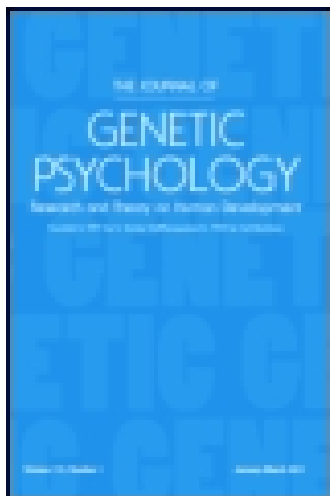


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COMMUNICATION

By FRANK A. MANNY, Kalamazoo, Michigan

"Do not think the youth has no force, because he cannot speak to you and to me. Hark! in the next room his voice is sufficiently clear and emphatic. It seems he knows how to speak to his contemporaries."¹

Compared to many European class rooms the American teacher and student have made considerable advance in establishing lines of communication. It is hard for some German teachers to understand that instructor and pupil can be "contemporaries" in any real sense. I recall the look of astonishment upon the faces of good men and boys in that land when after some sturdy boy had brought me my coat and helped me put it on I would turn to assist him with his coat. Yet our advance in these matters is slow. One can still find schools in which those tools which have formed so great a part in the progress of civilization—I refer to mutual aid and communication—are the cardinal sins.

In our interest in developing the constructive work in material of three dimensions and the representative and creative opportunities in drawing and painting, we have not always taken account of the extent to which language can become a means of communication in a creative and active sense. The newer developments in music, especially in primary classes, have reacted upon the language recitations. In some schools there is co-operation between these departments, and visitors who are concerned with English problems are directed to spend a part of their time in certain music classes because there they will find some of the most effective constructive work in gaining control of the mother tongue.

Those who have had experience with the more substantial experiments in correspondence study have often remarked on the opportunities for communication developed in that department, so that in many cases students have found themselves able to do more responsible work in correspondence with an efficient teacher than had seemed possible in the classroom. Here, as elsewhere, it is possible that the class instruction can

¹ Emerson: Self Reliance.

become a more adequate social tool by larger inclusions and the use of suggestions from these newer fields may help in the advance.

I have no fault to find with our usual tools in so far as they serve their purpose. The usual recitation methods—reviews, simple tests, formal examinations, topics, questions and answers, students' inquiries, theses, dissertations, conferences, etc., establish sufficient communication in a large number of instances. The laboratory idea carries over more and more into a wider range of interests and the development of oral speech in play and dramatic activities promises more efficiency. One of the significant factors in the better schools of the day is the extent to which it seems possible to carry regard for the individual without danger of rendering him less useful in society. Professor Cooley in his latest book has shown that while modern society makes it increasingly difficult to preserve the individuality that came from isolation, it offers constantly greater opportunities for that higher individuality that can come only through choice. The elective system has left a trail of absurdities and waste. Yet its tendency has been decidedly for progress. We have been slow to appreciate that its significance in earlier years will be found to be as great as it now is in the secondary and higher schools and, further, that some of its greatest achievements will be in the field of method and operation. It has been costly to learn what it can afford us in subject matter, but its larger usefulness may well be in giving to individual students a wider range of means of communication, through which the needed habits and conventions of life can be organized, with reference to social responsibility, without so great sacrifice as is sometimes made of initiative and individuality.

During the past fifteen years my work first as a teacher of English, and later of education, has led me to work upon this problem in my own classes ranging through the high school, normal school and the graduate department in two universities. My work as supervisor, superintendent and adviser of several schools has given me further occasion to see many aspects of the problem in the kindergarten and the elementary school.

A valuable study could be made of the improved tools that have come into our English classes through the activity of a few live men in certain universities. I have used many of these but found myself in need of some means that might serve as a centre and afford continuity. The device that served best is what students call "the reading list," or, better, "the weekly communication." On a certain day of each week each student hands in a paper on which he is asked to note

the references to the reading he has done during the preceding week. I have found it an advantage to have this a regular exercise as it then rests on a basis of habit and can be performed economically. While it is thus a definite requirement the required element is placed at a minimum and can be met by the use of a very few minutes' time. Upon this basis of regularity I find that an interesting superstructure of voluntary communication grows. There are some students who never get beyond the simple necessities, but usually the list of references in the particular subject comes to include material in other courses and relationships are suggested and pointed out by the student,—quotations are copied and the habit of abstracting and outlining is developed. Further than this there is a tendency to make this exercise an occasion for attending to the more mechanical questions which usually take class time or involve long waiting for conference, or more often are let go at much loss because it would require so much effort to bring them to the instructor's attention.

The communication would be well worth while if it accomplished nothing more than the exercise it gives in discrimination and in bringing to my attention the types of material which interest particular students, together with its function as a periodical clearing house. But further than this it has its best service in the use that is made of it to raise problems and to record impressions. Most young people like to write out their thoughts. For many the diary or journal is a real means of catharsis, but often a similar writing has greater value if it is known that it will have a sympathetic reader who will briefly comment and suggest relationships and connections. Naturally each week presents a large amount of material which can be marked for class use.

The frankness of statement and the directness of application oftentimes bring out erroneous views and serve to keep the instructor in touch with the actual muddy current of thought in the student's mind as well as his own clearer current that has been clarified by years of study. I have found it desirable to keep in a closet a "Lest we forget" shelf of books to which I turn from time to time in order to have a better understanding of the contents of older students' minds. There are curious cross currents to be found in these minds and canals side by side which are quite unconscious of each other's existence. I was once walking with an earnest young man of twenty-three who had taught two years. At this time he was taking less than usual work in order that he might have more time for reading. To my surprise I found that this reading was in the works of Horatio Alger, Junior! Yet following up a clue which a communication had given me I found that he

had made a list of important events in his life and one of these was the reading of Emerson's *Compensation*, which he discussed with intelligence. I had just read a barely passable examination paper by him, but in his communication there came up a reference to impeding habits which showed a comprehension of the subject far beyond that evidenced by the average student, and a sensible application of the idea to opposition to spelling reform and other like movements.

Following are a few extracts from the weekly communications representing the work of students in a normal school :

"During vacation I read about one quarter as much as I usually do during vacations and tried to observe more. I read enough of Francke's *History of German literature* and Scotts' *Social Education* to get their aim, point of view and main or general plan of treatment."

"I read some extracts from Tom Sawyer. Had read it some years ago. Wanted to see if I saw it in a different light. Think I found it nearly as interesting, but the interest lay not in the adventures of Tom but the causes and interests that brought them about."

"I tried one of Alger's books the same way. Think they are too much exaggerated to find even a study in them."

"I thought I would see what I could make out of some of Shakespeare's works. Can still see many places where there might be many meanings. But I think I can get down to the essence of the work a great deal better."

"I am studying the life and letters of Huxley. From what I read I think that he made himself a factor in changing his environment."

"I try to keep in mind the general contents of several good periodicals—as the *Survey*, *Manual Training Magazine*, etc."

"I. My work this week has been what I call a clearing up. I have been writing note books for all my subjects, getting points I did not understand cleared up, and trying to get my work into some sort of shape for the summer term. Outside of this I have done no work."

"II. Speaking of woman's rights I noticed the following in a paper this morning: 'After the style of hats women are wearing this spring, they still claim that they do not have their rights.' Looks to me very inconsequential!"

"During this term of *Psychology of Occupations* I have thought a great deal more about my course of study than I ever had before. Before I came to school I had heard only these arguments for Domestic Science, that it teaches a girl to be a home-maker and if she must depend upon herself, teaching it is a good way of earning money. Now I have a little broader view of it. It seems to me that the whole problem is this: In many homes to-day, women are putting the household industries into hands of professionals and are trying to do bigger things out in the world; in many other homes women are trying or pretending to make homes and they do not know how, so that improper nourishment, unhealthful conditions and many other bad things are the result. There are two ways of meeting the situation, either of putting all household duties into skilled hands, taking the children into the schools and giving them there all the things which are or were given in the best homes; or of teaching home-making in the schools, in clubs and through the press so that the present or more particularly the rising generations of women will know how and will be home-makers. In the former case,

I can see no reason for putting Domestic Science and Art in the public schools, in the latter case there is need for it in every school.

"In the Home Journal of Economics there is an article, 'A Campaign for Home Making.' The author describes the conditions of many homes, the lack of knowledge of food, clothing, and the care of children, and says: 'Is there a more fruitful field for professional teachers of home-making than this?' Do I have the right idea of it?"

"*An after thought.* Domestic Science may at first look to be too materialistic, too much stress being put upon the external and physical rather than on the internal, but this is not the true meaning. It is a necessary step to higher things.

"'Home Economics stands for the freedom of the home from the dominance of things and their due subordination to ideals.'"

"I do not agree with this report (Committee of fifteen) on the methods of teaching arithmetic. I have noticed that pupils do better work if not allowed to use texts until about the sixth grade. I get much more and better ideas out of the Michigan Manual than I do this report."

"I. Was Pestalozzi a transcendentalist? In his New Year's Address of 1809, he says: 'The divine nature which is in you is counted holy in you. You are among us what the divine nature within you and without you summon you to be. We oppose no vile force against your gifts or your tendencies; we constrain them not,—we only develop them. . . . What I seek is to elevate human nature to its highest, its noblest; and this I seek to do by love. Only in the holy power of love do I recognize the basis of the development of my race to whatever of the divine and eternal within its nature.'

"What I understand he means by 'elevate' is to open new things to the individual as he grows and is ready for them. I believe in Pestalozzi.

"II. Compulsory Education laws of the State of Michigan, 1907.

"III. I also believe in Froebel, when he says, 'In all things there lives and reigns an eternal law. . . . This all controlling law is necessarily based on an all pervading, energetic, living, self-conscious, and hence eternal unity. . . . This unity is God.'"

"'Education consists in leading man to . . . pure and unsullied consciousness and free representation of the inner law of Divine Unity, and in teaching him ways and means thereto.'

"I think Misawa's treatment of Pestalozzi and Froebel is excellent. (Modern Educators and their Ideals, by Tadasu Misawa, Ph.D.—D. Appleton, N. Y.)"

"I. 'School and Society.'—Dewey. (Problems worked out—to make school not isolated from home and society but in co-operation with them. His four problems are worth remembering.)

"II. 'Social Education.'—Scott. (Good. Have not done much reading in this.)

"III. 'Little Journeys to Homes of Great Teachers—Booker T. Washington.'—Elbert Hubbard. (A very interesting account of Booker T. Washington's boyhood and work at Tuskegee.)

"IV. Carlton, ch. 12. (A very fine account of continuation schools and industrial education. Worked out very well.)

"V. Misawa. 1. Table of Contents. 2. Preface. (I consider this one of the best books on modern education. A well organized work and interesting.)

"VI. Life of John Stuart Mill, from Rand's 'Modern Philosophers.' 'Elimination is probably as necessary for the true advancement of science and humanity as accumulation.' (I find that Mill

was an empiricist, individualist and associationalist. I cannot find an adequate definition or meaning for the term associationalist. Does it mean utilitarian? Does it hold something of the idea contained in the quotation before? Elimination in so far as the thing eliminated is useful and corresponds with previous experience?)"

"I. 'Education of the Indian,' Vol. II, Butler. 'Education in United States.' (I had never realized before that so much and so great work had been done for the Indians. It is certainly a rich field for any one concerned with the race problem to-day. It is just as interesting as the negro question, except that public opinion is not so strongly against the Indian.)

"II. 'School Management,' Dutton. (Shall take time some day to read this through carefully. It is a book every teacher should own. Have read greater part of first half.)

"III. To show or to illustrate the relation of school to society. I found this statement in Dutton's 'School Management': 'The school exists to create a better social life.'

"IV. 'The problem is not one of correlation, but of differentiation,' Dewey. There is much the same thought and same idea in this as in the statement, 'Elimination is probably as necessary for the true advancement of science and humanity as accumulation.' The one contains the idea of distinction, the other of extinction; discrimination and separation?"

"Chaps. I. and II. 'School and Child,' Dewey. A portion of 'The Young Malefactor,' Travis."

"'Plain facts about Public Schools,' Sam. Orth in Atlantic Monthly, 3, 09. This was a very good article. If the schools are really in this bad condition why not remedy them? After all, is society civilized? Look at the school system, at the 400, at the social relations. To me it seems doubtful. Man is not yet in his own and will not be for years to come."

"This week has been a great deal of going over work for me. I have gone over Patten and read much of it. I read some in Travis's 'Young Malefactor.' The little Michigan bulletin of laws was gone over. I read some of Dopp. 'The Teachers College Record' was new to me and in it I read the material by MacVannel on the educational theories of Herbart and Froebel. Besides this and some magazine work I have had considerable reference work to do in cooking and sewing."

"I have been following up references on special sense of pain which involved reading in Wundt, Titchener, Groos, Baldwin, King, Gulick and others. I doubted at the beginning of the reference work that there was such a sense—as many of the class do yet."

"Day, Squire Phin. A book to read for enjoyment. I have made a determination to read at least one such book or as much as I have time for each week. Too much for one week?"

"The discussion in class, the other day, of the Sunday ball game was a shock. Without attempting to reason it out or even to think it over, I have always hurriedly thought, 'Of course it is not right.' It fairly took my breath away then to have one of the girls come out and declare it a good thing. Most of all her reasoning was such that I found it impossible not to agree to it as a theory or principle, and yet it is on principle that it is to be opposed!"

I find it impossible to include extracts from some of the most effective material because it is written in so intimate a manner as to lose its significance when isolated. I trust, how-

ever, that this statement will serve to show the serviceableness of this tool. I am constantly impressed by the results it aids in bringing about by relating one week's work, or one year's work to that of another. There is a continuity established which is an important factor in gaining effective control of material and processes. I find frequent references to problems raised by the instructor or by students in other terms or courses. Again, a new point of view will suddenly appear and a note will be found sometimes in the midst of an examination paper, as, "I see this matter of Sophie's education [in Emile] in a new light, and will write this out in my next communication after I have had time to think it through."