

## THE CULTURAL VALUE OF COURSES IN PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION

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Right thinking will justify the study of education *as such* by disclosing two sets of values: First, the *vocational*,—the contribution made to teaching and administration; second, the *cultural*,—the contribution made to a liberal education. This paper contends that the study of education *as such*, over and above its vocational worth, possesses cultural possibilities so distinctive as to make it indispensable in the acquisition of modern culture.

It is necessary to start with a working conception of culture. As the term is here used, a cultural or liberal education is one that *frees* a person—that frees him from ignorance, from awkwardness, from low and destructive attitudes and tastes, from the stultifying effects of superstition and prejudice. To put the matter differently, a liberal or cultural education is one that affords all of the necessary insights into contemporary civilization, as a result of which a person may walk through an intelligible world, understanding and controlling the forces that play upon him, and responding emotionally to that which is good and beautiful and true.

With this conception of culture in mind, I am prepared to affirm that courses in education are liberalizing to precisely the same degree that other courses are liberalizing, that is, to the degree that they furnish insights, understandings, appreciations, and tastes relative to some great department of human life. I shall thus proceed to indicate some of the ways in which the subject of education can create the insights, understandings, appreciations, and tastes necessary to the life of the present day.

In the first place, the study of education affords a set of sympathetic insights into our largest public enterprise, that of public education. No person in the United States, whether he engages in education professionally or not, can afford to be ignorant of this gigantic enterprise. The nature of education, the objectives of education, the curricula of education, the qualifications of teachers, the housing of school-children, and the means of financing the system—all these are matters about which every citizen should be adequately informed and profoundly interested.

In the second place, wholly aside from an understanding of the educational system of the United States, the study of education contributes a range of penetrative insights and emotional attitudes as broad and deep as life itself. To illustrate, a study of *educational objectives* brings the student to a consideration of what is worth while in human living, because what is worth striving for in life determines what is worth striving for in education. Again, the study of *educational curricula* brings the student to a consideration of what is most worth while in subject-matter, thus revealing the essential nature of the great body of human culture, its value to the race, and the uses to which it may be put in the cultivation of the individual. Also, a study of education brings a person to a consideration of the *learning process itself* whereby subject-matter may be appropriated, with resulting insights as to how a human being learns, how a human being can be motivated, and how both matter and method can be adjusted to suit the varying needs of individuals. The study of education also trains a person to take into account all of the *imponderable influences* that impinge upon the human mind—the unmeasured but vast influence of music, art, literature, and hu-

man personality, and the multitude of other environmental stimuli that help or hinder the processes of liberalization. And finally, it may be affirmed that the study of education *culminates* in a chastened view of life, a reverential regard for youth, a richer conception of the meaning of education, and a firmer conviction of the necessity of education as a means of preserving and promoting civilization.

We may close with the conclusion that if the conception of culture as a set of sympathetic insights into contemporary civilization is accepted, and if the study of education is so revelatory of profound insights as my analysis has indicated, then we may confidently affirm that the study of education as such makes *an indispensable contribution* to the type of socialized and humanized culture demanded by the present day.