

GENDER EQUALITY
IN THE PHILOSOPHY
OF EDUCATION



*Catharine Macaulay's
Forgotten Contribution*



CONNIE TITONE

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PETER LANG

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ADVANCE PRAISE FOR

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

"In *Gender Equality in the Philosophy of Education: Catharine Macaulay's Forgotten Contribution*, Connie Titone offers a compelling argument that Catharine Macaulay's *Letters on Education with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects* merits inclusion into the canon of educational thought. As the editor/author of a widely used anthology, *Philosophical Documents in Education*, I am persuaded that Macaulay's response to Rousseau's version of the ideally educated man and woman should become a part of the never-ending discussion of what it means to be educated. Congratulations to Professor Titone for her outstanding scholarship and for a significant contribution to the field of educational philosophy."

*Tony Johnson, Dean, School of Education,
West Chester University, West Chester, PA*

"Connie Titone's splendid account of the educational philosophy of eighteenth-century English political theorist, Catharine Macaulay, adds much to the small, but growing literature on women contributors to the field. Reader interest is broad: philosophers, historians, political theorists, teacher educators, humanists, and feminists of many stripes. Within philosophy of education, Titone's project is significant. Women's writings are to be taken as central and not as marginal curiosities. In its day, Macaulay's principal text, a series of letters about education, ironically broke rules of philosophical presentation and so does this book. Herein is a unique transtemporal combination of intellectual history, synthetic as well as analytic exposition, primary sources, and, to my mind, a wonderful imaginary conversation between Macaulay and two heretofore unknown literary near-contemporaries, Chapone and Genlis. Manifest is Titone's own philosophy of education, developed with connections to contemporary theory and providing a practical exemplar for educators in many contexts."

*Lynda Stone, Professor of Culture, Curriculum, and Change,
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

“This book is an excellent resource for reinstituting Catharine Macaulay into the philosophical record. In this text, Macaulay’s work is compared and contrasted with the work of contemporaries (both male and female). Additionally, heeding the warning of Jane Roland Martin, Connie Titone is careful to avoid the simple ‘add women and stir’ approach. Rather than simply adding Macaulay to the philosophical record, Titone analyzes the threads of Macaulay’s position to weave a tapestry, altering our current understanding of the field. This new philosophical tapestry presents us with alternative ways of approaching some of the perennial philosophical questions.... In this text, Titone reveals how Macaulay’s struggle to respond to these questions emerges from her contemporary context, was addressed and unaddressed by the men and women of her day, and may still be relevant to our struggles for social justice today.”

*Delores Liston, Program Director, Department of Curriculum,
Foundations and Reading, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA*

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OF EDUCATION





**Studies in the
Postmodern Theory of Education**

Joe L. Kincheloe and Shirley R. Steinberg
General Editors

Vol. 171



PETER LANG

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To my daughters, Erin and Jillian
and to my mother, Josephine

with love



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Who can say how broad and how deep are the forgotten contributions of strangers, colleagues, friends, and intimates to our thinking and our energies? I am aware, however, of the specific influence of some in the realization of this work, and I would like to thank them here. For reading full drafts and engaging fearlessly with me on the substance of the thing, I am indebted to Dee Bucharelli, Vincent Sherry, and Christine Williams. Your gentle, relentless support of me and the project has been a sustaining balm. For technical and general assistance, I am grateful for the consummate skill and unflappable kindness of Christine Maurer and also of Joseph McCormick. Transcending these contributions and undergirding my ability to persevere, I thank Griff Henninger and Agnes Lamme, especially for the spiritual encouragement each has so generously and continuously given. For all the rest of you, from Sicily to Louisiana, to France and to Cambridge—I remember. Part of this effort is to honor you.

I dedicate this book to my mother and to my sweetest, smartest daughters.



BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Catharine Macaulay

Catharine Macaulay (1731–1791) was born in England to a family of considerable wealth. During her lifetime, she was considered an able historian whose eight-volume *History of England* gained exposure and popularity in France and the American colonies, as well as in England. Throughout these writings, she defends the ideals of equality and every individual's right to freedom. It is in her last major work, *Letters on Education with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects* (1790), that Macaulay explicitly extends these concepts of equality and freedom to the construct of gender, providing metaphysical reasons for her perspective. These ideas find application in her emergent educational philosophy.



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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The very word respect brings Mrs. Macaulay to my remembrance. The woman of the greatest abilities, undoubtedly, that this country has ever produced.—And yet this woman has been suffered to die without sufficient respect being paid to her memory. Posterity, however, will be more just; and remember that Catharine Macaulay was an example of the intellectual acquirements supposed to be incompatible with the weakness of her sex.

—Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792/1975

Suppose we believed that the purpose of education was to shape the consciousness of the individual in such a way as to render him or her completely immune to the internally silent echoes and externally deafening shouts of gender limitation and human fallibility. Suppose we believed that human nature could attain perfection and become like the divine Mind that conceived it. Yes, suppose we had set our course to uncover an independent mind—actually a reflection of the divine Mind—in every single human being and to encourage that mind’s continuing emergence. Suppose the development of benevolence in human character was our unrelenting aim and the practice of social justice in human action our ultimate hope. What system of education would we create to support these aims? Whom would we choose for our teacher? These are questions committed to large purposes. Using the epistolary style, Catharine Macaulay takes on these questions in *Letters on Education with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects* (1790).¹ How did she come to have such uncommon, revolutionary views in eighteenth-century England? What is the relevance of her ideas today? These are the primary questions addressed in this book.

Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay Graham,² who lived from 1731 to 1791, is best known as a political historian of seventeenth-century England, her

homeland. Less recognized is her insightful and articulate work on the education of young people, *Letters on Education with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects* (1790). In *Letters on Education*, Macaulay articulates her philosophy of education, which, as the title of her book suggests, integrates her metaphysical beliefs and epistemological views with the pedagogy and practice they imply. She claims that the ultimate goal of formally educating young people is to produce an educated person who attains the character, morals, and knowledge that Macaulay believes is possible for individuals of both genders. She hypothesizes “that the character of our species is formed from the influence of education” (p. 84). She explicitly denies that differences in intellectual attainment and character are attributable to non-educational causes, such as God’s partiality to certain parts of creation, innate racial inferiority, or the geographic location of any group of people (p. 257). Macaulay presents education as the remedy to mistaken beliefs about limited capacities resulting from limited natures.

These are revolutionary ideas for a philosophy of education developed in the eighteenth-century. Yet, a painstaking study of her educational philosophy has not been undertaken. Twentieth-century scholars’ neglect of Macaulay’s work accounts in part for the continuing underevaluation of her work and its absence from the canon of the philosophy of education. It is possible, however, that even if Macaulay’s work had received more attention, it would remain absent from the collected material considered essential to an understanding of the history of the philosophy of education, in that it is representative of a much larger omission. In *A Room of One’s Own*, Virginia Woolf alludes to this omission when she writes about the daunting challenge that faced nineteenth-century women writers: “When they came to set their thoughts on paper...they had no tradition behind them, or one so short and partial that it was of little help” (1981, p. 76). Philosopher and scholar Eileen O’Neill acknowledges the extension of the problem within the history of philosophy. She writes:

Women are not included in the standard nineteenth and twentieth century histories of European philosophy as significant, original contributors to the discipline’s past. Indeed, only a few women’s names even survive in the footnotes of these histories; by the twentieth century, most had disappeared entirely from our historical memory. (Kourany, 1998, p. 17)

Twenty-first-century women who are absorbed with understanding and writing about the development of ideas by and about women as they relate to the educational realities and possibilities of the early modern period face a simi-

lar challenge. Primary source materials chronicling the history of these ideas has not been acknowledged as substantive and cannot easily be compared to other fundamentally substantial works on education or assessed in that context.

The failure to include women's ideas in the canon of the philosophy of education has been noted in scholarly circles for the last two decades. In her 1982 *Harvard Education Review* article, "Excluding Women from the Educational Realm," feminist and philosopher, Jane Roland Martin points out that women's writings have been kept out of comprehensive studies of educational philosophy as a matter of historical fact. Among the women she names as a prime example of this costly omission is Catharine Macaulay (1982, pp. 37–38). Martin's critique of the literature and history of the field documents the claim that women have been left out of the center of educational thought; their ideas have not been studied and therefore have had little part in shaping educational policies. Martin speaks of the epistemological inequality, in the representation and treatment of women in academic knowledge. She claims that "the disciplines exclude women from their subject matter; they distort the female according to the male image of her; and they deny the feminine by forcing women into a masculine mold" (p. 35). The exclusion of women, Martin argues, has led to narrow, male-defined and male-oriented paradigms that dominate educational philosophy. As late as 2004, Martin's general charge has not been corrected. A theoretical negative space still exists in regard to women's ideas. Besides not knowing how these ideas might affect educational practice, we also cannot even pose questions about them. They are black holes that are unknown and unseen. This is a perfect example of the null curriculum.

Plato's *The Republic* (380 B.C.E.), John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), and Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* (1762)—all of which Macaulay comments on in her philosophically educational work—are prime examples of the male-defined philosophies of education that remain effective in shaping the canon today. Rousseau's *Emile*, for example, has been acknowledged by many writers as a major text in the development of modern education (Dupuis & Gordon, 1997; Kaminsky, 1993; Noddings, 1995; Ornstein & Levine, 2000, 2003; Rorty, 1998; Ulich, 1982). Plato's *Republic* creates a design for a perfect society, including an ideal education. These works (or references to them) are the cornerstones of educational philosophy and are regularly included in anthologies and courses of study.

One important debate embedded in the works of Plato and Rousseau has particular relevance to this study. This debate includes the authors' views on the purposes of education and the proposed similarities and differences in education based on the learner's gender. For Plato, gender is not a limiting or defining characteristic in decisions about educational purposes. For Rousseau, gender determines one's societal role, and the role of Sophie—Rousseau's typical female student—is to please Emile—Rousseau's typical male student—and to be his companion and helpmate. This end-in-view determines the education required to prepare Sophie to assume her role.

In *Letters on Education*, Macaulay contributes to this debate from the perspective of a woman who has earned an education and garnered professional success. Some of the issues she raises and the views she holds point specifically to woman's situation in society and her potential. While Macaulay provides sharp social analysis of women's situation in *Letters on Education*, she also expresses compassionate understanding of it. She comprehends the personal, social, and political constraints placed on women, but she neither excuses women's conduct nor sacrifices her expectations of women's potential. Her work on education, published only seven years after Rousseau's *Emile*, convincingly refutes Rousseau's simplistic and conventional views on gender and education, and if our aim as educators is the students' full understanding, her work should be presented alongside Rousseau's as a disarmingly different point of view. Unfortunately, the reality is that Macaulay's work has been left out of all of the books cited above that claim to represent the field. For students reading Ulich, Kaminsky, Dupuis & Gordon, Rorty, and Ornstein & Levine, which overlook Macaulay's work, the prescribed readings fail to illuminate the true quarrel that existed at the time. The epistemic of Macaulay's voice, that is, her challenge to man's definition of woman—and the epistemic interest of the knowledge that she produced must be provided to the contemporary student and scholar.

Many scholars are slowly moving forward in their recognition of the value of studying women's works and recovering the traditions they created. Consequently, we are becoming increasingly aware of women forgotten by history who made great contributions to education, philosophy, and other fields.

In the discipline of philosophy, one could certainly argue that this is so. Mary Ellen Waithe's four-volume set, *A History of Women Philosophers* (1987; 1990; 1991; 1995), chronologically records women's contributions to the development of the discipline from 600 B.C.E. to today. Janet Kourany's

edited volume *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice: Critiques and Reconstructions* (1998) is another example. The book treats all of the branches of philosophy, and in each case women's perspectives and contributions are central to the treatment. In her chapter on early modern women philosophers in Kourany's volume, Eileen O'Neill presents a stunning sampling of those who took up the topics of philosophy and educational philosophy and their fate in history. Regrettably, volumes like Waithe's and Kourany's by and about women continue to be marginalized, kept separate from the mainstream discussions about the heart of philosophy. They are allowed little influence in the move toward epistemological equality. This is particularly important in educational philosophy because the theoretical significance results in practical significance. The acknowledged theories are applied to educational practice to solve dilemmas that have an impact on human lives.

It is difficult to find works by early women that have been considered sufficiently valuable within the dominant discourse of educational philosophy to study them in depth or to make use of them in practice. The results of a survey of recent works on the history of the philosophy of education concretize this point. One of the newer works, James Kaminsky's *A New History of Educational Philosophy* (1993), is a self-proclaimed "anthropology of the discipline" (p. viii). In his chapter entitled the "Philosophy of Education in Great Britain," Kaminsky begins his discussion with David Hume and the Scottish Enlightenment and goes on to include Locke and the influence of Rousseau, yet he makes no mention of the women who contributed to the intellectual history of that era. Kaminsky states that it was in the late 1960s in the United States that "women started to take a significant place in educational philosophy, a male-dominated discipline" (p. 93). Jane Roland Martin, Maxine Greene, and Nel Noddings, women who are currently actively contributing to the field of educational philosophy, are among those who Kaminsky erroneously claims "opened the way."

In *Philosophy of Education in Historical Perspective* (1997), Adrian Dupuis and Robin Gordon omit Macaulay and other women from the chapter, "The Beginning of Educational Liberalism." They focus on Rousseau's philosophy and contributions, and include ideas of his male contemporaries such as John Basedow, Johann Pestalozzi, and Benjamin Franklin. They acknowledge that "there are other educational reformers of the period who contributed to the development of new teaching-learning methods. However, they embody the same principles and characteristics of those already discussed" (p. 106). Thus, Dupuis and Gordon are either unaware of or satisfied to ex-