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-- T H E S I S --

For Degree of MASTER OF ARTS

In the

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METHOD IN TEACHING.

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In selecting for my subject "Method in Teaching", I assume that all will agree that in any and in all teaching there is some essential element without which there would be no teaching. I hope in this discussion to be able to show what this element is, and what it is that determines it.

Before there can be any teaching there must be a pupil and a teacher, or one to be taught and one to teach. While, in a sense both these functions may be found in the same individual, we are accustomed to think of them as being in different individuals. I could not be teacher to myself in the best sense of the term, "teaching", for, in this case, the teacher must see the steps necessary to the experience and the means that would best bring about these steps prior to the experience by the pupil. In short, he must have experienced what he is to teach; he must see it as a whole made up of parts.



When I am teacher to myself, it can only be in the sense of setting the task that I am to experience later. What the true teacher would see and realize at the beginning, I could fully realize only after I had learned the task before me, so I could be teacher to myself only in this limited sense.

In what follows I shall refer to teaching in the best sense, where the teacher is conscious of the end in view, and also of the necessary steps that it may be realized by the pupil.

Granting the two factors, the teacher and the pupil, let us see what it is that constitutes teaching. The mind of the child to be taught must be led by me, the teacher, to a definite activity, to a definite mental experience.

In order that I may lead or guide the child mind in gaining this experience, I must see clearly what the experience is; I must know the steps in the experience and the order in which they exist for without this there could be no intelligent leading. If any leading at all, it would be "The blind leading the blind."

After I know the steps necessary to the experience, I must then decide the best means at my command that I may use in order to lead the mind of the pupil through the steps necessary to the desired experience.

The experience and the steps in the experience in learning anything are one with those in teaching the same thing, so the



problem "Method in Teaching" resolves itself into the problem "Method in Learning". When we know the steps the mind must take in learning any thing, we also know the steps necessary for the teacher in teaching the same thing,- the essential difference between learning and teaching being that in learning any thing the pupil is not conscious of the steps necessary to the experience before he has taken them, while in teaching the teacher must be conscious of the steps necessary, and also of the pupil's experiencing those steps. The teacher, having a purpose in view, will have a guide for all his means and the manipulation of the same. His every direction and question will be determined by the end he has in view, viz., the leading of the individual minds of his pupils systematically through the steps necessary to the experience of the subject before his class. This end will determine all else. Questions and directions will all be directed toward it and should cease when and only when it has been reached by the pupils.

The method and the means are frequently confounded, and the term method is used when the means is referred to. In fact, the means is often looked at as the method, and, for this reason, we speak of so many methods. In teaching reading <sup>we</sup> have the alphabetic method, the word method, the phonic method and many others, when there is but one method, and these are only means to that method. The objective physical thing is the means, while the method is a subjective spiritual process. This spiritual move-



ment is the vital thing without which there is no learning and therefore, no teaching, and it is always determined by the nature of the thing itself.

To illustrate. I have before me a class of primary pupils who know the numbers to and including four, and I have for today to teach them the idea five. In order to know five they must see it as made up of four and one more. They already know four and one, but the new thing is the four and one grouped together in a unity. Since this is a new group for them, unless there is some one in the class who knows the name for the new group, I must tell them the name for the group. I tell them we call this group  $(4+1)$  five, and that wherever they find the group made up of  $(4+1)$  it will be five. The essential thing or act is that the pupils grasp the idea  $(4+1)$  in a unity, and whatever I may do to get them to grasp this or to fix it in their minds is only a means and not a method. The method depends upon the nature of the five as resulting from uniting one to the four, and the method for the pupil is the mental movement in his seeing the necessity of the one and four grasped into one unity, one whole, and not the means used to get him to grasp it.

There is something in whatever I may teach the children that is essential to its existence, and for the children to learn the thing is for them to grasp the essentials in it.

The right angle has something in it which sets it off from all



other kinds of angles. It also has something common to all other angles. The common element is that which it possesses in common with all other angles that entitles it to the name angle, viz., the space between the two straight lines meeting in a point.

The particular thing and that that makes it a right angle is found in no other angle. This is the definite space determined by the way the lines meet. The pupils can not know the right angle without knowing both these things, neither can the right angle exist without both. I may use whatever contrivances possible to get them to see these points, they will be only means. The method is the mind's movement in thinking the thing, in grasping the essential in it.

I have for another lesson the foot. Assuming that the pupils know the idea length in general, I am to give them a definite idea of the unit of length called foot.

By way of preparation, I should have on the desk a number of rulers, sticks, strings, papers, etc, each a foot long. I might also have marks on the board a foot in length.

In beginning the lesson I would have the class observe these different objects closely, letting them handle them, and ask that they ascertain what they can as to the length of the various objects. After this, I would ask the class, each with a foot ruler in his hand, to notice its length and then to close eyes and image the length. I would have the exercise repeated, the pupils chang-



ing the rulers for strings or other objects a foot in length, and ask for the comparison of the images from the different objects. After pursuing this course for some time and until each of the pupils has some idea of the length, foot, I would then have them pass to the board, and after looking at an object a foot long, place the object behind them, and make a mark on the board a foot in length. After this I would have each test the accuracy of his idea foot by applying the object in hand to the mark made. They will probably find the marks, some too long and some too short. I would have them erase and repeat the act until each has a fairly accurate judgment of the length foot. I would then have them place books a foot apart, the finger a foot from the end of the desk, hold the hands a foot apart, etc., and, in each case, test the accuracy of the judgment by applying a foot ruler. In all of this exercise, the method and the vital thing for the pupil, is the mental movement in forming the correct judgment of the abstract idea, foot. All the outward acts and movements were only means used to bring about the subjective spiritual result. This definite length, the foot, has been the common element in all the objects they have observed, and in all they have done, and the work must be continued until each pupil finds in all the diversity the common element, the length, foot. The mind must at last seize this idea, the definite length, and ignore all else. This definite length is essential to the existence of the foot, so it is



essential that the pupils grasp this idea, <sup>the</sup> definite length, to the exclusion of all else that they may know the foot. Thus again, the method depends upon the minds grasping the element, vital in the existence of the thing.

In reading whether, as a means, I use the phonic method, the word method, the alphabetic method, the sentence method, or all combined is not the essential thing, but that by whatever means I use, I teach the children that these letters, words and sentences express definite meanings and that a particular form stands for a definite idea or thing. They must see that these words are only valuable for the meaning they convey. The pupil must find in these forms, his own thoughts, his own acts, in fact his own life.

In preparatory and primary reading the key to interesting the pupil is found in leading him to see that these words and these forms have for him a message. They express things of interest to him, if only he learns to find what they say. The method is found in the movement of the pupil's mind in interpreting these forms, and when the child is made to crave this power, the burden of the teacher's work is done. Create in the child an interest in the thing for its own sake, and it will do the rest. These forms are only as hulls, and the ideas they express are the kernels.

In teaching any event in history, the pupil must see the event first as an object, as an individual thing. He must also see it



as the result of forces working themselves out, or as the form the force took on at a certain time, the effect of certain causes.

Not only this but he must see it as a cause for other effects.

In this way he will see it as so much of the life of the people, and what brought it about and its effect on subsequent history or life. In this way it will not be for him a dead thing, but a living, moving thing, very similar to the events in his own life.

We see, therefore, that in whatever we study the mind naturally looks for reason, for something akin to itself, and here is where one finds the method.

The thing in itself is the result of certain activities, or is in other words, the form a certain energy takes on at a certain time. There is an energy we might call tree energy, and the result is the trees we see all about us. The germ which contains in embryo the possibility of the tree, when acted on by certain natural forces, has the power of transforming these forces, or of directing the energy contained in the natural forces towards the definite end that is in unity with the nature of the germ.

We may see this energy working itself out in all the possible stages from the tiny sprout to the huge oak of the forest. This tree energy is the essential thing in the production of trees.

All the other forces in the world working together in all possible ways could not or would not result in producing trees.

To be sure other forces are needed in the development of this germ



and only when all are working together in unity is the result trees. The various kinds of trees have attributes or peculiarities that are not common to other kinds of trees, and it is this attribute that separates this tree from other trees. It too has something in common with all other trees that makes it a tree.

So we shall find in whatever we may study general attributes and particular attributes. The general attributes enable us to grasp the thing under a larger class, a larger whole, while the particular attributes enable us to see it as an individual. For the learner to know the tree, he must become one with it. He must act the activity necessary to the tree's existence. In this way he becomes one, in reason, with it. He finds in the tree order, system, and reason.

The pencil is the expression of man's reason. As the race developed, man felt his limitations in not being able to express himself easily on paper, or by means of characters, and saw the need of being able to do so. As the result, some one, urged by the desire to remove this limitation, saw the solution of the difficulty in the pencil, and as a result, invented it. The pencil then is only the outward expression of the thought of man. It is reason objectified. It is the expression of life, and, for the pupil to know the pencil fully, he must see the limitations on the race, the desire to remove the limitations, the desire for freedom, and as a result, the pencil fulfilling its purpose so perfectly. This purpose or end is the thing.



that determined the size, shape, weight, etc., of the pencil, also the material and the arrangement of the same in it. The pupil will know the pencil when and only when he sees the final cause as the fundamental thing in determining every thing with reference to it. It was necessary to the existence of the pencil, so also, is it necessary in the pupil's knowing it.

The order of the pencil's coming in to being was (1) the final cause which was the need in the life of the race, the limitation and the desire for freedom; (2) the parts, material etc., all determined by the purpose; and (3) the idea put in outward objective form or the ideal made real. This was the order of the thing or the logical order. The order for the learner is the reverse. The pupil sees (1) the form, the material pencil; (2) the parts, material etc., and (3) the purpose or final cause. This may be called the chronological order, or the order in which the pupil learns them. After the pupil has worked out the parts in this way, he must then think the pencil through in the order of its becoming. He must see the final cause as moving or working itself out and as determining all else with reference to the pencil. He will then know the pencil.

It will be the same in anything the pupil studies. The order of the thing's becoming will be reversed in the pupil's learning it, but that he may know it in the fullest and best sense possible, he must see the moving force as an active principle working

itself out, and this thing, whatever it may be, as a product of this energy, or as the form the energy under the environment takes at this particular time.

Method in teaching then is the mind's movement through any subject, or the movement of the mind in constructing its own subject and is determined, in each case, by the nature of the subject studied. There is something in any thing and every thing, essential to its existence and this essential nature of the thing determines the way the mind must think it.

While, in what I have said, I have placed emphasis on the subjective, spiritual movement and that without which there could be no learning and therefore no teaching, I would not think of doing away with the means. This objective side is necessary that the spiritual movement be brought about. It is a means used for the purpose of bringing about this inner movement, but it may be used and no inner movement result. In this case there would be no teaching. This objective side, the means, is valuable only as it brings about the movement of the mind in thinking the thing, and the whole process is determined by the nature of the thing studied.

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