

A Few Brief Selections by John Dewey

From “Education as Growth”, ch. 4 in Democracy and Education, Macmillan Company, 1916

“The primary condition of growth is immaturity...immaturity designates a positive force or ability—the power to grow. We do not have to draw out or educe positive activities from a child, as some educational doctrines would have it. Where there is life, there are already eager and impassioned activities, Growth is not something done to them; it is something they do”. P. 42

“From a social standpoint, dependence denotes a power rather than a weakness, it involves interdependence. There is always a danger that increased personal independence will decrease the social capacity of an individual. In making him more self reliant, it may make him more self sufficient; it may lead to aloofness and indifference. It often makes an individual so insensitive in his relations to others as to develop an illusion of being really able to stand and act alone—an unnamed form of insanity which is responsible for a large part of the remediable suffering of the world.” p. 44

“The significance of habit...means formation of intellectual and emotional disposition...any habit marks an inclination—an active preference and choice for the conditions involved in its exercise...a habit does not wait for a stimulus to turn up so that it may get busy; it actively seeks for occasions to pass into full operation...Modes of thought, of observation and reflection, enter as forms of skill and of desire...but there are habits of judging and reasoning as truly as of handling a tool, painting a picture, or conducting an experiment.” P. 48

“Hence education means the enterprise of supplying the conditions which insure growth, or adequacy of life, irrespective of age....Active habits involve thought, invention and initiative in applying capacities to new aims. Since growth is the characteristic of life, education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself. The criterion of the value of school education is the extent in which it creates a desire for continued growth and supplies means for making the desire effective in fact.” p. 53

From “The Democratic Conception in Education”, ch. 7

“An undesirable society is one which internally and externally sets up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience. A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms...is so far democratic. (p. 99) ...a social return must be demanded from all and that opportunity for development of distinctive capacities must be afforded all. The separation of the two aims in education is fatal to democracy.” (p. 122)