

MODERN PHILOSOPHIES
OF
EDUCATION

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FIRST EDITION
SIXTH IMPRESSION

McGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY, INC.

NEW YORK AND LONDON

1939

PREFACE

The study of educational philosophy is at least as old as the Greeks. Probably the first systematic treatise on it in Western literature was Plato's Republic. Not till the twentieth century, however, did the philosophy of education become widely recognized as an important part of the professional preparation of teachers. Prior to this time, if teachers were trained at all in this direction it was through a study of general philosophy. More recently, however, the tremendous growth in the knowledge of teacher training has required the differentiation of educational philosophy from the field of general philosophy.

Beneficial as this specialization has been, it has, perhaps, gone too far. Educational philosophy has tended to slip its moorings to general philosophy, especially under the leadership of pragmatism, which some indict as a veritable denial of the possibility of philosophy. This specialization has been widened almost into a breach by the further fact that teacher training is frequently carried on in separate institutions. Normal schools, and later teachers' colleges, have been offshoots from the main trunk line of education represented by the university. They have developed not only separate physical plants but independent curricula. Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, if educational philosophy has tended to grow up in isolation and to forget its parentage. One purpose of the present undertaking is to relate these two fields more closely again.

Although frequently the problems of educational philosophy are, like icebergs, merely the visible portions of the larger, more fundamental problems of general philosophy, no direct attempt has been made here to solve the perennial riddles of the latter by the implications and consequences which the theory and practice of the school may have for them. Neither have all the principal concepts of general philosophy been worked out in terms of their educational equivalents. In fact, many of them would be quite irrelevant. Only those have been examined

here which have actually found their way into the thinking and practice of twentieth century education.

While Western educational philosophy has a tradition which stems from the Greeks, the instant presentation has been chiefly limited to educational philosophy in the first half of the twentieth century. Occasional reference to earlier points of view has been inescapable, especially as they continue to be contemporary viewpoints, but for systematic accounts of them the reader will have to refer to standard historical works.

The number of places in educational literature where outcroppings of philosophy occur is almost legion. Consequently the scope of this presentation has been restricted for the most part to topics which have been elaborated with philosophical purposes primarily in mind. With this qualification, practically all the American literature since the turn of the century has been canvassed so that this introduction might afford a broad acquaintance with varied philosophies of education. Several foreign sources of recognized importance have also been drawn upon from time to time. With such a background, a much more extended, even minute, documentation of the various shades of philosophical opinion might have been expected than is offered in the following pages. As a matter of fact, the author had the sources marshaled to present, but the length and readability of the volume dictated against their inclusion.

Practically all this literature in educational philosophy sets forth some individual author's personal philosophy of education. The candidate planning to enter a career of teaching is confronted with a variety of such philosophies of education. If he wishes to be critical and widely informed, he will have to read and study from a wide number of sources, requiring more time than he usually has to give to a single phase of his preparation. This is not only unnecessarily burdensome, but it fails to economize the student's time by sorting out and setting conflicting views over against each other. Consequently, there seems urgent need for a comprehensive general treatment. Another purpose of this volume, then—and the principal one—is to afford within the covers of a single book an introduction to the whole range of viewpoints on the main problems of educational philosophy.

Further to expedite this purpose, the style of presentation has for the most part been limited to description and exposition.

Only very occasionally has it extended into criticism. The last quality has been minimized to prevent this volume from becoming just another text in the philosophy of education, which would merely represent the personal view of the present author. In contrast, it is rather the object of this endeavor to present in a form as unbiased as possible the alternate possibilities on which the careful student may base his own philosophy of education. The order in which different points of view are presented, therefore, indicates no preference as to the merit of the view under consideration. In balancing various views over against each other, too, it may sometimes appear as if more evidence is presented for one view than another. This is generally due to the amount of exposition which appears in the literature, not to any predisposition on the part of the author. At other times, it may seem that one view is set forth in warmer and more appealing terms than some other. If so, it will be regrettable and unintentional. Yet it is probably too much to expect that the author will be completely successful, however earnest and sincere his effort, in concealing his own inclinations.

One ordinarily classifies these various philosophies according to different schools of thought. So, too, the systematic accounts of educational philosophy could probably be assorted into idealistic, pragmatic, scholastic, and other well-known categories. Although these terms will occur occasionally in the following discussion, it has seemed better to organize the main exposition on a more functional basis. Wherever possible, therefore, the topics discussed are determined by the categories of actual school experience. To focus contrasting philosophies on some concrete issue in educational practice is held better than to subordinate school procedures to the different systems of philosophy. But no attempt has been made to go to the other extreme, of forming educational philosophies for different subjects in the curriculum or for different levels of the educational ladder.

The author has not been without encouragement, advice, and criticism during the preparation of his manuscript. To his father, A. R. Brubacher, president of the New York State College for Teachers, he is indebted for having read the whole manuscript at various stages of its preparation and for offering timely criticisms. He is also under obligation to several others who have read selected portions of the manuscript and made valuable

comments thereon, notably Professors W. H. Kilpatrick and Edward H. Reisner of Teachers College, Columbia University; Professor J. Warren Tilton of Yale University; and Dr. Lawrence G. Thomas of Stanford University.

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HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT,
June, 1939.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

In education, as in other human enterprises, it is easy to erect an artificial barrier between the theorist and the practitioner. The man who specializes in the task of thinking through the crucial issues which underlie the surface activity of the profession is sometimes tempted to regard those who carry on the activity as being mere rule-of-thumb operators unaware of the real meaning of the things they do. The man in the field, similarly, is often too ready to look at the educational theorist as an impractical dreamer juggling verbalizations and unable to cope with the everyday problems of the craft. Thus a wall of mutual distrust, sometimes tinged with contempt, is built between those who work at doing the job and those who work at examining the job critically.

Not only is this barrier unnecessary; it is also a distinct drag on professional progress. The mutual attitudes of superiority giving rise to it are often compensatory responses to suspicions of inferiority, suspicions which are usually justified. Many an educational theorist could not manage a school successfully to save his professional life; sometimes he cannot even teach a university class competently. It is also true that many a practical school administrator or teacher, proud of his mastery of workable devices and technical minutiae, has so little knowledge of what the educational shooting is all about that he is doomed to be a mere mechanic without real comprehension of his direction and purpose.

This barrier between the man who does and the man who knows is broken down when each one recognizes the justice in the other's position and thus secures a summation of the truth concerning the nature of professional competence. The whole truth is that no man can hope to achieve a high quality of practical success unless he bases his activity on a firm foundation of sound theory, and no theory is worth formulation unless it includes all the available suggestions of everyday practice. The great practitioner is always a theorist, and the great theorist is always a practical man.

For the school administrator and teacher, the present book gives a critical summary and interpretation of various basic concepts upon which a sound theory for a sound practice must be built. For the educational theorist, it offers a listing of viewpoints against which his own philosophy may be compared and checked for practical implications. For the general student of education, it furnishes a complete and stimulating treatment of the field of educational philosophy.

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August, 1939.

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MODERN PHILOSOPHIES OF EDUCATION

CHAPTER I

THE SCOPE AND FUNCTION OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Education is one of the most commonplace activities to be found in any society. In fact, education of an informal character is going on all the time. Hardly an enterprise can be undertaken that some learning does not incidentally result. In this informal guise, education has never seemed very problematical. Neither has it received much conscious attention. It is only when an intentional effort to teach is made that the inherent difficulties of education become apparent. It is then that the need is felt for making some systematic attack on the problems presented. This might be done in various ways. The approach selected here is that of philosophy.

By entering the mansion of education over this threshold a number of inquiries open up. (1) What service can a study of philosophical theory perform to enlighten the educational program? (2) How is the approach of philosophical theory to educational problems to be distinguished from the scientific? (3) What essential difference is there between the philosophy and art of education? (4) What is the relation of the philosophy of education to the field of general philosophy?

1. There are a number of views as to the role philosophy should play in the conduct of the educational enterprise. Most widespread approval would probably be given to a conception that philosophy directs attention to a certain totality of experience. The classroom, the school too for that matter, is always in danger of being isolated by its four walls. It is even more in danger of being walled in by the folkways of the community. What the acts of teaching and learning require for fertilization is

to be related to the total context of human endeavor. They must be related to the past, educational history. They must be related to what the sciences of education, such as psychology, sociology, and medicine, know of the present. Save as they are further related to the political and economic milieu, their meaning will be far from clear. Equally, if not more, important are their connections with religion and morals. Finally, their bearings must be gained in some measure from the speculative future. When one tries in this manner to order his teaching or learning in the light of its ultimate and most inclusive ramifications, an educational philosophy may be said to be emerging.

This totality of circumstances, however, should not be thought of as merely a quantitative affair. Only an encyclopedia could effectively build such a summation. Furthermore, merely to multiply the circumstances which the educator should take into account is as likely to confuse as to enlighten practice. The wholeness that educational philosophy seeks is more concerned with unity and consistency. It seeks a comprehensive viewpoint which will operate as a common denominator for the diversities of experience.

While wholeness or unity of outlook may be the legitimate object of educational philosophy, the manifold details with which it deals need not necessarily be reduced to a single principle of interpretation. Some philosophies actually succeed in doing just this, as, for instance, the totalitarianism of fascism or the theocentricism of certain religious philosophies of education. But others, paradoxically, find unity in diversity. Those reducing to two principles are dualistic. This type is illustrated in the antitheses that have frequently been set up between such items as mind and body, child and curriculum, interest and effort, thought and action, and many others.¹ All other philosophies which are neither monistic nor dualistic are included under pluralism. Such are philosophies like pragmatism, which exalts the importance and uniqueness of individuality, the varieties of which are seemingly endless.

While there is perhaps fairly general agreement that philosophy enables the teacher to see education steadily and see it whole, disagreement immediately arises when the question is raised, to

¹ For a more complete list, see B. Bogoslavsky, *The Technique of Controversy*, New York, Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928, pp. 257-258.

what end? Some treat the quest for unity and inclusiveness as an occasion for obtaining a more adequate picture of ultimate and eternal reality. Others view it as an opportunity to enlarge the implications of contemporary educational practice. The differences consequent upon these two positions must now be detailed.

Proceeding with the latter view first, it is worthy of note that most education, whether formal or informal, is carried on with complete absorption in the hurly-burly of the demands of the immediate situation. Whether there is a philosophy underlying one's practices and, if so, what that philosophy may be, rarely rises to the level of conscious attention. Philosophy receives direct attention only when practice has unexpected and baffling outcomes, or when conflicting demands are simultaneously made on the educational program. Indeed, if the factors of the educational situation present no contradictions, the need for educational philosophy will hardly be perceptible. Philosophizing, seeing the isolated predicament in the light of its total context, then, is instrumental to solution of the difficulty. The purpose of educational philosophy is pragmatic. 困境

困境 Educational philosophy is thus concerned primarily with a criticism of experience. The teacher, for instance, frequently wonders why, with the best of intent and endeavor, his achievement is often so meager. At other times, the demands made on school policy by varied pressure groups are so contradictory that he is at his wit's end to form a course of action suitable to all. Either sort of experience is likely to give rise to a temporary impasse. At this point, one is usually forced to turn aside from overt action to the clarification in thought of what further action will entail. Under the stress of an ongoing educational situation, the number of circumstances which one can bring within the focus of attention is necessarily limited by the pressure of time. When this pressure is temporarily relaxed, the educational situation can be proportionately enlarged. But, according to this view, if one reviews the events leading up to the impasse or pushes their origin back into educational history, if one consults the experience of others, if he seeks the advice of science—psychological or political—or if he seeks guidance from religion, it is all as a means toward an end, the solution of a practical educational problem, to restore the continuity of experience.

In contrast to a philosophy which invokes the whole as a tool for the solution of practical problems stands a philosophy which pursues the whole on its own account, as an end in itself. For some, the pragmatic view is too circumscribed. They hold that the wholeness of educational philosophy should also shed light on the final truth and ultimate meaning of the universe.¹ Just as the temporary impasse is but a segment of a wider context of educational forces, so the educational process in its entirety is but a part of a still larger world process. From this view the whole not only lends significance to the part, but also the part may reveal something of the nature of the whole of reality. If the philosophy of education, therefore, informs anything as to the nature of man and his destiny, it will have a significance beyond the practical situation out of which it arose. In this direction the contemplative, rather than the practical, character of educational philosophy will be emphasized.

The acceptance of this position for some hinges on the connotation of such words as "reality," "final," and "ultimate." If reality is something different from the type of difficulty out of which the resort to theory arose, they would reject it. Education with a basis in metaphysics makes them apprehensive. They feel that educational philosophy has no private access to the ultimate nature of things. To claim that it does, risks a danger that someone will lay claim to *the* philosophy of education, to an absolutistic and exclusive theory of the educational process. Where men are obviously moved by diverse personal motives, such a pretension fosters concealment of these real differences of opinion and a consequent insincerity. Furthermore, an absolutistic philosophy can tolerate no rival. Such supremacy can only be maintained by the external support of some powerful institution, such as the church or state. These critics would also be disinclined to take ultimateness or finality in a literal sense. If these terms indicate that a terminal has been reached, that educational experience is now complete, then they feel the philosophic pursuit of wholeness has been carried to unwarranted lengths. If, on the other hand, these terms designate merely a tendency to penetrate to ever deeper levels of meaning, then they can be usefully employed.

¹ HORNE, HERMAN H., *Philosophy of Education*, rev. ed., New York, The Macmillan Company, 1927, pp. 12, 258, 297.

Consistent and closely allied with the quest for eternal reality is the function sometimes expected of educational philosophy, that it construct an ideal of what education ought to be. Here, too, much depends on what is meant by "ideal." To some, the ideal carries no authority unless it transcends the usual order of experience. Educational philosophy for such seeks universal truths. It is at one with Plato's search for those changeless patterns of reality which lie back of the shadowlike appearances of this world and which by their very permanence should command our allegiance.

But how is one to describe this ideal when he has never seen it, inquire others?¹ Any picture attempted will be imperfect, will have elements of randomness in it born of the vicissitudes of time and place. Other inquisitors are able to accept this function of educational philosophy only if ideals are seen to be continuous with ordinary experience. The ideal and the practical here must not be regarded as different parts of experience; the ideal is to be regarded merely as fragmentary experience filled out to its completion. Furthermore, such an ideal is conceived in order to guide learning. In turn it must be reconstructed by the outcomes of the learning experience. In fact, it is just such improvement in the redirection of education that one seeks and expects when he relates his immediate purpose to a wider context.

Opposed to these views are those who think that philosophy follows rather than leads educational practice. They view educational philosophy as a rationalization of usages already in existence.² Educational practices are seen to arise in informal random fashion. On the face of it, they do not appear to be parts of a large-scale coordinated design. By the artful use of logic, however, the philosopher manages to supply this intellectual structure. He states with as much consistency as he can what seems to be the common theory which underlies these diverse practices. But in doing this, philosophy is retrospective rather than prospective in character. It is a conservative rather than a progressive influence.

In pursuing an interpretation of education which will enable one to achieve unity of outlook in the face of diverse demands, it

¹ ROYCE, J., "Is There a Science of Education?" *Educational Review*, 1: 19, January, 1891.

² KANDEL, I., *Comparative Education*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933, p. 24.

would be a mistake to overlook the part which preference plays. The pattern of consistency which philosophy of education seeks is not an unemotional affair of cold logic. Desire and bias play a large part. The fact that there is a variety of educational philosophies testifies to different schemes of value. Referring one's professional problem to a wide range of circumstances is a qualitative as well as a quantitative matter. Of relevant facts one may have a plenty, but educational philosophy will be more concerned with one's general attitude and disposition toward them. Thus, the person philosophically inclined will inquire of his facts not only whether they are true, but also are they right and just, are they adequate, what do they mean in terms of purpose and value? At the same time, he will seek to avoid merely subjective opinions by adherence to the canons of reflective thought. Philosophy seeks, not to eliminate preferences, but to make them explicit and to show to what consequences they lead in action. Hence it becomes a major obligation of educational philosophy to be concerned with theories of ethics and value.

Another service expected from educational philosophy is a critical examination of the assumptions upon which educational practice, and especially educational science, is conducted. Educational policy must frequently be formed in spite of a certain incompleteness of evidence on which to base it. To expedite the formation of policy one imagines, or assumes, what the complete state of affairs actually is. When assumptions are incorporated into educational programs two possible results are to be noted. The program may be of such a character that, when finished, it affords the data originally missing. Here a more or less exact check can be made as to whether the initial assumption was warranted. Such assumptions are better called hypotheses. Other programs are launched with no expectation of obtaining data which would corroborate their assumptions. The latter are employed as a short cut to the prosecution of some more immediate project.

The determination of educational aims is a case in point. Sometimes they are selected by taking a consensus of opinion. Because the results are objective and so emulate science, they often receive greater credence than they deserve. This is because no attempt is first made to examine into the validity of the

method. This is just assumed, taken for granted. The investigator is eager to get on to the aims. Yet certainly no evidence he gains as to aims will test whether consensus as a method is sound. Actually the whole case ought to be justified, the technique as well as the outcome. This type of assumption is frequently hidden or lost sight of, just because the emphasis is on the outcome or result. Because it is, the most rigid and penetrating scrutiny of the whole undertaking is demanded. Of course, educational philosophy can make no exclusive claim to the function of criticizing assumptions, but it can, perhaps, make the most plausible one. Since criticism is carried on by relating the educational practice under consideration to a wider range of pertinent factors than originally taken into account, it seems peculiarly to belong to educational philosophy, for philosophy aims at wholeness.

In contrast to the criticism of assumptions is the position that educational philosophy should start from some postulate, something "given," and seek to bring other pertinent ideas into harmony therewith.¹ Because philosophic thinking starts with something known or regarded as true, it is to be differentiated from the usual type of thinking, which generally originates in doubt or perplexity as to what to do next. Thus one comes to the final conclusion that one cannot philosophize unless he already has a philosophy. As a matter of fact, no learning or thinking, not even that arising out of a problem situation, can start without some base. This is a cardinal point which those engaged in teaching should never overlook. This being the case, it seems a pity that anyone should teach without looking into the warrant for his presuppositions. 假設

So far, educational philosophy has been described in terms of the functions it performs. It has followed the pattern of the old Greek motto, *ὁ φιλοσοφία ἀλλὰ φιλοσοφείν*, not philosophy, but to philosophize. The question now arises, does educational philosophy have a substance as well as a process? The point is made that, in dividing up the domain of facts among the various academic disciplines, philosophy receives no domain peculiarly its own. Nor is educational philosophy concerned with seeking 本件

¹ SKEELES, A. G., "What Is an Educational Philosopher?" *School and Society*, 32: 62-64, July, 1930.

MIRICK, G. A., *Progressive Education*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923, pp. 12-13.

out new facts. Rather is it content to get its facts from those who are specially fitted to provide them, the scientists. In fitting concrete educational problems into the broad context of relevant information, educational philosophy must go to every science that bears on human life, especially where learning is involved. Thus it will go to biology, psychology, history, anthropology, sociology, economics, political science, ethics, and others. While philosophy of education is not equipped to add to these fields, yet it does secrete a kind of knowledge which grows out of attempting to integrate the varied and often contradictory data from these disciplines. In the course of this process the interaction of certain kinds of data tends to recur again and again. When it does, the concepts so developed become strategic for use in later attempts at unity and consistency. Such are the concepts of academic freedom, respect for personality, self-realization, continuity, education as growth, "precarious" universe. Only in this derived sense, then, does philosophy develop and deal with a content of its own.

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Some go so far as to assert that educational philosophy does not even have an indigenous technique of its own.¹ If so, this would readily explain why educational philosophy makes only a secondary addition to the professional store of facts and must obtain its primary data elsewhere. From this point of view there is no such thing as philosophical research in education. The absence of such a methodology, however, need not imply that the conclusions of educational philosophy rest on unscrutinized presuppositions. Yet others hold that there definitely is a method of philosophical research in education. What they probably refer to is not fact-finding, but the technique of achieving consistency. This resides in the rules for gaining logical coherence and follows the usual canons of reflective thought. Of course, it needs no pointing out that philosophy has no monopoly on the processes of logic, but it may require noting that it applies them to a wider range of data than does science. Whether the results of an attempt to gain an inclusive point of view are a contribution of the order of research is, perhaps in the end, just a dispute of terminology. In any case, pointing out unwarranted assump-

¹ SYMONDS, P., "A Course in the Technique of Educational Research," *Teachers College Record*, 29: 30, October, 1927.