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See table of contents

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Brian Hendley, *Dewey, Russell, Whitehead: Philosophers as Educators* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986)

Brian Hendley's *Dewey, Russell, Whitehead: Philosophers as Educators* is both a call for the revitalization of philosophy of education and an instance of how the author thinks this should be undertaken. He asks, "Need philosophy of education be so dreary?" His answer can be summarized in these five propositions:

> 1. If the emphasis on conceptual analysis was not misplaced from the outset, it certainly is an exhausted movement now.
> 2. Philosophers of education can and probably should engage in theory-building.
> 3. Theories need to be tested in experience.
> 4. Among its sins, analysis cut us off from the continuity of philosophical ideas and from experience.
> 5. Philosophy of education could benefit greatly from studying the theories and practice of philosophers who attempted to implement their ideas either by establishing schools (as in the case of Dewey and Russell) or by working energetically within the system (as did Whitehead).

Hendley begins his study by quoting Sven Erik Norbendo with approval:

> Analytic educational philosophy emerged out of nothing at the end of the fifties ... bloomed through the sixties and has in the seventies been exposed to pressure.

In his own words, philosophy of education once fuelled by analysis "... has gradually tapered off into the present state of stagnation and increasing self-doubt." (p. 1) Hendley traces the rise in interest in philosophy of education and offers an interpretation of its alleged demise by reviewing attempts of philosophers to analyse the concepts of education and indoctrination. He does not provide a full fledged critique but just enough "to convey a sense of its ultimate futility" (p. 5).

Wise enough not to look for single essences or one set of conditions, Hirst and Peters "... consider the family resemblances among different processes and activities which enable us to distinguish central cases of 'education' from peripheral ones" (p. 5). Hendley's quarrel with all of this "... is that it seems unnecessarily cut off from any sense of continuity in the history of ideas." Hirst and Peters are accused of

1. almost stumbling upon a definition from the 19th century,

2. failing to provide an explanation of who propounded such a view,

3. not considering arguments used to justify the ideal, and

4. not demonstrating how it applies to our high technology society today.

The efforts of many to analyse concepts such as indoctrination come in for an even more severe drubbing:

> A whole sub-literature has been built up around them ... Much of the writing ... has now taken on the flavour of an in-house dispute or the proceedings of a private, rather boring debating society ... [and] has become more and more "professionalized" and further and further removed from the very real problems that initiated such reflective thinking in the first place. (pp. 6-7)

What are we to do about this?

> If the field is to grow and be effective we must wean ourselves from the single-minded attachment to conceptual analysis and begin once again to develop general theories of education and pay attention to what is happening in the classroom. (p. 12)

One way to do this would be for us to "learn from what ... [Dewey, Russell, and Whitehead] said and did and then move on to current issues in education that require critical thought and informed action" (p. 13).

But who are those with a "single-minded attachment to conceptual analysis"? Surely not Peters whose range of work—*Hobbes* (1956), *The Concept of Motivation* (1958), *Social Principles and the Democratic State* (1959), *John Dewey Reconsidered* (1977), and *Essays on Educators* (1981)—belies the accusation. Even when he is most analytically inclined, his purpose is always propaedeutic: the conceptual ground is cleared in order to tackle important philosophical (usually ethical) questions. It is also apparent from surveying this work that Peters and Hendley share the belief that it is important to work within a philosophical tradition. Ironically, were Peters not the ox to be gored, he might have been substituted for Whitehead in Hendley's study. Their work inside educational institutions has interesting parallels though with respect to educational

theory Whitehead made only a few suggestions, while Peters worked out ideas in considerable detail.

The portrait of Hirst is somewhat different. True, "What is teaching?" and "The logical and psychological aspects of teaching" are in the analytical mode. It is true also that in his writing he is not as bedded down in the history of philosophical ideas as Peters. But the relationship between self-consciously working in a philosophical tradition and doing good philosophy is a contingent one. A criticism of Hirst's work must be made independent of the genealogy of his ideas. Hirst's major contributions have been to clarify the nature of educational theory[1] and to lay the epistemological groundwork for a curriculum designed to to develop the rational mind. The "practical test" of his work akin to that which Hendley applies to Whitehead could be begun by turning to the minutes of the Cambridge University Senate for the past ten or so years.

When he criticizes the "London School," Hendley's target may be (a) particular analyses which he thinks are disastrously inconclusive (on indoctrination, for example) or unsuccessful (say, on education), or (b) students of Peters and Hirst who may not be as well grounded in the history of philosophy as their mentors. Much could be said on both of these points as well as Hendley's own interpretation of Peters' analysis of education and its practical usefulness. Let me venture two observations. First, why the analyses of indoctrination were so inconclusive while those on teaching proved more stable is an interesting and perhaps profound puzzle all of its own. Second, many efforts in analytical philosophy of education conducted on this side of the Atlantic show how threadbare this mode can be when it is cut off from the life-line of philosophical tradition (Did Komisar add anything to the analysis of "needs" that Dearden had not laid out in a perfectly satisfactory way?) This last point certainly offers partial support for one of Hendley's contentions.

There is no doubt that the heyday of analytic philosophy is over. In art, so is the heyday of cubism. In both cases, those who follow should learn much from the movements that have preceded it. We do not have to disown conceptual analysis unless it is completely discredited. This Hendley has not shown. Indeed, there are several references throughout his book to the need for clarification though what view of language he espouses and what methods he thinks should be used in its analysis are never addressed.

My major concern is the tests that are to be used to judge what constitutes good philosophy of education and good theory of education. What sort of inquiry must we undertake in order to answer such a question? I submit that such a critical meta-question is precisely what Paul Hirst has been endeavouring to answer for the past twenty years. Without such criteria, no judgment is possible.

Schools based on good and bad educational theory sometimes

succeed and sometimes fail to survive. Their survival is only contingently related to the soundness of their theory. The same is true for whether students learn or do not learn what they were supposed to in these schools. That is, the relationship between theory and practice in education is much more tenuous than is portrayed in this book. The school is not always a reliable crucible for "testing" theory. And at least some of the tests for good philosophy of education are internal to the discipline of philosophy. Some ideas that are badly grounded last for a considerable length of time (surely this is true of values clarification, for example). Other theories which are carefully argued for and articulated fail to survive. Some modes of thinking can fall into disfavour with students[2] and administrators alike.[3] Such disciplines may be less valued for a period, though not less valuable.

So, I agree, with Hendley that philosophers as educators ought not to decline on principle the opportunities to engage in educational theorizing. It does seem possible, however, to philosophize well in education without much involvement in theorizing.[4] It is distinctly possible that Dewey and Russell[5] were both inept at philosophizing and theorizing about education, but that neither shortcoming had anything or much to do with the failure of their schools. Thus, I am not certain what can be gained for revitalizing philosophy of education by studying the theory in practice. *A fortiori*, I do not know what strength we can gain by following Whitehead's conduct on various education committees.

While I do not believe, therefore, that Hendley has achieved the objective he set for himself and the field, he has written a very engaging book. His research has been careful and thorough. In his narrative, he has captured tantalizing details of the lives of major figures in twentieth century philosophy and education. He fills out many of the human details of these three great thinkers as they tried to wrestle with difficult educational problems. Philosophy with a human face may add interest to our field. He has provided one, but not the only, beacon into the future.

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Notes

[1]He records changes in his own position over the past twenty years in "Educational Theory," *Educational Theory and its Foundation Disciplines* (1983).

[2]Philosophy and history are two current examples at many universities.

[3]When jobs are on the line, there is a danger that in the pursuit of relevance, disciplines may lose their virtue. One should reflect a moment, for example, before collapsing foundations of education departments into policy studies units.

[4]Is Robert Dearden's analysis of the concept of needs any less telling for educational theorists because he was or was not actively engaged in educationally theorizing at the time?

[5]Historically, many philosophers who have turned their hands to philosophy of education seem to have been unable to bring their professional acumen to bear on the educational domain. Platitudes have often been the end result.