

SUGGESTION IN EDUCATION

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Suggestion in education by M. W. Keatinge

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IN EDUCATION**

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BY

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SECOND EDITION

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Keatinge

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I CAN scarcely allow this book to go into a second edition without making some allusion to the criticism of its doctrines which has been reiterated by Dr. F. H. Hayward on every second page of his recently published volumes, *Education and the Heredity Spectre* (1908) and *Day and Evening Schools* (1910). It is difficult to be angry with Dr. Hayward even with the greatest wish to indulge one's passions. Indeed, when he refers to the state of English opinion upon education in the following words, "There is not even a single healthy and honest controversy being fought out at the present day. In any country that was educationally awake, Mr. Keatinge's important and arrestive doctrine of 'contrariance' would, during the past two years, have awakened animated discussion,"¹ it is impossible for me not to feel that he is a sympathetic critic, and that a reply to his criticism almost smacks of discourtesy. His remarks, however, embody such a misapprehension of the proper use of terms, that in the interest of educational theory I cannot let them pass unchallenged.

Dr. Hayward brings two charges against me:

- (1) I am a Herbartian without admitting it, and yet cross swords with the professed followers of Herbart.

¹ *Day and Evening Schools*, p. 577.

(2) I talk of contrariant ideas without making it clear what their origin is. "I admit," he says, "that a youth may derive wrong ideas from companions or from books; but this is not what Mr. Keatinge means. He does not trace contrariant ideas to any definite source, but imagines that they spring up inevitably in the soul. This I doubt, this I am very strongly inclined even to deny."¹

(1) Nothing is more futile than a dispute which never would have arisen if the combatants had been at pains to define their terms at the outset, and Dr. Hayward's attitude towards me results, I believe, from the lack of such definition, or at least of a correct definition.

What is Herbartianism, and who is a Herbartian? Dr. Hayward defines the term for us.

"What, essentially, is Herbartianism? It is a system of thought which regards the 'idea' or 'presentation' as the best starting-point for educational exposition; which believes that much mental life can be interpreted in terms of ideas—their emergence, coalescence, rivalry, and so forth; that factors like feeling and will, soul and heredity, though as primitive and fundamental as any others, are best dealt with educationally in relation to ideas or presentations; that certain categories—notably 'apperception' and 'interest,' or these in union, 'apperceptive interest'—are more helpful than the categories of the faculty psychology; that education must have a definite and ideal aim; that this aim is 'character'; that character is linked with insight and interest; that insight and interest are linked with apperception; that these things are under educational control, and so forth."²

And again:

"Herbartians do not for a moment believe that ideas are self-existent entities, or that feeling and will are not implicit

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 489.

² *Education and the Heredity Spectre*, p. 142.

at first in the soul, or that heredity and instinct are impotent. They do but believe that the best starting-point for the educational thinker is the idea; the most illuminating psychological formula, 'apperception'; the best aim to be set before the teacher, 'many-sided interest'; the best ultimate aim, 'character-forming.'¹

With this attitude towards mental process, in spite of the excessive and needless array of technical terms in which it is expressed, little fault can be found, but there is no element in it that can properly be described as Herbartian. We have here a sketch of a very common, indeed of the only possible attitude in educational psychology, the attitude which recognizes that mental processes must be considered from two standpoints: (1) from that which looks on mental content, and to some extent on mental existence, as built up by experience, the result of this experience in the mind being meanings or ideas which are associated and linked together, in other words, 'which believes that much mental life can be interpreted in terms of ideas'; (2) from that which regards mind as a unified entity, conscious of itself as struggling and striving in a certain direction, in other words, 'which believes that factors like feeling and will are primitive and fundamental.' The first standpoint is necessary in dealing with all phases of education that involve the imparting or acquisition of knowledge, the second must in part be adopted when 'will' and 'character' are in question. Modern writers on psychology adopt both these standpoints, though they do not always seem clearly to realize this, and pass from one to the other as it suits their purpose to do so. Further, when working from

¹ *Op. cit.*, Preface, p. x.

the associationist standpoint they frequently use terms which were introduced into the language of associationism by Herbart. Generally these terms are not used in their strict Herbartian sense, but it must be recognized that Herbartian terminology has exercised a powerful influence on the modes of expression adopted by prominent psychologists such as Dr. G. F. Stout in England and Dr. Th. Lipps in Germany. These writers are, however, no more Herbartians than the persons who in speaking use the 'quotations' to be found in Shakespeare are to be called Shakespeareans. For the Herbartian doctrine of the mind and its constitution is something definite which is not shared by modern writers on psychology.

For Herbart the mind is primarily intellectual, that is to say, it consists of presentations, or, to adopt the usual English terminology, ideas. Herbart recognized, it is true, that the mind is not purely intellectual, that we are conscious of feelings, and that, when in a certain mental state, we talk of ourselves as 'willing'; but for him feeling and will are derivative. Feeling arises out of the interplay and mutual inhibition and furtherance of ideas, while will similarly arises out of the interplay of feelings. The Herbartian position is *not* that feeling and will are influenced by ideas, but that feeling and will arise out of presentations or ideas, which is a vastly different matter.

The result of a rigorous application of the true Herbartian doctrine to problems of education is easily seen. Character-forming in some sense or other is admitted to be an important aim in education; in one aspect character is identical with will, will arises out of the interplay of ideas, and therefore character is the

result of ideas properly presented to the mind, in other words, of a good instruction. It is but a step from this position to lay excessive stress on the value of direct moral instruction and to believe that the best way to make a child moral is to talk to him about morality. In addition, the thorough-paced Herbartian must deny and ridicule the notion that any kind of formal training can be given to the mind or to the feelings; for instance, he must find it absurd to imagine that self-control grows easier in proportion to its exercise.

The psychological position outlined above is that which Dr. Hayward must adopt if he is with any sense to call himself a Herbartian, and these are the educational corollaries of that position. Now it happens that these corollaries are in fact the educational views which he advocates, and it is therefore legitimate to suppose that Dr. Hayward is in error when he maintains that the attitude described in his own words on page vi, which he calls Herbartianism, is in reality the basis of his educational position. Indeed, a number of expressions in his books show that as soon as he begins to apply his psychology he is applying not the modern position which he chooses to term Herbartianism, but Herbart's psychology in its purity. Two instances must suffice. "The 'will' is not a separate faculty, but is rooted in the circle of thought."¹ "The case (for moral instruction) . . . seems stronger yet when we look at moral ideas in the Herbartian way—not as mere knowledge acting distantly upon the desires, the motives and the will, but as the roots of these."² Neither of these statements is in accordance with what Dr. Hayward calls 'Herbartianism'; but they are both undiluted *Herbart*.

¹ *Education and the Heredity Spectre*, p. 98.

² *Ibid.* p. 103.

I have, I trust, made it clear that this controversy is merely a question of terms. Dr. Hayward has of course a right to call any position that he pleases Herbartianism, as long as he makes it evident that by this term he does not mean an application of Herbart's psychology to education. The term would still be a mischievous and a misleading one, but if it were used consistently it might be allowed. Dr. Hayward, as I have shown above, is not consistent, for when he deals with moral instruction he forgets all about his definition of 'Herbartianism,' and becomes a true Herbartian.

(2) Dr. Hayward's other charge is easily disposed of. He complains that I have not explained "where contrariant ideas come from." In so far as they do not enter the mind from without, they arise out of the instinct of combativeness, and the term 'contrariant idea' may be looked upon as the associationist mode of expressing the working of this instinct in the boy's mental system. During the period of adolescence the instinct of combativeness is especially strong, and it is at this stage that contrariant ideas are most to be encountered and render moral education most difficult.

OXFORD,
February 1911.