The Logic of Education

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and

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Routledge & Kegan Paul
THE STUDENTS LIBRARY OF EDUCATION has been designed to meet the needs of students of Education at Colleges of Education, and at University Institutes and Departments. It will also be valuable for practising teachers and educationists. The series takes full account of the latest developments in teacher-training and of new methods and approaches in education. Separate volumes will provide authoritative and up-to-date accounts of the topics within the major fields of sociology, philosophy and history of education, educational psychology, and method. Care has been taken that specialist topics are treated lucidly and usefully for the non-specialist reader. Altogether, the Students' Library of Education will provide a comprehensive introduction and guide to anyone concerned with the study of education and with educational theory and practice.

J. W. Tibble

The vital contribution which the philosophy of Education, in its modern form of conceptual analysis, can make to the theory and practice of Education, was outlined by Professors R. S. Peters and P. Hirst in their contribution to 'The Study of Education' which introduced The Students Library of Education. This book is a further development and exemplification of their ideas concerning the nature and scope and applications of the subject. The first chapter discusses and demonstrates the techniques used in conceptual analysis. These are then applied in an examination of the key concept 'Education' and of other topics familiar to students of Education – the notion of 'development', the processes of learning and teaching, the limitations and organization of the curriculum, personal relationships in teaching and the nature and purposes of educational institutions.

The book, therefore, as the authors point out in the introduction, serves a double purpose. It presents for consideration a positive thesis about the nature of the educative process, which gives a central position to the development of knowledge and understanding and claims that the emphasis given to public modes of experience, as distinct from school subjects, offers a much needed reconciliation between the traditional authoritarian subject-centred approach and the progressive child-centred approach to Education. It is indeed time that this controversy, at any rate in the crude form in which the recent Block Books have presented it, was laid to rest.
The other main purpose of this book is to exemplify for students of Education in the latter stages of their course as well as for practising teachers, the methods of study which the philosophy of Education in its modern form entails. Readers willing to make the necessary effort will be able to evaluate for themselves the effects on their thinking about Education, possibly also on their practice of Education. For those who wish to pursue the subject at a more advanced level detailed suggestions for further reading are given at the end of the book.

JWT
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This book has been produced with two definite purposes in mind. Firstly the book explores the implications for the curriculum, for teaching, and for the authority structure of schools and colleges of an analysis of 'education' in which the development of knowledge and understanding is accorded a central position. It is claimed, however, that within the sphere of knowledge and understanding the emphasis given to public modes of experience, as distinct from school subjects, provides a much needed reconciliation between the subject-centred and child-centred approaches to education. The authors believe that this presentation of a positive thesis about the implications of an analysis of 'education' is more likely to stimulate students to think for themselves about these topics than a more neutral approach to them. They also hope that the point of view which is made explicit in the book will make it of general interest to a wider public.

Secondly the book is meant to serve as an introduction to the growing literature in philosophy of education in Great Britain. This subject has only been recently established in this country and most of the work done is contained in articles and in a few rather advanced books which are suitable only for lecturers and advanced students. This book attempts to explain what philosophy of education is and, by concentrating on its central concepts, to initiate the student into exploring it for himself. It is not, however, designed for students who are just starting their studies in educational theory. Rather it is designed for those who have embarked on the study of philosophy of education as a distinct branch of educational theory. It should therefore be suitable for students in their third year at a College of Education who are beginning serious study in philosophy of education e.g. for the B.Ed. degree, or for students in a Department of Education who are tackling philosophy of education as part of a differentiated education course. With this
end in view the authors have included detailed suggestions for further reading for each chapter, rather than studding the text with references and footnotes.

The authors wish to thank *Melbourne Studies in Education* for permission to reprint abbreviated versions of Professor Peters' Fink Lectures on 'Education and Human Development' and 'Teaching and Personal Relationships' which were delivered at the University of Melbourne in July 1969 and published in their 1970 volume. They also wish to thank the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain for permission to reprint a very abbreviated version of Professor Peters' paper on 'Education and the Educated Man' which appeared in the 1970 volume of their proceedings.

Finally the authors would like to express their thanks to their secretaries, Mrs Rosemary Snell and Miss Jane Williams, for their patience in typing and re-typing many versions of the text.
I Philosophy

1 The contemporary situation

To be a teacher at the present time should be both disturbing and challenging. There are, of course, many schools where the old routines persist while only the faces change in the classrooms and where, in the staff-room, the conversation revolves only round the idiosyncrasies of the children, the latest idiocies of the government, clothes, cars, gossip and the best places to go for holidays. But more often practices in the classroom are changing as well as the faces and the stock subjects of conversation in the common room are punctuated by controversies about what should be done in the school.

The teacher should find this situation disturbing; for the staff-room may be divided into factions and generate a constant pressure on him to identify himself with one group or the other. Roughly speaking he is likely to find the traditional, more tough-minded point of view and the progressive, more tender-minded point of view. The former will stress the importance of knowledge and skill, traditional subject divisions and the crucial role of examinations; the latter will protest that learning to learn is more important than the actual acquisition of knowledge, that the curriculum should reflect the child's interests and needs, the traditional subject divisions being artificial impediments to the child's natural curiosity, and that examinations are an elitist device whose main function is to encourage a sense of rejection and failure. The former will favour formal class instruction as a teaching method and will not be averse to using punishment to maintain discipline, whereas the latter will favour group projects and individual activity methods and will regard punishment as an unjustifiable expression of the teacher's sadism.

The challenge of such a situation is obvious enough, especially as this opposition between approaches to education represents an artificial polarization, a caricature of the alternatives open to
teachers in performing their tasks. There is first of all the intellectual challenge involved in trying to make up one's mind about complex questions to which there are not as yet, and perhaps never can be, definite answers. There is also the practical challenge presented by the real possibility of trying out alternatives to see which is better. There is, of course, the ever present problem of the criteria by reference to which one says that one type of teaching or curriculum is better or worse than another. But at least there exist more possibilities for experiment in the present situation than ever existed before. Indeed, many would say that the illusion is so widespread that change must necessarily be a good thing, that teachers are becoming too easily pressurized into abandoning well-established practices.

It is one thing to find a situation challenging but quite another to have the equipment which is necessary to cope with it. Without such equipment teachers are likely to develop an irrational type of loyalty to one of the factions in the current controversy or to be very much at the mercy of the headmaster or the local 'expert'. It is our conviction that the philosophy of education is an indispensable part of the equipment which the teacher needs in order to form a clearer, better informed and better reasoned opinion about most of the matters under discussion. This presupposes a certain view of philosophy; so something of a preliminary sort must briefly be said about the authors' view of it as an activity.

2 What is philosophy?

Philosophy is an activity which is distinguished by its concern with certain types of second-order questions, with questions of a reflective sort which arise when activities like science, painting pictures, worshipping, and making moral judgments are going concerns. Not all reflective, second-order questions, of course, are philosophical. A teacher, for instance, can reflect about what prompts people to paint pictures or about the connection, if any, between painting pictures and social class. These are reflective questions in that they presuppose that the activity of painting pictures is a going concern. But they are not philosophical questions. Indeed they are part of the domain of two other types of enquiry which are also important contributors to educational theory, namely the sciences of psychology and sociology.

What then, distinguishes philosophy from other forms of reflective enquiry? Let us take an example; for one of the cardinal points in philosophical method is to show points by means of examples. Supposing one teacher says to another: 'You should not punish children by keeping the whole class in' and another says
'That's not really punishing them; and how do you know you shouldn't do this anyway?' The second teacher is dealing philosophically with the moral judgment made by the first teacher. What makes his reply philosophical? What sort of reflection does it exemplify? It involves reflection about the concept of 'punishment' and about the sort of grounds which are good grounds for making a judgment of this sort. Philosophy, in brief, is concerned with questions about the analysis of concepts and with questions about the grounds of knowledge, belief, actions and activities.

This rather bald assertion should give rise to a host of questions. But two connected questions would obviously present themselves to the practically minded. The first question concerns the nature of conceptual analysis itself. Is it, for instance, a matter of defining terms carefully? The second question is how going into the meaning of terms, or probing into the grounds of knowledge, helps anyone to tackle the type of question which sets the enquiry off. Maybe at the finish one's head is a bit clearer than at the start. But whether or not keeping the whole class in is to be called punishing the children, the question still has to be faced whether they ought to be kept in or not. Can philosophizing about the situation shed any light on this very practical problem?

3 Conceptual analysis

Let us first of all address ourselves to the question of what it is to analyse a concept. What is a concept? It obviously is not the same as an image; for, to revert to our previous case, we can have a concept of 'punishment' without necessarily having a picture in our mind of a criminal being hung or a boy being beaten. Is to have a concept then to be able to use the word 'punishment' correctly? If we have the concept it might be said, we can relate 'punishment' to other words like 'guilt' and say things like, 'Only the guilty can be punished'. Indeed it was the understanding of this connection that probably led one of the teachers in our imaginary conversation to say that keeping the whole class in did not constitute 'punishment'; for guilt had not been established. This ability to relate words to each other would also go along with the ability to recognize cases to which the word applied.

This looks a much more promising approach to making explicit what it is to have a concept. But it won't quite do for two reasons. In the first place we often make distinctions between things or group things together, but have not got a word for marking the difference or similarity. Are we then to say that in such cases we have no concept? This would mean denying that animals, who make quite complicated discriminations, have any concepts.
would mean that children, who behave differentially towards their mother very early in their lives, have no concept of their mother until they can use the word 'mother'. And what is the point of being so restrictive? Would it not be better to say that our possession of a concept is our ability to make discriminations, and to classify things together if they are similar? To be able to use a word appropriately is a sophisticated and very convenient way of doing this. Indeed it could be regarded as a sufficient condition for the possession of a concept though not a necessary one. In other words, we would probably be prepared to say that a person had a concept of 'punishment' if he could relate the word 'punishment' correctly to other words such as 'pain' and 'guilt' and apply it correctly to cases of punishment. But the absence of this ability to use the word would not straightaway lead us to say that he had not the concept. He might, for instance, get upset when he saw cases of wanton cruelty but not get upset when he saw cases of punishment; but for some reason or another, he might not have been introduced to the words which have been developed for marking these distinctions.

The second reason why it is not altogether satisfactory to equate having a concept with the possession of an ability, whether it be the specific ability to use words appropriately, or the more general one to classify and make discriminations, is that both types of ability seem to presuppose something more fundamental, namely the grasp of a principle which enables us to do these things. Locke said that an idea is 'the object of the understanding when a man thinks' and this is probably as near as we can get to saying what a concept is. But it is singularly unilluminating. As, however, our understanding of what it is to have a concept covers both the experience of grasping a principle and the ability to discriminate and use words correctly, which is observable in the case of others as well as ourselves, there is, amongst philosophers generally, a tendency to rely on this publicly observable criterion of having a concept. For it is possible to say more about it than it is about the subjective side. This public criterion is necessary to identify having a concept, but having a concept is not identical with it.

So much, then, for the object of our scrutiny in this branch of philosophical activity. But what do we do in philosophy when we analyse a concept? As the concept in question is usually one the possession of which goes with the ability to use words appropriately, what we do is to examine the use of words in order to see what principle or principles govern their use. If we can make these explicit we have uncovered the concept. Historically philosophers such as Socrates attempted to do this by trying out definitions. Now there is a strong and a weak sense of 'definition' in such