

WHAT SHOULD EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY CONTRIBUTE TO A THEORY OF EDUCATION?

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As the term "education" has, in ordinary usage, two rather distinct meanings, so the theory of education may be said to have two distinct phases, as it emphasizes the one or the other of these meanings. In the first place, "education" may be said to refer to an end, more or less fully attained, to a result which has been accomplished, to a possession which has been secured, and so one speaks of a person's "education" as of something which he has. As this meaning of "education" is emphasized the theory of education deals largely with the ideal or complete man. In the second place, "education" may be said to refer to the process by which this result has been reached, and in this sense it becomes equivalent to the process of teaching and learning if we confine our attention to schools and their work. As this meaning of "education" is emphasized, the theory of education will, as a matter of course, deal largely with the process of teaching and learning and points of interest closely related to these.

The theory of education which emphasizes the ideal man has one point in its favor. It will possess a degree of unity and completeness which no other form of theory can well possess. It has these properties because the method used is essentially deductive in character, and so the theory of teaching and learning as well as of the subjects to be taught, and the time at which they ought to be taught will be reached largely as a deduction from the ideal man set up as the end of education.

Such a theory has, however, rather obvious disadvantages. In the first place it is competent for anyone to ask, How was this ideal discovered? And that question is a troublesome one, for the ideal of one age is not that of another, nor is the ideal of one thinker necessarily that of his neighbor. And again, there are two aspects of the ideal which ought to be sharply distinguished. If one believe in development, the ideal, as the last stage of such progress, must be spoken of as a possibility simply in order to place something at the end of the series, but such is not an ideal