

past in such a way that the acquaintance is a potent agent in appreciation of the living present?

Dewey, *Experience and Education*, I

88 Education as growth or maturity should be an ever-present process.

Dewey, *Experience and Education*, III

89 In its contrast with the ideas both of unfolding of latent powers from within, and of formation from without, whether by physical nature or by the cultural products of the past, the ideal of growth results in the conception that education is a constant reorganizing or reconstructing of experience. It has all the time an immediate end, and so far as activity is educative, it reaches that end—the direct transformation of the quality of experience. Infancy, youth, adult life—all stand on the same educative level in the sense that what is really *learned* at any and every stage of experience constitutes the value of that experience, and in the sense

that it is the chief business of life at every point to make living thus contribute to an enrichment of its own perceptible meaning.

We thus reach a technical definition of education: It is that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience.

Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, VI

90 The only adequate training *for* occupations is training *through* occupations. The principle . . . that the educative process is its own end, and that the only sufficient preparation for later responsibilities comes by making the most of immediately present life, applies in full force to the vocational phases of education. The dominant vocation of all human beings at all times is living—intellectual and moral growth.

Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, XXIII

8.2 | *Habit*

The ancient saying that habit is a kind of second nature explains the significance of habit and habit-formation for the process of education. If men were born with their natures perfected, with no room for improvement, with no potentialities to be realized, they would not need and could not use education. Precisely because they are born with room for improvement, they can be and need to be educated, and this usually takes the form of giving them a “second nature”—a set of acquired habits that, once they are well established, operate as smoothly as their original nature.

Some of the passages quoted deal with the psychology of habit and habit-formation, and with the conditions under which habits are acquired, strengthened, weakened, and changed. Other passages present distinctions among kinds of habit, especially the differ-

ence between habits of mind (of thought and knowledge) and habits of character (of action and of emotion). This, of course, has a bearing on the distinction between intellectual and moral training—the effort, on the one hand, to form or inculcate good intellectual habits; and the effort, on the other hand, to instill good moral habits. The discussion here tends to move from the domain of psychology to that of ethics, for the qualification of habits as good and bad introduces the notions of virtue and vice.

Learning would be fruitless if what is learned were not retained. One aspect of such retention, especially when the learning is verbal, is discussed under the head of memory, in Section 5.3 of Chapter 5 on MIND. The other, and much broader, aspect is discussed here.

- 1 Those things which one has been accustomed to for a long time, although worse than things which one is not accustomed to, usually give less disturbance; but a change must sometimes be made to things one is not accustomed to.

Hippocrates, *Aphorisms*, II, 50

- 2 *Socrates*. Is not the bodily habit spoiled by rest and idleness, but preserved for a long time by motion and exercise?

Theaetetus. True.

Soc. And what of the mental habit? Is not the soul informed, and improved, and preserved by study and attention, which are motions; but when at rest, which in the soul only means want of attention and study, is uninformed, and speedily forgets whatever she has learned?

Theaet. True.

Plato, *Theaetetus*, 153A

- 3 The effect which lectures produce on a hearer depends on his habits; for we demand the language we are accustomed to, and that which is different from this seems not in keeping but somewhat unintelligible and foreign because of its unwontedness. For it is the customary that is intelligible. The force of habit is shown by the laws, in which the legendary and childish elements prevail over our knowledge about them, owing to habit. Thus some people do not listen to a speaker unless he speaks mathematically, others unless he gives instances, while others expect him to cite a poet as witness. And some want to have everything done accurately, while others are annoyed by accuracy, either because they cannot follow the connexion of thought or because they regard it as pettifoggery. For accuracy has something of this character, so that as in trade so in argument some people think it mean. Hence one must be already trained to know how to take each sort of argument.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 994^b31

- 4 Virtue, then, being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, whence also its name is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word habit. From this it is also plain that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature. For instance the stone which by nature moves downwards cannot be habituated to move upwards, not even if one tries to train it by throwing it up ten thousand times; nor can fire be habituated to move downwards, nor can anything else that by nature behaves in one way be trained to behave in another. Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted

by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.

Again, of all the things that come to us by nature we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity (this is plain in the case of the senses; for it was not by often seeing or often hearing that we got these senses, but on the contrary we had them before we used them, and did not come to have them by using them); but the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, for example, men become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts. . . .

Thus, in one word, states of character arise out of like activities. This is why the activities we exhibit must be of a certain kind; it is because the states of character correspond to the differences between these. It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather *all* the difference.

Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1103^a14

- 5 By abstaining from pleasures we become temperate, and it is when we have become so that we are most able to abstain from them; and similarly too in the case of courage; for by being habituated to despise things that are terrible and to stand our ground against them we become brave, and it is when we have become so that we shall be most able to stand our ground against them.

Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1104^a33

- 6 Habit is a kind of second nature.

Cicero, *De Finibus*, V

- 7 Every habit and faculty is maintained and increased by the corresponding actions: the habit of walking by walking, the habit of running by running. If you would be a good reader, read; if a writer, write.

Epictetus, *Discourses*, II, 18

- 8 If you would make anything a habit, do it; if you would not make it a habit, do not do it, but accustom yourself to do something else in place of it.

Epictetus, *Discourses*, II, 18

- 9 Some habits are infused by God into man, for two reasons. The first reason is because there are some

habits by which man is well disposed to an end which exceeds the power of human nature, namely, the ultimate and perfect happiness of man. . . . And since habits must be in proportion with that to which man is disposed by them, therefore it is necessary that those habits, which dispose to this end, exceed the power of human nature. Hence such habits can never be in man except by Divine infusion, as is the case with all gratuitous virtues.

The other reason is, because God can produce the effects of second causes without these second causes. . . . Just as, therefore, sometimes, in order to show His power, He causes health without its natural cause, but which nature could have caused, so also, at times, for the manifestation of His power, He infuses into man even those habits which can be caused by a natural power.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 51, 4

- 10 A habit is like a second nature, and yet it falls short of it. And so it is that while the nature of a thing cannot in any way be taken away from a thing, a habit is removed, though with difficulty.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 53, 1

The destruction or diminution of a habit results through cessation from act, in so far, that is, as we cease from exercising an act which overcame the causes that destroyed or weakened that habit. For . . . habits are destroyed or diminished directly through some contrary agency. Consequently all habits that are gradually undermined by contrary agencies which need to be counteracted by acts proceeding from those habits are diminished or even destroyed altogether by long cessation from act, as is clearly seen in the case both of science and of virtue. For it is evident that a habit of moral virtue makes a man ready to choose the mean in deeds and passions. And when a man fails to make use of his virtuous habit in order to moderate his own passions or deeds, the necessary result is that many passions and deeds occur outside the mode of virtue, by reason of the inclination of the sensitive appetite and of other external agencies. Therefore virtue is destroyed or lessened through cessation from act.—The same applies to the intellectual habits, which render man ready to judge rightly of those things that are pictured by his imagination. Hence when man ceases to make use of his intellectual habits, strange fancies, sometimes in opposition to them, arise in his imagination, so that unless those fancies be, as it were, cut off or kept back by frequent use of his intellectual habits, man becomes less fit to judge rightly and sometimes is even wholly disposed to the contrary; and thus the intellectual habit is diminished or even wholly destroyed by cessation from act.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 53, 3

- 12 Virtue is a habit by which we work well.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 56, 3

- 13 Habit is a violent and treacherous schoolmistress. She establishes in us, little by little, stealthily, the foothold of her authority; but having by this mild and humble beginning settled and planted it with the help of time, she soon uncovers to us a furious and tyrannical face against which we no longer have the liberty of even raising our eyes. We see her at every turn forcing the rules of nature.

Montaigne, *Essays*, I, 23, Of Custom

- 14 I find that our greatest vices take shape from our tenderest childhood, and that our most important training is in the hands of nurses. It is a pastime for mothers to see a child wring the neck of a chicken or amuse itself by hurting a dog or a cat; and there are fathers stupid enough to take it as a good omen of a martial soul when they see a son unjustly striking a peasant or a lackey who is not defending himself, and as a charming prank when they see him trick his playmate by a bit of malicious dishonesty and deceit. Nevertheless these are the true seeds and roots of cruelty, tyranny, and treason; they sprout there, and afterward shoot up lustily, and flourish mightily in the hands of habit. And it is a very dangerous educational policy to excuse our children for these ugly inclinations on the grounds of their tender age and the triviality of the subject. In the first place, it is nature speaking, whose voice then is all the purer and stronger because it is more tenuous. Second, the ugliness of cheating does not depend on the difference between crown pieces and pins: it depends on itself. I find it much more just to come to this conclusion: "Why would he not cheat for crowns, since he cheats for pins?" than, as they do: "It is only for pins, he would never do it for crowns." Children must be carefully taught to hate vices for their own sake, and taught the natural deformity of vices, so that they will shun them not only in their actions but above all in their heart, so that the very thought of them may be odious, whatever mask they wear.

Montaigne, *Essays*, I, 23, Of Custom

- 15 Habituation puts to sleep the eye of our judgment.

Montaigne, *Essays*, I, 23, Of Custom

- 16 Habit is a second nature, and no less powerful. What my habit lacks, I hold that I lack. And I would almost as soon be deprived of life as have it reduced and cut down very far from the state in which I have lived it for so long.

Montaigne, *Essays*, III, 10, Of Husbanding Your Will

- 17 *Hamlet*. Assume a virtue, if you have it not.

That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,

- Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery,
That aptly is put on. Refrain to-night,
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence; the next more easy;
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either master the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency.
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III, iv, 160
- 18 *Hamlet*. Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?
Horatio. Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.
Hamlet. 'Tis e'en so. The hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, V, i, 73
- 19 Custom is most perfect when it beginneth in young years: this we call education; which is, in effect, but an early custom.
Bacon, *Of Custom and Education*
- 20 Our senses, our appetites, and our passions, are our lawful and faithful guides in most things that relate solely to this life; and therefore, by the hourly necessity of consulting them, we gradually sink into an implicit submission and habitual confidence. Every act of compliance with their motions facilitates a second compliance, every new step towards depravity is made with less reluctance than the former, and thus the descent to life merely sensual is perpetually accelerated.
Johnson, *Rambler No. 7*
- 21 Johnson observed, that the force of our early habits was so great, that though reason approved, nay, though our senses relished a different course, almost every man returned to them. I do not believe there is any observation upon human nature better founded than this; and, in many cases, it is a very painful truth; for where early habits have been mean and wretched, the joy and elevation resulting from better modes of life must be damped by the gloomy consciousness of being under an almost inevitable doom to sink back into a situation which we recollect with disgust. It surely may be prevented, by constant attention and unremitting exertion to establish contrary habits of superiour efficacy.
Boswell, *Life of Johnson (Apr. 18, 1775)*
- 22 If habit is not a result of resolute and firm principles ever more and more purified, then, like any other mechanism of technically-practical reason, it is neither armed for all eventualities nor adequately secured against changes that may be brought about by new allurements.
Kant, *Introduction to the Metaphysical Elements of Ethics*, II
- 23 The habitual practice of ethical living appears as a second nature which, put in the place of the initial, purely natural will, is the soul of custom permeating it through and through.
Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 151
- 24 Habit is everything. Hence to be calm and unruffled is merely to anticipate a habit; and it is a great advantage not to need to form it.
Schopenhauer, *Wisdom of Life: Aphorisms*
- 25 The force of character is cumulative. All the foregone days of virtue work their health into this.
Emerson, *Self-Reliance*
- 26 That which is the result of habit affords no presumption of being intrinsically good.
Mill, *Utilitarianism*, IV
- 27 Habit is habit, and not to be flung out of the window by any man, but coaxed downstairs a step at a time.
Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar*, VI
- 28 Nothing so needs reforming as other people's habits.
Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar*, XV
- 29 One will seldom go wrong if one attributes extreme actions to vanity, average ones to habit, and petty ones to fear.
Nietzsche, *Human, All-Too-Human*, 74
- 30 Habit is . . . the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent. It alone is what keeps us all within the bounds of ordinance, and saves the children of fortune from the envious uprisings of the poor. It alone prevents the hardest and most repulsive walks of life from being deserted by those brought up to tread therein. It keeps the fisherman and the deck-hand at sea through the winter; it holds the miner in his darkness, and nails the countryman to his log-cabin and his lonely farm through all the months of snow; it protects us from invasion by the natives of the desert and the frozen zone. It dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice, and to make the best of a pursuit that disagrees, because there is no other for which we are fitted, and it is too late to begin again. It keeps different social strata from mixing. Already at the age of twenty-five you see the professional mannerism settling down on the young commercial traveller, on the young doctor, on the young minister, on the young counsellor-at-law. You see the little lines of cleavage running through the character, the tricks of thought, the prejudices, the ways of the "shop," in a word, from which the man can by-and-by no more es-

cape than his coat-sleeve can suddenly fall into a new set of folds. On the whole, it is best he should not escape. It is well for the world that in most of us, by the age of thirty, the character has set like plaster, and will never soften again.

William James, *Psychology*, IV

- 31 The physiological study of mental conditions is thus the most powerful ally of hortatory ethics. The hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way. Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, "I won't count this time!" Well! he may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work. Let no youth have any anxiety about the upshot of his education, whatever the line of it may be. If he keep faithfully busy each hour of the working-day, he may safely leave the final result to itself. He can with perfect certainty count on waking up some fine morning, to find himself one of the competent ones of his generation, in whatever pursuit he may have singled out. Silently, between all the details of his business, the *power of judging* in all that class of matter will have built itself up within him as a possession that will never pass away. Young people should know this truth in advance. The ignorance of it has probably engendered more discouragement and faint-heartedness in youths embarking on arduous careers than all other causes put together.

William James, *Psychology*, IV

- 32 We may say that an "instinctive" movement is a vital movement performed by an animal the first time that it finds itself in a novel situation; or, more correctly, one which it would perform if the situation were novel. . . .

On the other hand, a movement is "learnt," or embodies a "habit," if it is due to previous experience of similar situations, and is not what it would be if the animal had had no such experience.

Russell, *The Analysis of Mind*, II

- 33 The basic characteristic of habit is that every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experiences. For it is a somewhat different person who enters into them. The principle of habit so understood obviously goes deeper than the ordinary conception of a habit as a more or less fixed way of doing things, although it includes the latter as one of its special cases. It covers the formation of attitudes, attitudes that are emotional and intellectual; it covers our basic sensitivities and ways of meeting and responding to all the conditions which we meet in living.

Dewey, *Experience and Education*, III

- 34 It is a significant fact that in order to appreciate the peculiar place of habit in activity we have to betake ourselves to bad habits, foolish idling, gambling, addiction to liquor and drugs. When we think of such habits, the union of habit with desire and with propulsive power is forced upon us. When we think of habits in terms of walking, playing a musical instrument, typewriting, we are much given to thinking of habits as technical abilities existing apart from our likings and as lacking in urgent impulsion. We think of them as passive tools waiting to be called into action from without. A bad habit suggests an inherent tendency to action and also a hold, command over us. It makes us do things we are ashamed of, things which we tell ourselves we prefer not to do. It overrides our formal resolutions, our conscious decisions. When we are honest with ourselves we acknowledge that a habit has this power because it is so intimately a part of ourselves. It has a hold upon us because we are the habit.

Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, I, 2