

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Educational psychology by Edward L. Thorndike

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EDWARD L. THORNDIKE

**EDUCATIONAL
PSYCHOLOGY**

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

SECOND EDITION

REVISED AND ENLARGED

BY

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PREFACE

This book is a revision of a book, *Educational Psychology*, which appeared in 1903. Its primary purpose is, as was the case with the first edition, to provide students in advanced courses in educational psychology with material which they would otherwise have to get from lectures at great cost of time.

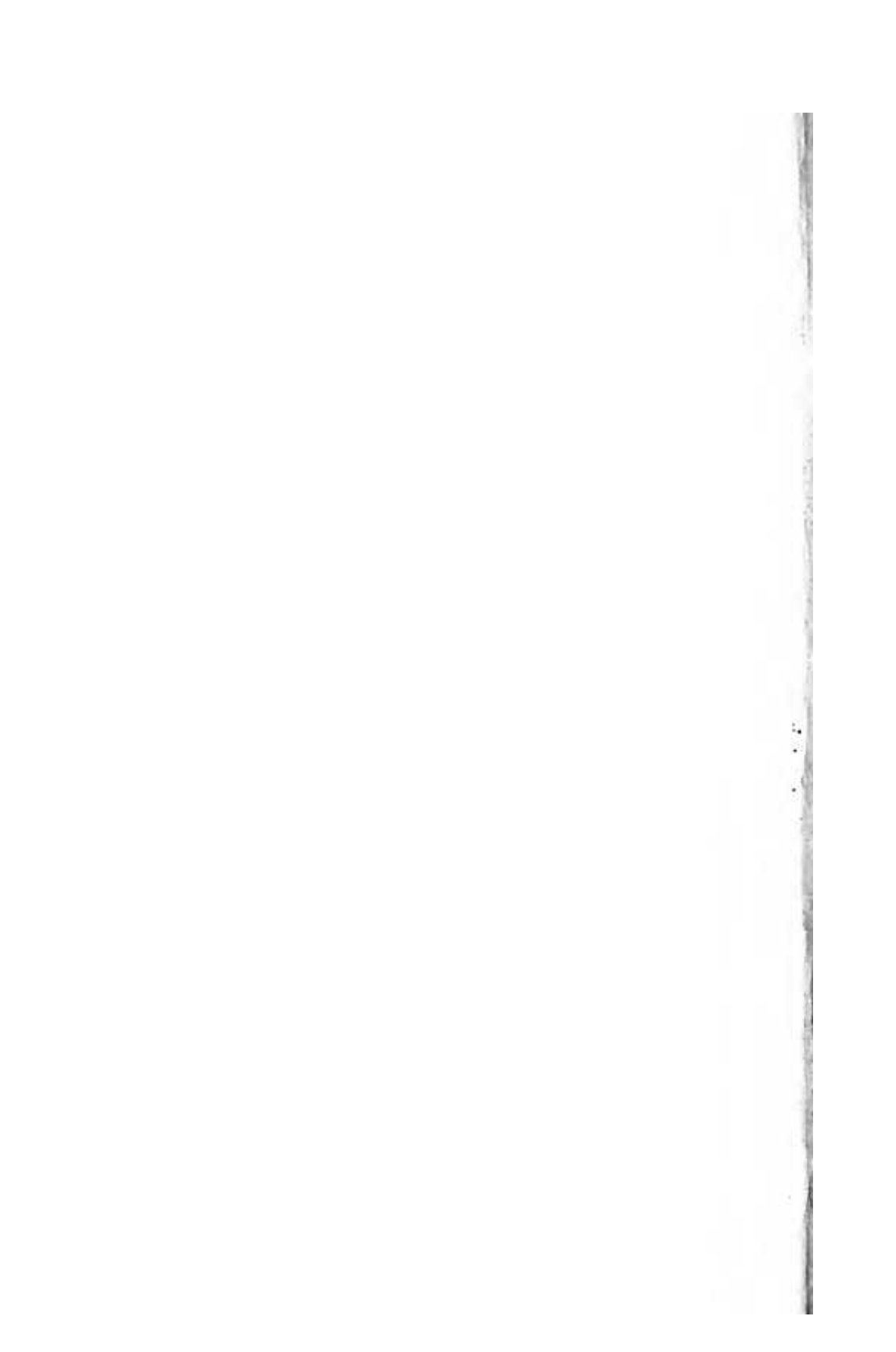
The chapter on 'The Influence of Special Training upon More General Abilities' is not included in this edition. It was out of place before since it treated facts of mental action in general instead of facts of individual mental conditions and their causes. It was put in the original book because of the great practical importance of the facts concerned. The facts are now widely known and are presented conveniently elsewhere.

This book attempts to apply to a number of educational problems the methods of exact science. The problems chosen are those of the mental natures of individual men, and the causes of their differences. The problems concerned with the nature of man as a species,—the general problems of instinct, habit, learning, practice, memory, fatigue and the like,—will sometime be treated in a separate volume. The two together will, I hope, be a serviceable quantitative treatment of educational psychology.



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CHAPTER I

21724 INTRODUCTION

THE knowledge of human nature which psychology offers to students of educational theory and practice may be roughly divided into four parts. A body of general knowledge about instincts, habits, memory, attention, interests, reasoning, etc., finds place in the ordinary text-books. Detailed descriptions of the thoughts, feelings and conduct of certain children at different ages are available in the literature of child study. Particular facts which bear upon this or that school subject or method of teaching may be gleaned from researches upon perception, association, practice, fatigue and other topics. Finally there is an even more incoherent mass of facts about the differences between one human being and another and the respective shares which sex, age, 'race' or remote ancestry, 'family' or immediate ancestry, and the circumstances of life have in the causation of these differences. It is the aim of this volume to put this last group of facts at the service of students.

Their significance for educational theory and practice is obvious. What we think and what we do about education is certainly influenced by our opinions about such matters as individual differences in children, inborn traits, heredity, sex differences, the specialization of mental abilities, their interrelations, the relation between them and physical endowments, normal mental growth, its periodicities, and the method of action and relative importance of various environmental influences. For instance, schemes for individual instruction and for different rates of promotion are undertaken largely because of certain beliefs concerning the prevalence and amount of differences in mental capacity; the conduct of at least two classes out of every three is determined in great measure by the teachers' faith that mental abilities are so little specialized that improvement in any one of them will help