective response, such as our system of roads and means of transportation, our ready command of heat, light, and electricity, our ready-made machines and apparatus for every purpose, do not, by themselves or in their aggregate, constitute a civilization. But the uses to which they are put are civilization, and without the things the uses would be impossible. Time otherwise necessarily devoted to wresting a livelihood from a grudging environment and securing a precarious protection against its inclemencies is freed. A body of knowledge is transmitted, the legitimacy of which is guaranteed by the fact that the physical equipment in which it is incarnated leads to results that square with the other facts of nature. Thus these appliances of art supply a protection, perhaps our chief protection, against a recrudescence of these superstitious beliefs, those fanciful myths and infertile imaginings about nature in which so much of the best intellectual power of the past has been spent. If we add one other factor, namely, that such appliances be not only used, but used in the interests of a truly shared or associated life, then the appliances become the positive resources of civilization. If Greece, with a scant tithe of our material resources, achieved a worthy and noble intellectual and artistic career, it is because Greece operated for social ends such resources as it had. But whatever the situation, whether one of barbarism or civilization, whether one of stunted control of physical

Democracy and Education

forces, or of partial enslavement to a mechanism not yet made tributary to a shared experience, things as they enter into action furnish the educative conditions of daily life and direct the formation of mental and moral disposition.

Intentional education signifies, as we have already seen, a specially selected environment, the selection being made on the basis of materials and method specifically promoting growth in the desired direction. Since language represents the physical conditions that have been subjected to the maximum transformation in the interests of social life - physical things which have lost their original quality in becoming social tools - it is appropriate that language should play a large part compared with other appliances. By it we are led to share vicariously in past human experience, thus widening and enriching the experience of the present. We are enabled, symbolically and imaginatively, to anticipate situations. In countless ways, language condenses meanings that record social outcomes and presage social outlooks. So significant is it of a liberal share in what is worth while in life that unlettered and uneducated have become almost synonymous.

The emphasis in school upon this particular tool has, however, its dangers - dangers which are not theoretical but exhibited in practice. Why is it, in spite of the fact that teaching by pouring in, learning by a passive absorption, are universally condemned, that they are still so entrenched in practice? That education is not an affair of "telling" and being told, but an active and constructive process, is a principle almost as generally violated in practice as conceded in theory. Is not this deplorable situation due to the fact that the doctrine is itself merely told? It is preached; it is lectured; it is written about. But its enactment into practice requires that the school environment be equipped with agencies for doing, with tools and physical materials, to an extent rarely attained. It requires that methods of instruction and administration be modified to allow and to secure direct and continuous occupations with things. Not that the use of language as an educational resource should lessen; but that its use should be more vital and fruitful by having its normal connection with shared activities. "These things ought ye to have done, and not to have left the others undone." And for the school "these things" mean equipment with the instrumentalities of cooperative or joint activity.

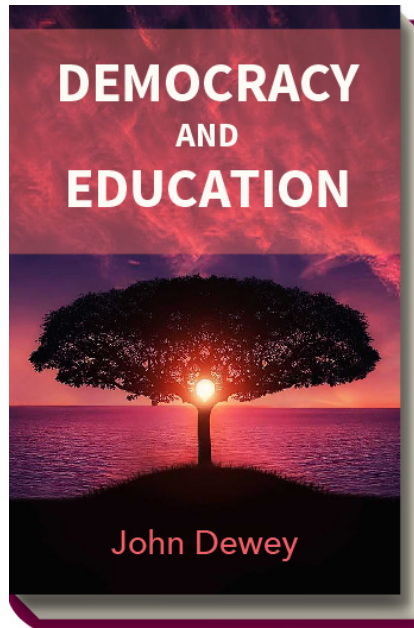
For when the schools depart from the educational conditions effective in the out-of-school environment, they necessarily substitute a bookish, a pseudo-intellectual spirit for a social spirit. Children doubtless go to school to learn, but it has yet to be proved that learning occurs most adequately when it is made a separate conscious business. When treating it as a business of this sort tends to preclude the social sense which comes from sharing in an activity of common concern and value, the effort at isolated intellectual learning contradicts its own aim. We may secure motor activity and sensory excitation by keeping an individual by himself, but we cannot thereby get him to understand the meaning which things have in the life of which he is a part. We may secure technical specialized ability in algebra, Latin, or botany, but not the kind of intelligence which directs ability to useful ends. Only by engaging in a joint activity, where one person's use of material and tools is consciously referred to the use other persons are making of their capacities and appliances, is a social

Democracy and Education

direction of disposition attained.

Summary

The natural or native impulses of the young do not agree with the life-customs of the group into which they are born. Consequently they have to be directed or guided. This control is not the same thing as physical compulsion; it consists in centering the impulses acting at any one time upon some specific end and in introducing an order of continuity into the sequence of acts. The action of others is always influenced by deciding what stimuli shall call out their actions. But in some cases as in commands, prohibitions, approvals, and disapprovals, the stimuli proceed from persons with a direct view to influencing action. Since in such cases we are most conscious of controlling the action of others, we are likely to exaggerate the importance of this sort of control at the expense of a more permanent and effective method. The basic control resides in the nature of the situations in which the young take part. In social situations the young have to refer their way of acting to what others are doing and make it fit in. This directs their action to a common result, and gives an understanding common to the participants. For all mean the same thing, even when performing different acts. This common understanding of the means and ends of action is the essence of social control. It is indirect, or emotional and intellectual, not direct or personal. Moreover it is intrinsic to the disposition of the person, not external and coercive. To achieve this internal control through identity of interest and understanding is the business of education. While books and conversation can do much, these agencies are usually relied upon too exclusively. Schools require for their full efficiency more opportunity for conjoint activities in which those instructed take part, so that they may acquire a social sense of their own powers and of the materials and appliances used.



Dewey, J. (2018). *Democracy and Education*. EdTech Books. Retrieved from <http://edtechbooks.org/democracyandeducation>



CC0: This book is in the public domain, which means that you may print, share, or remix its contents as you please without concern for copyright and without seeking permission.