

APPERCEPTION.

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Herbart calls ethics and psychology the two auxiliary sciences of pedagogy. The first shows the end of education, namely, character ; the second shows the means and hindrances.

Herbart left the beaten track in psychology. The old theory of distinct faculties, such as memory, imagination, understanding, etc., he considered erroneous and objectionable. Consciousness is a unit. The mind is not a group of powers working side by side, but a single force manifesting itself in many ways. Mental life is a succession of states of consciousness. These are called ideas ; they vary in strength. Herbart endeavored to apply mathematical principles to the relations of ideas to each other. This attempt cannot be regarded as successful in itself, and yet it opened the way for those vast labors in psychological measurements which have given us the new science of physiological psychology.

Herbart's chief service in psychology, at least so far as pedagogy is concerned, lies in the prominence which he gives to apperception in mental growth. This mental activity is *pivotal* in his whole system of instruction. Apperception is to the mental health and growth what digestion is to the body. It is in either case only what is assimilated that makes strength. Dead, unrelated knowledge in the memory serves no good purpose.

Apperception, then, is the controlling principle with Herbart. It dictates what subjects shall be studied by the pupil and in what order, also in what order the parts of each subject shall follow each other. It decides how the various studies shall be connected with each other in instruction,

and finally the method the teacher must follow in presenting the lesson matter.

Apperception is an active appropriation of knowledge, as distinguished from a mere passive reception of it. The new elements are worked over and rightly understood by means of the related ideas already in the mind. One sees, hears, reads, etc., with the ideas he possesses. No two persons get the same results from reading the same book, hearing the same lecture, or visiting the same city. Each one sees only what he is prepared to see. Hence, in any act of learning, there must be not only something to be apperceived, but also a means or power to apperceive. In short, the teacher's instruction must connect firmly with the pupil's existing knowledge, or it is useless.

Herbart's doctrine of apperception involves his doctrine of *interest*, on which he lays great stress. "Interest is the light with which Herbart once for all brought the clearness of day into the dark and labyrinthine mazes of instruction." Continued interest cannot exist without apperception. Interest is an indispensable condition to profitable instruction. That work which is long continued without it wears out mind and body. We have thermometers to measure the temperature of the schoolroom ; pity it is that we have not a more exact means of finding the temperature of a child's interests. Voluntary attention, which the pupil can only give with effort, should not satisfy the teacher, if he can by means of interest convert it into involuntary attention. Let the teacher who would truly succeed keep his eye on the pupils' interest, and let not a single day be lost by teaching