

Preface

The following comments on G.B. Vico, A.N. Whitehead, and John Dewey, which for the most part, follow the outline of my "Spring 1994 Sabbatical Report," are given here as a way of introducing and providing some context for this issue of Educational Change.

The great works of the past such as Vico's On the Study Methods of Our Time not only fascinate us for the human interest inherent in them, as records of our past, but in dealing with the problems of their times they may be instructive in shedding light on our own failures and provide an avenue to ward off additional misfortunes. And, failure and adversity seem to be ultimate traits of human experience.

In Human Nature and Conduct Dewey provides a relatively neutral pair of traits in conflict and uncertainty. These terms (conflict and uncertainty) do not capture the connotation of privation evoked by failure and adversity and, if I understand Dewey, were not intended to do so. If anything, Dewey attempts to present them as potentialities for the avoidance of failure and the promotion of fulfillments. Seen as such failure and fulfillment are the limits to the possible consequences of conflict.

In part the merit of the works under consideration is in the attempt by their authors to address the adverse conditions, especially with respect to educational institutions, during their own times, i.e. Vico's Naples of the late 17th and early 18th century, Whitehead's England of post World War I and Dewey's United States preceding World War II. Attempts by society and educational institutions to evade the phenomena of failure is bound to the same end as attempts to stop aging or efforts to evade other intractable human experiences. These forms of evasion lead to a social world in which the focus is exclusively on what is pleasant (the ostrich syndrome) such as youth and success. In the construction of a social world with such parameters one is caught in an endless attempt to cover (hide) the intractable in human experience which, however, cleverly or ingenuously concealed, continues and persists in a more confused and more dangerous form. Such denial is similar to other social processes which lead to fragmentation and incoherence and ultimately to disintegration.

In Chapter XIV of On the Study Methods of Our Time which addresses the drawbacks of the universities as well as the remedies, Vico focuses sharply on the problem of fragmentation and coherence. The tension among the competing perspectives and disciplines expressed by Vico aptly captures our own frustration in framing basic curriculums and mission statements which should direct us to aim for and provide the essential coherence for the coordinated efforts of faculties, students and entire college communities.

Today, students who may be trained in the art of discourse by an Aristotelian are taught physics by an Epicurean, metaphysics by a Cartesian. They may learn the theory of medicine from a Galenist, its practice from a chemist; they may receive instruction in the Institutes of Justinian from a disciple of Accursius, be trained in the Pandects by a follower of Antoine Favre, in the Codex by a pupil of Alciati. Students' education is so warped and perverted as a consequence, that, although they may become extremely learned in some respects, their culture on the whole (and the whole is really the flower of wisdom) is incoherent.

The integrity of coherence so elusive in Vico's Naples has become even more difficult for us and consequently an obstacle to the expression of the genius of our public mission. These considerations seem to be a version of the ancient problem of unity and multiplicity. The terms pushed to their individual extremes reveal the problem of the too much and the too little. Too much unity and too much variety place unusual burdens on societies and institutions which ultimately collapse from the sheer weight of too much or the frail structure of too little. Too much unity may turn into tyranny and too much multiplicity may degenerate into chaos. Aristotle's extremes of excess and defect are operative in the above account.

The above distinctions have their counterparts in educational theory and practices and, consequently, are crucial to the foundations of pedagogy. Vico's On the Study Methods of Our Time, in a sense, is a commentary on Renè Descartes' philosophical method (Discourse on Method) and is based on the claim that it rests on the indubitable foundation ar-

rived at in the Meditations, namely the absolute certainty of the *cogito* (ego). As every student in an introductory philosophy class soon learns the problem is that of moving from the indubitable internal subjectivity of the *cogito* to cognitive claims which are external to it (*cogito*).

Vico's critique of Descartes' analytic method is the result of his attempt to provide an explanation for human knowledge. He argues, as Aristotle did with respect to subject and method, that Descartes' method is appropriate only to a specific subject matter, namely, deductive mathematics. Therein lies the reason for Descartes' rejection and scorn of the humane studies, history, rhetoric, languages and other social studies. The failure of Descartes' dream lies in overextending his method. The attempt to apply his geometric method to all areas of human knowledge would not in itself have been harmful; rather the harm is in the rejection of those disciplines which resist or remain intractable to his method.

The strongest claim Descartes could have made would have been to indicate that the humanities, the social sciences, and probably the natural sciences, do not exhibit the precision of analytic geometry. If Aristotle is correct in his claim that a wise man does not expect necessary demonstrations from an orator nor probable ones from a geometrician then from this perspective, Descartes must be deemed foolish.

The above are issues which will determine the manner in which teachers approach their task and the expectations or outcomes of their respective disciplines. For Vico of On the Study Methods of Our Time it implies coming to terms with the "instruments," the "complimentary aids and procedures" and the "aims" of education. For Whitehead of The Aims of Education the keys are the role which "romance," "precision" and "generalization" have in the life of the students and the difficult job of finding the appropriate balance. Finally, for Dewey of Human Nature and Conduct one must look for the answer in the harmonious ordering of the essential components of human nature, i.e. "habit," "impulse" and "intelligence." Although, these three great thinkers used different terms and addressed different aspects of education they had a common underlying concern—the need to unify and integrate rather than succumb to the fragmentary scattering experiences which characterizes much of the process of learning. Maybe, here is the need for genuine mission statements (visions) which are not loose and vague at-

tempts at placating competing faddish claims which distract one from addressing fundamental human needs.

Beginning with Aristotle's division of the virtues into civic, intellectual, and technical or productive Professor Jane Morse from SUNY Geneseo complements it with the ethical analyses of Immanuel Kant and John Dewey to arrive at a more balanced view of the "Ends of Education." Aristotle's virtues are derived from *pragma* (πράγμα), *theoria* (θεωρία), and *techné* (τέχνη). To this Dr. Morse adds an account of Aristotle's four causes (final, formal, efficient and material) which she puts to good use in her analysis of recent educational policy (the last thirty years). For Aristotle's our final cause (end), happiness, is achieved through excellent action; and this is nothing but virtuous action. In short, well-being (happiness) is well-doing. For Aristotle, then, education in its broadest sense is devised to enable humans to reach well-being (well-doing).

Kant transforms Aristotle's final cause into a transcendental ideal which aims at fulfillment, and at the same time, is both open-ended and autonomous. Kant's desire for a universal principle expressed in his famous categorical imperative to which rational human beings assent while autonomous is a source of considerable tension. However, he would have his cake and eat it too, since, by a sleight of hand, he relegates anyone acting autonomously who does not assent to his universal categorical imperative to the class of non-rational beings, in the language of Freud, irrational beings.

The tension between humankind and the individual remains unresolved unless one assumes a kind of Leibnitzian pre-established or post-established harmony. Kant's insistence on autonomy has particular and democratic propensities with the consequence that there is no guarantee that individuals will "act autonomously as members of a kingdom of ends." We still have the lingering question: How does the transcendental ideal function in education?

John Dewey, especially sensitive to these issues, tries to negotiate these tensions (as indicated above) by analyzing human nature as a combination of habits, impulses, and intelligence. Recognizing that intelligence has no pre- or post-established priority in human actions, he leaves

it potentially open ended that its (intelligence's) beneficial influence may work its magic for constructive human behavior.

According to Morse educational reformers may fail in either of two ways. "One is to fail to formulate the proper ends for education. The other is to neglect the final cause in favor of material, efficient or formal causes." In these ways Morse accounts for many fads which have been put forth in the name of educational reform, of which many have been fueled by behavioristic methodologies in an endless cycle of stimulus-response patterns. These responses quickly come and go, only, to be replaced by other responses which trap the educational process in a self-fulfilling behavioristic process. Complicating this, there is the confusion which the social order imposes on the educational system, i.e. holding up the goals of power, fame, and riches as the true ends of education. Unfortunately, our educational leaders succumb to these false idols while paying lip service to the ideals of civic, intellectual and technical virtuosity.

In her examination of the more prominent reforms (responses) that took place over the last thirty years, Morse shows that, oftentimes, the conceptual confusion of the Aristotelian causes results in misguided policies which (1) focus on symptoms rather than causes or (2) replace material, efficient, or formal causes for the final cause

E. D. Hirsch's Cultural Literacy and A. Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind are examples of such confusion. Here the content is treated as though it were the end of education. By the same token other responses such as reforms for inclusion and diversity must also be analyzed from the perspective of the final causes which they serve, and the same goes for "canonical" and "non-canonical" authors. The "romantic naturalism" of J. J. Rousseau exemplified by "free schoolers" and "de-schoolers," such as A. S. Neill and I. Illich, must be treated similarly as well as the other reforms which have surfaced over the last thirty years.

Having shown us the misguided ways of educational reformers, Professor Morse goes on to underscore the critical need for conceptual clarity with respect to the final causes. We must know where we are going if we are to find our way there. "Clearly final cause determines the others. We must know why we are doing something before we can

ascertain in what order, by what method, and with what materials we should pursue our purpose.” It is of paramount importance for us to be as conceptually clear as we can be with respect to our educational ends; but, given Professor Morse’s formulation of the final cause of education as a transcendental ideal, i.e. “education should actualize the potential of all people in the practical, theoretical, and technological spheres, including recognition of autonomy of citizens in a global society,” we are faced with the same difficulties she has already pointed out with regard to the many vague utterance which serve as mission statements such as, “We will successfully teach all students,” or “to teach—to search—to serve,” the present motto of our own state university system.

Some closing remarks on Professor Morse’s “Ends of Education” reveals, what I consider, the crux of the difficulty with respect to Dr. Morse’s application of the Aristotelian causes to education. I should begin by pointing out that “autonomy” has a positive connotation similar to “freedom.” In communication the positive emotional tone obliterates the other possible ramifications latent in genuine “autonomy,” i.e. a potentiality for “good” as well as “evil.” If we accept the multiple potentiality inherent in “autonomy” how shall we conduct ourselves in actualizing the ends of education? Shall we habituate students towards “good” inclinations as Aristotle suggested and limit “autonomy?” Dr. Morse realizes the shortcoming of this view since she attempts to rectify it with Kant’s moral analysis. However, Kant’s analysis, as I previously suggested, gives “autonomy” with one hand and withdraws it with the other, i.e. when an “autonomous” individual does not arrive at Kant’s moral imperative that individual is relegated to the class of non-rational beings.

My suspicion is that underlying Morse’s analysis there are two views of teaching which her sources amply confirm. On one hand, there is the Aristotelian view which treats teaching as a “craft;” on this view the end (final cause) is known in advance and one, merely, has to find the appropriate means (formal, efficient and material causes) to get there. On the other hand there is the view that treats teaching as an “art.” This view seems to emphasize “autonomy” which Dr. Morse derives from Kant. However, this option runs the risk of the novel (good and evil), the unpredictable (good and evil) or open-ended quality (good and evil)

which Professor Morse has articulated. Again, this brings us to Dewey's emphasis on the ultimate traits of experience, "conflict," and "uncertainty." Being clear about these issues will help one appreciate the very difficult process with which we are dealing.

Our remaining contributions fall into two broad categories. The first three, those of Drs. Douglas Shrader, John Ryder, and Timothy Glander amplify some of the theoretical and structural concerns outlined by Professor Morse; whereas, the next four, those of Drs. Edith Gordon, George Iber, William Griffen and Richard Glotzer treat special issues which are essential in informing the ongoing educational dialogue. Finally, Dr. Lance Ternasky attempts an analysis of tolerance which tries to establish guidelines for negotiating the conflicting demands within the social order.

"The Lessons of Émile" by Professor Shrader from SUNY Oneonta is an attempt to elicit the basic principles of J. J. Rousseau's educational theory. Dr. Shrader teases the prominent insights from this influential classic; at the same time he maintains sufficient distance to appreciate its strengths and recognize its weaknesses. With his broad scope, he suggests parallels with Taoism pointing to the harmonious interaction between the individual and his surroundings, the aim (final cause) of both Rousseau and the Taoist sage. However, this requires that special attention be given to the often neglected aspect of learning, the emotional and affective demands on the teacher and on the student. Perhaps for this reason, Dr. Shrader re-directs us to Rousseau's text: "the story of human nature is a fair romance. Am I to blame if it is found only in this book? It ought to be the story of mankind." These words should be an occasion to re-consider and re-read humankind's "love story" and bring back the "romance" Whitehead refers to in The Aims of Education, and which is essential for the occurrence of education.

Professor John Ryder from SUNY Cortland provides a brief but effective statement of the obstacles and problems which issue from his analysis of schooling in a democratic society. His remarks are an outgrowth of his comments on Robert Westbrook's (University of Rochester) "Public Schooling and American Democracy." Both Westbrook's analysis and Ryder's comments were delivered at the Spring 1995 Annual Meeting of the N.Y.S.F.E.A. at SUNY Cortland. As found in this

publication, Ryder's remarks have an integrity all their own and may be read independently or in conjunction with Westbrook's analysis. Dr. Ryder focuses on the conditions Dewey considered critical for democratic societies, i.e. "shared interests" and "communicative interactions." These conditions are the *elan vital* for democratic societies, while the degree to which they are actualized is the measure of how democratic a society is. With the above parameters, what are schools expected to accomplish? Of course, as Professor Ryder indicates, many ramifications and thorny issues flow from this question. However, in a very general way, he along with Dewey argues for schools which promote a cultural environment which nourishes traits of character and dispositions conducive to those "shared interests" and "communicative interactions" characteristic of democracy. However circular this may sound Professor Ryder is aware of the problems and his comments are informative and provide some clarification.

Among the many obstacles which hinder the development of democratic life there are two social factors which are especially prominent. The first, of these, points to the existence of classes which institute special privileges and requirements unrelated to specific needs or functions and, consequently, hinder the demands of "distributive justice." Ryder says that, "As long as the control of the productive property of the society is concentrated in relatively few hands, and the distribution of wealth is correspondingly disparate, the shared interests and communicative interactions which democracy requires will elude us." Such a state of affairs may be promoted by two interrelated phenomena, i.e. "the inertia of existing educational traditions," and the realization by those "entrenched in command of the industrial machinery" that a pervasive democratic educational system would threaten their ability to promote their own vested-interests and use "the less fortunate others" for their own ends. The second major obstacle to democratic life is the phenomena of "nationalism" and "national interests." This issue results from the conceptual limits imposed by a restrictive sense of human community. It is a daunting problem and challenges the human spirit and imagination to the task of removing artificial barriers while preserving and promoting devotion and loyalty to those ends that bind humans and promote "shared interests" and "communicative interaction."

A subtle aspect of the potential for manipulation by those in privileged positions through the process of communication is explored by Professor Timothy Glander from Nazareth College of Rochester. In his "C. Wright Mills and the Rise of Psychological Illiteracy," he provides an outstanding account of C. Wright Mills' concept of "psychological illiteracy." Dr. Glander realizes that the sociological shifts from "a community of publics" to "a mass society" which result in a condition pervasive with "psychological illiteracy" cannot be laid at the doorstep of any one class or individual. However, he provides evidence that suggests that Mills' The Power Elite is not only a methodological critique of the mainstream American sociology of the times and of Paul F. Lazarsfeld's Personal Influence, in particular, it is also a moral condemnation of the motives, the ends, and the uses of such scholarship. The publication of The Power Elite, which saw the social scientists as "servants of the power elite" who provided the elites with the theoretical framework and the techniques "to control the mass society," made it more difficult for Mills to obtain research funds. At any rate, armed with these new sociological insights (the two-step flow communications," "personal persuasion and influence of opinion leaders," etc.) "the power elite" has not been reluctant to encourage "psychological illiteracy" in order to manipulate "mass society," especially in promoting its own power, prestige or pecuniary interests.

In "The Changing Perception of Women's Role in Education in New York, 1972 and 1996," Dr. Edith Gordon gives us a clear account of the critical developments in the struggle for gender equity on the national, state (N.Y.), and local (Long Island) level which have taken place since the passage of Title IX Higher Education Act of 1972. She focuses on the overwhelming difficulties which women have encountered in the struggle to overcome entrenched patterns of exclusion (supported both by attitudes and emphasized by the gender-biased linguistic habits). These attitudes and habits which are pervasive in administrative and leadership positions tend to translate into general patterns of exclusion with considerable impact on the distribution of incomes. While noting some improvements in attitudes and established priorities Dr. Gordon alerts us to the risk that the present financial crises (national, state and local) may undermine these advances.

“Academic Performance of Minority Students,” is a study by Professor George Iber of The Sage Colleges which does not confirm either the “cultural ecology” model of John Ogbu or the model of “cultural discontinuity” of Henry Trueba. Iber’s analysis of the first and second generation Mexican-American high school students in Liberty, U.S.A., leans towards the views of D. Fetterman, i.e. “the approaches of cultural discontinuity and cultural ecology address the same problem at different levels.” Consequently, in determining success or failure of high school minority students, confirmation of one theory or the other depends on the trait selected for comparison. For example, “acculturation trait” results supported both theories while “ethnic identity” comparison supported the “cultural ecology” model of Ogbu, and the “mainstream interest” score supported the “cultural discontinuity” model of Trueba. Iber concludes that, in policy making, a joint approach must be used to assess and ameliorate problems faced by minorities.

Professor William Griffen of SUNY Cortland provides less than an enthusiastic response to the explosion in information technology. He takes issue with the promises made by the advocates of the information technologies and suggests that these technologies are anything but “neutral.” His analysis, “Beyond Technology,” expresses serious concerns with the impact these new tools have on the “quality of life” and “social justice.” Rather, than speed headlong into the information highway, Griffen urges us to examine closely the impact these new developments have on the social order, and the distribution of resources and incomes. Further, we must examine whose “ends” these technologies serve, and finally, how do these technologies serve the public interest whose resources are drained in order to develop them. Undergirding Griffen’s analysis is the concern for the democratic order which is being undermined, even more, by removing both the decision making process and the financial resources further from the “common man.”

“Philanthropy in Educational Foundations: Conscience of The Public Good or Instrument of Control? Illustrations from Recent World History,” by Professor Richard Glotzer from SUNY-Oneonta, is a brief but excellent account of the influence of American Philanthropic Foundations on education with special consideration of their influence on race relations at home and abroad. Dr. Glotzer provides some evidence

that the influence of such foundations has rarely been detached or neutral. In general funds have been carefully allocated to perpetuate the political and social assumptions of the governing boards, staffed by "foundation men" drawn from universities, government, and business leaders. Using the tools of the emerging social sciences along with their dubious assumptions, Dr. Glotzer suggests that, these foundations functioned as informal and unelected vehicles of policy implementation. This raises the sensitive issue of the impact the distribution and allocation of these resources have on the future of democracy and democratic institutions in both "developed" and "developing" countries. These are critical concerns for the Foundations of Education.

It is appropriate that we close this issue of Educational Change with Lance Ternasky's, "Teaching Tolerance Amidst Disagreement." Given the present social and academic climate it is of considerable consequence that one tries, to arrive at the essential elements of a "genuine moral dialogue." Professor Ternasky constructs a model which requires the presence of three conditions. First, the conversation must be free of coercion and undominated. Ternasky's second concern deals with the relationship between knowledge and participation. He suggests that cognitive limitations should not preclude one from participation; for that matter, the clarification of moral issues have historically proceeded from a position of cognitive limitations. Further, such limitations seem to be ultimate traits of experience and thus should not be a bar to the contributions of each individual's moral experience. Finally, discourse should not be used as a way of precluding participation in the moral debate, i.e., one should not appeal to private, obscure, and technical language as a way of excluding participation among "equals." However, this raises the problem of the nature of "equality" and the problem of translating Ternasky's models and metaphors into the world of human action. In spite of Ternasky's balanced account, often times the darker sides of existence seem to carry the day. Perhaps, the more important question is: how do we bring about the conditions that make such dialogues possible? The brief exchange between Socrates and Polemarchus in Book I of Plato's Republic captures this concern adequately:

Polemarchus said to me: I perceive, Socrates that you and your companion are already on your way to the city.

You are not far wrong, I said.

But do you see, he rejoined, how many we are?

Of course.

And are you stronger than all these? for if not, you will have to remain where you are.

May there not be the alternative, I said, that we may persuade you to let us go?

But can you persuade us, if we refuse to listen to you? he said.

Certainly not, replied Glaucon.