LV. THE TEACHING OF IDEALS AND THE DEVELOP-MENT OF THE TRAITS OF CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY.

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Advancement in education is made, not by bold revolutionary strokes that shake the school to its foundations, but by experiments undertaken here and there, followed by slow and tedious adjustments of the whole system in the light of these experiments.

The most important task of the school is the development of fundamental ideals, good habits, right attitudes, and desirable traits of personality and character. Honesty is more important than a knowledge of the multiplication table. Industry is more valuable than definitions in grammar. Useful as is this or other information, it is only a means to an end and that end is right conduct resulting from an enlarged, deepened, and strengthened personality.

If this be true, and it unquestionably is, then why not include this subject in the curriculum and make the same scientific attack upon it as has been made upon the academic subjects? The psychology of it, the subject matter of it, the technic and methods of teaching it, standards and scales for measuring it, must all be worked out with the same painstaking care and high degree of efficiency that we have attained in our common branches. Educational leadership everywhere is becoming awake to this fact and a scientific approach to the subject is being made for the first time in history.

I am giving a course entitled "Personality and Character" this semester to a group of senior and graduate students. Being a new field and almost virgin soil, we are having to use the Law of Multiple Response a great deal. We are feeling our way along by organizing the whole field under these tentative headings: I. *A brief study of the historical aspects of the subject,* including some of the present day attacks and current literature, which on the whole is rather scanty. II. *General orientation,* including a statement of the problem, its theory and bearings, and some definitions. III. *The methods of selecting traits and ideals.* There are four: the individual, the consensus, the activity analysis, and the analysis of personnel. By the individual method, an individual selects a list which his judgment bias says is best. The better equipped and trained for the task he is, the more valid and valuable the list. Other things being equal, a more reliable method is the consensus

method, which is the composite judgment of a number of qualified judges. Activity analysis is an analysis of the traits necessary for the successful performance of the duties of a line of work. Analysis of personnel is an analysis of the traits of persons engaged successfully in a line of work. IV. *Sources of materials and methods of teaching and developing traits.* History, literature, the fine arts, and current incidents furnish abundant materials. Some of the methods used are rewards, penalties, example, suggestion reasoning, personification, dramatization, word control, and the like. V. *Scales and methods of rating traits.* A number of ways of rating have been proposed and tried out with as much success as those in other fields in their beginnings. No doubt many others of an improved sort will be forthcoming.

My class and I are now examining all the more than 400,000 words in Webster's New International Dictionary with the view to listing all the words in the English language that express traits and ideals. I have been unable to find in any addenda, supplements, or lists of new words, a single example of a new word expressing a trait, hence we may consider the words from Webster's New International as a practically complete list. I intended this paper to be a report of that study but we so enlarged the scope of our study that it will take several months to complete it. We have made the first draft and are checking for accuracy and completeness. It appears that there will be about 3,000 words in the list. They are all abstract nouns. A later study will be a study of adjectives descriptive of traits and of adverbs as modifiers of actions. The first thing in our present task will be to separate from the others the obsolete, the obsolescent, the rare, the archaic, and the occasional words that English speaking peoples have developed to express traits and have abandoned. The remaining ones will be separated into a positive group or those expressing desirable traits, a negative group, or those expressing undesirable traits, a group that may sometimes be undesirable, and perhaps a residue group of colorless traits. These again will be grouped into families that is, into groups of synonyms and other words of similar meanings. To illustrate, I made a little preliminary and anticipatory study of the trait of courtesy. I found more than two hundred words of similar meanings, as, politeness, sauvity, bienseance, urbanity, courtliness, and so on.

Next they will be subjected to statistical methods of treatment. The consensus method of selecting will be the most practical and reliable method here. The desirable trait list, it is expected, will

now be reduced to a point where it will not be unwieldy. Printed lists will be submitted to each member of the class and to each member of the faculty and they will each be requested to select from the list of two hundred or three hundred a smaller number, say 50, which they regard as the most important general traits. An arbitrary number must be chosen for I know of no other means of determining the number. The medians of the votes for the various words will be computed and those standing highest will be selected, if there is no apparent reason why they should not be. This list will be printed and again submitted for ranking and the medians of these computed. The final list will be those that our school considers as the most desirable traits, those that should characterize every American citizen.

We hope as time goes on to have other classes or groups of students to work out in addition to these the special traits needed in a number of the common occupations, and also determine which of the general traits would need special training for certain callings. The methods of analysis of personnel and of activity analysis will lend themselves best here.

Then extensive lists of situations in common life in which these ideals may operate will be collected. Also detailed lists of trait actions appropriate for specific situations will be made. For after all what are ideals worth unless the infinite situations of life are recognized as opportunities for ideals to be exhibited? The final test of our whole program of character training rests upon whether children show right trait action in the common situations of life. That is to say, our ideals and traits as abstract nouns are valueless unless they become adverbs of action or behavior. Hence the importance of these latter studies being made. Teachers have long held up noble ideals as desirable ends but have failed to help the pupils generalize situations. Also they have not provided and emphasized extensively trait actions. Take two examples in closing: The incident of Sir Walter Raleigh, Queen Elizabeth, the cloak and the mud is told to children by the teacher, believing thereby they will be able to generalize and apply the ideal of courtesy when occasion arises. This is about the way the boy generalizes: he says to himself, "Fine! If ever I meet a queen at a mud puddle and have a cloak, I'll know what to do." The trouble is he'll never meet a queen under such circumstances, and the ideal evaporates. One other case where in my judgment teaching of this kind goes astray. Mrs. Hemans has given us an attractive little poem entitled Casabianca, the boy that stood on the burning deck, to

teach, I suppose, the ideal of obedience or bravery. I would not hold up that incident as a desirable trait action for boys and girls I want my boy to have enough sense to get out of the fire. Personally I regard that boy as a moron.