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G. Stanley Hall

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THE NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE CONFERENCE: ITS WORK AND ITS RELATIONS TO CHILD STUDY¹

By G. STANLEY HALL

Child study has now so many departments, medical, hygienic, criminological, legal, religious, pedagogic, linguistic, social and the rest and its literature is so vast, the academic chairs and journals and sciences devoted to it are so numerous that no one can master all its fields. Specialization is already well advanced. It has a great and growing influence upon education and the list of reforms in method, matter, buildings, hour plans, text-books and ideals that now stand to its credit, is a long and noble one. Indeed, it is not too much to-day, to say that in every educational problem he who tells us authoritatively what the nature of the child requires, speaks the final word. Nothing in the history of education has contributed so much to make teaching professional and scientific. Profound as all this influence has been, it has been from the start silent and spontaneous. Now, however, we are organizing a more active and aggressive campaign to extend the application of its results and its influence outside the school proper to the thousands of child welfare institutions which we have tried to classify into 90 species, of which the following ten are the genera, viz., institutions for defectives, delinquents, dependents, those that deal with health and disease, morals and religion, protection, recreation, sex, eugenics, and general. Our Child Welfare Conference which just held its second annual five day meeting aims to unite all these into a national organization in order to secure the same advantages of co-operation, avoidance of duplication, the closing of gaps, enhanced efficiency, etc., as the Associated Charities have gained by co-ordinating local relief work. Our programme is first local, to bring all child welfare agencies outside the school in each city together so that they may know each other's work, catch each other's spirit, profit by each other's experience and impress the community more strongly. We wish then to effect a state, and last of all, a national organization, or organizations, with perhaps a head

¹Address given before the Child Study Section of the N. E. A., July, 1910.

or a central bureau at Washington, for the conservation of American childhood which is the most precious of all our national resources and indeed of all earthly treasures. This federal bureau ought ultimately to be represented in the President's Cabinet and rank with the departments of state, agriculture, the navy and the rest and should eventually include education as well as all the agencies connected with child labor, hygiene, relief, delinquency, juvenile courts and all the other scores of organized interests of the rising generation always including eugenics. The practical ends aimed at are the following.

First, every social worker and every head of every institution caring for dependent children and their helpers should have special training for their work. Child philanthropists, too, need to know children better and draw upon all this fund of paidology. The work of all these institutions could be better done and every dollar contributed by patrons would have enhanced value by training of this sort. There are no more devoted friends of children than they, but to the high virtue that prompts their work they should now add a science for the sake of the children, not to mention their own interests.

Second, from one to three per cent. of the children of the land, hundreds of thousands in number, who are defective, dependent or delinquent should be studied. We now spend nearly \$100,000,000 yearly upon classes of the population, old and young, that are a fearful drag upon the advancement of civilization. If a new pestilence were to break out that did damage of this magnitude, we should turn every available agency to the work of investigating causes and cures and should not be content with merely ameliorating present conditions. This vast field of observation is now very inadequately utilized for the permanent lightening of this heavy national burden. Experts in every such institution should work together systematically to draw lessons from this field so ripe in harvest and where the scientific wastage is too incalculable. The end should be prevention even more than cure. Every child publicly cared for should be systematically tested, its hereditary and personal history laid under tribute for the good of others and for that of science. This work, too, is already well begun in certain favored localities.

Third, in every institution for the training of teachers, some special course should be given to inform them in order that they may get and keep in touch with every child welfare agency outside the school in their community. We urge, too, that all upper grade pupils be informed of the work for dependent, delinquent and defective classes in their community as part of their education for citizenship and also that every

teacher of child study and every pedagogical department in normal schools, colleges and universities conduct extension work and make systematic surveys of all child helping agencies about them with the double purpose to learn and to help. We have found it profitable to assign topics in this field for thesis work and also to organize a series of committees of citizens to advance local playgrounds, promote better probation work, improve the milk supply for babies during the fatal hot months, to promote school gardens, training for workers on dependency and neglect, school hygiene, theatres, festivals, recreations, etc. It is to this great and new task to which we students of children are now applying ourselves that we invite your good will and if possible, your active co-operation in your several fields of labor. We believe the time has come to unite on the one hand all experts in paidology and practical agencies, to put to work what we know and to utilize children aided in every way for our science which now has so much to say not only on juvenile vice and crime and pediatrics, on nursing, feeding and dress of infants and children, their contagious diseases, games, habituations, vocations, social activities, adolescence, the psychology of poverty, criminal legislation, the child's relation to nature and to the city, on arrested development, truancy, gymnasia, bathing, prostitution, story telling, but even has something new and great to say concerning wedlock and race suicide. So our third slogan is—teach this applied child study everywhere from the high grammar grades up, put it to work for the charities, as college and university extension work.

Let me now tab off a few of the specific contributions which the larger child study has made toward better knowledge and treatment of some of these classes, although each of the following points needs a chapter or an hour.

I. No one is qualified to deal with boys in gangs who does not know and has not pondered the studies of the gang which consist of the unique and integral part of genetic social psychology. This, the judge of the juvenile court, the probation and truant officers, heads of boys' clubs, or adult improved or controlled organizations of boys for religious of moral and other ends and those interested in school and self-government should know by heart. A large fraction of all juvenile delinquencies is due to the gang spirit which is of course that of the savage tribe. The reformer here has succeeded in proportion as he knows enough to become a true member and leader of the gang, for even such organizations as the Junior Endeavorers, Knights of King Arthur, etc., are in boy language, members of God's gang, or of the church gang. Gang psychology is the master key to juvenile crime.

II. Purity workers of all kinds must know the genetic psychology of sex or they can never cope with the gigantic evil of vice of which this is the key. Would that I had time to point out the positive injury done by well-meaning ignorance here, the harm done by those who strive to help. Nowhere have our ideas undergone such sudden enlargement and transformation in recent years as in this domain concerning the age of greatest danger, the predisposing and active causes, modes of cure, the nature and consequences of error, etc. We can now detect several of the roots of sex aberration in the infant in arms and a group of others in the child before school age. We know, thanks to the Freud school, the peculiar and hitherto unsuspected vulnerability of the years from eight to ten. We can appreciate the great significance of physiological aids. We know from special studies something of the magnitude of this generally hidden evil in school and college, and our ideas of self-abuse and of gonorrhea have undergone great change, while the effects of the social evil and the methods of moral prophylaxis are now revealed in a new light. Here lie the roots of nearly all the psychoses of later life and of many of the elements that Emmanuelists and mind curists have reached. The time is at hand when these topics and eugenics will be taught in the schools, but here, if anywhere, every worker must have special training and should bear a certificate before being permitted to enter this field.

III. The nature of the transforming era of adolescence, as it is now understood, is changing our ideas and methods of education at this age in home, school and church and in all special and private institutions for exceptional youth. Over the door of every such institution should be written—Let him or her who knows not the laws and facts of adolescence enter here. It is in many respects the most plastic and vulnerable of all ages, easiest helped by those who know it and easiest harmed by those who know it not. How harmful the moral or physical trainer, or the Sunday School teacher of youth who does not understand it and what a blessing are those true shepherds who can penetrate to the secret soul of the budding girl or the boy in the awkward age?

IV. At least one per cent. or some 170,000 American children of school age are subnormal or in some way arrested, although only a small per cent. of these come into institutions. I need only refer to the clinical work for this class lately done by Wittmer at Philadelphia, Goddard at Vineland, Healey and Macmillan at Chicago, Chase and O'Connor at Clark, and others in this country. Their achievements constitute one of the most brilliant chapters of psychology applied

with the most beneficial practical results. Here we have an almost ideal relation. These children are being studied more thoroughly than any other class ever were and they are adding much to our knowledge so that they are at the same time material for research and are being helped themselves by being segregated in special classes or schools and given the special care they need. Standards of ability, physical and mental, are being established for each age, on which we can grade subnormality, and a wealth of data for heredity is also being slowly accumulated. Thus, it is no longer sufficient to herd and care for these unfortunates. Each such child is a class by himself and must be specifically studied by the expert methods now being evolved, and nowhere has pedagogic genius and inventiveness accomplished better results.

V. Again, take playgrounds, games and toys. How grossly ignorant and negligent we were a few years ago until various studies of childhood showed that in play, children both practise and train themselves for future vocations and what is still more important, are rehearsing many, if not most, of the practical activities and vocations of the race through its ancient phyletic history! So, in right play-teaching we are working in the very depths and not in the shallows of the soul. Thus we woke up to the fact that many city children do not know half a dozen of the scores or hundreds of plays and games they should and had no place to play in. We realized that if the boy without a playground did not make the man without the job, he was at any rate dwarfed and distorted, if not a half evolved being. The present magnificent playground movement is a direct product of the better knowledge of the nature and needs of the child. With what we are now learning of the psychology of toys, it is easy to predict a new dispensation impending in this field when play material shall come to its rights.

VI. The work of the Story Tellers League, library and other story telling represent a contemporary revival of the antique method of education which was universal, for once all education was story telling. Here pedagogical psychology has much to teach that would render this work more effective and intelligent concerning not only the history of the art from the Homeridæ down, the nature of tradition, the advantages of oral and ear over the later long-circuited tract of the eye that reads and the hand that writes, but its best and surest teachings concerning the nature of the story material and the kind of tale that knits up the very brain itself into a better organized unity. Concerning the most vital point of matter, the modern story teller is usually singularly and pathetically astray. While children do not want a tale with

a too direct or obvious moral, every story should bear essentially upon conduct and form sentiment. It should be an instrument and every story teller should be able to stand and answer what he expects to do and to accomplish with each tale. The school canon of stories should include only the best classics, standard which introduce the child into the very best things in Greek, mediæval and other material which have shaped the masterpieces of literature, the tales of Troy, of the Greek dramatists, of Reynard the Fox and animal legends, the Niebelungen and Arthuriad groups, the Wandering Jew, Bible, some of Shakespere, etc. Story tellers are too prone to strive for entertainment only and the content to amuse and have little idea of real edification or even what it means and here the natural corrective lies in the history of their art and in the better knowledge of the nature of childhood. Until this reform is effected, story telling will never take the place it deserves in our educational system.

VII. The Big Brother Movement is in great need of pedagogic psychogenetic explication. Its history and its motivation date back to Plato who held that it was a shame to any boy not to have an older mentor, hero inspirer and that it was a disgrace to a young man not to make himself a special ideal or spiritual father of a younger boy. This principle has a long history from the apprenticeship to the fatherland to apprenticeship to a trade. It has other outcrops in a system of the personal advisers lately in use in many high schools and colleges of this country, in the ancient method of fagging, in initiation, in the control and hazing of freshmen and all the manifold monitorial care of younger by older children and youth. Indeed, this is one of the ideal types of friendship and prompts the mentor to always be at his best as a pattern-setter to his ward. As a godfather or guardian, or quasi or supplementary parent to younger men or women, older youth are themselves given great and new reinforcements to mental and moral progress.

VIII. At the opposite extreme, we have the psychology of orphans which shows what fatherhood and motherhood mean by their loss, and here belong sad lessons of parental cruelty and abuse, also the effects of disharmony between the parents and divorce, also the effects of institutionalization compared with the placing out system. Defective parenthood has many outcrops from inability and unwillingness to nurse which is absolutely necessary to complete motherhood and the failure to do which always involves one or more parental defects to the problem of the duties of unwed mothers toward their children and the problem of foundling asylums with their fearful mortality. Shall we rehabilitate these un-

fortunate mothers at the expense of their children, or shall we teach them to face the shame, retain their children and develop them and themselves? Shall our agency content itself with trying to secure marriage or support from the fathers? Upon all these problems genetic psychology has distinct new light to shed which will make every agency here more effective.

This list of things genetic psychology is now able and willing to do for child workers might be considerably extended were there time and this survey is of course extremely inadequate.

But let me in closing turn yet more briefly and glance at the challenging questions now put up to the psychologist by the practical workers in fields where we have more to learn from them than to teach them, to some of which problems we are still, though not to our credit, rather dumb. Here it behooves us to listen, ponder, go to work and feel ourselves put on our mettle and more or less at fault till we can say some authoritative word. For instance, how shall we treat young children in reformatories who have gone wrong and are so prone to relapse to vice as soon as they get out? Our present methods are inadequate and radical reconstructions are now needed for this very unique class to whose nature and needs we can reason from another class. We want to make these studies and to send our experts to these institutions. Again how shall we balance up the pros and cons between these who would raise the age of consent and those who deem it already in many places too high? Once more, child labor has its advantages as well as its abuses. How shall we foot up this account for different industries, ages, communities, social classes, etc.? Again, what shall we do for high grade imbecile girls who can just support themselves outside institutions but are prone to be the victims of scoundrels and mothers of human spawn of degenerates? Shall we keep them always sequestered or tubo-ligature them and let them loose, or what? And the same in modified terms for young male imbeciles of this grade. Again, how can we reconstruct the juvenile court, the success of which has at present organized seems now hanging in the balance, for it is in most places too much like an adult tribunal with sworn witnesses, publicity, jury, habeas corpus, appeal, when it should be based on pure equity principles and so organized that it can work well as a system and is still dependent on the personality of the judge who of course ought to be an ideal father for all the delinquent boys in his bailiwick, although this requires a supply of genius which we cannot rely upon. Again, how can we eliminate the evils of the placing out system which has spread so fast and far that, although statistical data concerning its success are lack-

ing we are beginning to hear serious reports of its evils in the way of spreading moral infection and of manifold bad relations between adopted and natural children? What are the facts about the appalling mortality and morbidity of foundling asylums and how can these be reduced? How can we extend the educative influence of moving pictures which have greater pedagogic possibilities than any invention since printing and how can we reduce the present dangers to eyes and morals? Such questions are legion and I must close. Here child psychology has a vast and to a great extent newly opened field for applying what it knows and for learning more, and here all child helpers can greatly increase the intelligence and the efficacy of their work by coming in contact with the rich store of facts and principles for which this section stands and which we in a sense hold in trust as its custodians. Here we must have a new and vital bond between knowing and doing, for the two in many fields are yet sadly isolated. The National Child Welfare Conference is a forum where genetic psychologists work for the exceptional child, get together and put mutual questions, report results and pool their knowledge for mutual benefit. Our motto always is that the cause of the child is the most precious of all the world's causes because it controls the future.