

**THE ESSENTIALS OF METHOD, A
DISCUSSION OF THE ESSENTIAL
FORM OF RIGHT METHODS IN
TEACHING: OBSERVATION,
GENERALIZATION, APPLICATION**

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The Essentials of Method, a Discussion of the Essential Form of Right Methods in Teaching:
Observation, Generalization, Application by Charles DeGarmo

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CHARLES DEGARMO

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THE
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A DISCUSSION OF THE ESSENTIAL FORM OF RIGHT
METHODS IN TEACHING.

Observation, Generalization, Application.

REVISED EDITION.

BY

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PREFACE.

ANALOGIES play an important *rôle* in all explanations of mental phenomena. This is true because nearly all our terms for mental processes and products are borrowed from sense. Among the many analogical theories of mind, and hence of education, two are particularly prominent: (1) That which regards the soul as a *germ*, containing by *involution* that which it is to become by *evolution*, — a self-active power which seizes upon its surroundings, appropriating what is useful for the development of its predetermined form and content; and (2) that theory which regards the mind at any given stage of its development as the resultant of the manifold forces of its environment, as a product more *externally* than *internally* produced.

The first of these views may be called the *germ* theory of education; the second, the *architectural* theory. According to the first notion, the mind is a self-producer of a predetermined product. According to the second, it is the result produced by the educational architect. The first conception makes the teacher merely a gardener; the second makes him an architect of mind. The first demands no science of

education from the subject-matter side; the second compels a study of mind in its more mechanical aspects, and a pedagogical adjustment of the matter of education to the laws of mind-structure. It finds the science of instruction to consist in giving rise to concepts, in co-ordinating and properly relating them. According to this idea, the science of education is the science of the concept, — knowledge, thought-power, intensity and direction of will, follow from an application of the architectonics of concepts.

At first view, these two theories are mutually exclusive; but a more careful examination shows them to be mutually complementary. The germ theory finds its truth in the idea of the *self-activity* of the mind to be educated, and in the fact that the *form* of all mental activity in knowing, feeling, and willing is predetermined, just as the form of the oak is involved in the acorn. But this analogy breaks down when the content of mind is considered. *How* knowledge shall be acquired, held and expressed is as much predetermined in the infant's mind, as the ultimate form of the plant is involved in the seed from which it springs; — the acorn never produces the maple; but *what* this knowledge shall be is not predetermined. A child left at birth upon an uninhabited island, and nourished by beasts, would become a beast, at least so far as the content of knowledge is concerned. The practical content of man's knowledge and judgment, and hence of his will and character, depends

upon influences and positive forces exterior to himself. Here the architectural theory of education finds its truth; for, *what* a man knows, the whole *content* of his knowing, judging, and willing, depends upon the kind, amount, and arrangement of the subject-matter of education. In this view, the office of the teacher is magnified: the pedagogy of the subjects of instruction becomes of the greatest importance.

Again, these two theories of education are but two figurative expressions for the manifest truth, *that there is a method in the child, and a method in the subject of study*. A complete pedagogy of instruction brings these two elements into harmony, makes them complementary the one to the other. The method in the subject at any stage exactly fits a corresponding stage of development in the method in the child. In other words, the development in the subject must be made at all stages to fit the development of the child. For this reason, the germ and architectural theories of education do not exclude but complement each other, and neither of them can be spared from a perfected science of education.

The present work deals with one phase of this adjustment of subject-matter to mind. It seeks to find the essential forms of methods of instruction, as determined by the general law of development in the mind of the child. It has therefore nothing to do with the *content* of knowledge,

but concerns itself solely with an inquiry as to *how we learn, and consequently how we must teach.*

Three-sidedness is a universal property of triangles, so is triangularity; just so, there are certain necessary and universal characteristics of all rational methods of teaching. To discover, through an analysis of the mental activities involved in knowing, what these essential elements of a good method are, is the function of this volume.

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