

PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION

RUPERT C. LODGE

EDUCATIONISTS have long since lost all faith in philosophy, as applied to education. The differences and conflicts within philosophy convince them that there can never be *one* accepted philosophy of education. Practical education in the class-room, and pedagogic research in the laboratory, they understand. But speculations which are remote from both class-room and laboratory, they feel, are "best left to the philosophers".

Philosophers regret this attitude. Their "speculations" seem remote, but are merely technical formulations of those backgrounds which affect our outlook in every detail of class-room and laboratory procedure. Philosophers merely try to bring these out into the open, so as to focus attention upon them. It is surely better to realize how they affect our thoughts and actions, than to leave them to work obscurely in the background. Whether we are realists, idealists, or pragmatists, makes a tremendous difference in practice, as well as in theory; and it is the aim of the present paper to make certain of these differences plain.

The *realist* accepts the physical universe as alone real. Education he regards as the work of nature. Physical reality stamps upon our plastic nervous systems its own structure, order and truth. It writes our books, directs our researches, and controls our conduct. Like Bacon in his wiser years, we must cease to be judges, and must become pupils of nature.

The realist *pupil* expects the school to teach him the content and methods of the sciences which study reality; physics, chemistry, and biology. Mathematics and languages he regards as the merest auxiliaries. He learns to observe, note, measure and weigh: to let the facts speak for themselves, and to subject himself to their strict but wholesome discipline. His *bête noir* is the exuberant teacher who *will* thrust himself into the picture: the genial *raconteur* who treats each class to an academic vaudeville display of personal pyrotechnics, or the Herbartian technician who always exhibits the arts of the professional pedagogue, and never lets the subject speak for itself.

The *teacher*, from this standpoint, is regarded as a mere transmitter of objective information, with all subjective interference cut out like so much static. In fact, the thought is never far

distant that a radio voice or gramophone record could do the business as well as most teachers, if not better. Partial experiments along this line, with advanced high school pupils and university students, have proved satisfactory, when measured by objective standards. In grading, as well as in teaching, objective measures of achievement have been widely adopted. They practically do away with anything as variable and subjective as "judgment" on the part of the teacher, and he is reduced, as far as possible, to the status of an amplifying and recording robot.

From his own standpoint, the realist teacher is something of a dual personality. As a realist, he is the impersonal voice of scientific truth, interested only in broadcasting objective information. Like the Encyclopedia, he is completely indifferent to the age and sex of his audience. He teaches the same truths to youths of sixteen as to men of sixty. Like Dr. Johnson, he supplies the members of his class with an argument. He does not undertake to supply them with an intelligence. But as a teacher, he has also been trained in some College of Education; and what he has there learnt bedevils the whole situation for him. He has learnt that what may be connected with the psyche of a man of sixty will mean very little to a youth of sixteen, and nothing at all to a child of six. As a teacher, he thus has to adapt the objective system to his pupil's interests, distorting his beloved science to make it appeal to immature minds. He admits the necessity, but it annoys him. At times, he loathes educational psychology and all its works, and even thinks of his pupils with distaste. If only he could give up teaching and devote himself wholly to research! At other times, he behaves like the true teacher, leading his pupils to the land of promise, and training them in techniques which will enable them to solve his problems, write his books, and succeed in his science, while he remains obscurely in the background, known, if at all, as their trainer and pedagogue.

The *administrator* of the realist type, when he devotes himself to education, is interested primarily in efficient teaching. He works through his teaching staff, guiding and directing their ideas and methods in principle, and vitally concerned with those ideas and methods. He makes himself an authority on modern pedagogy, and equips himself to participate, if only as director, in the many objective researches carried out in this field. Immersed in scientific technique, he decides all questions as to the acceptance, placing, and guidance of pupils, the size and duration of classes, the methods of teaching, examining and recording results, etc., by reference to experimentally determined fact. His decisions

are thus never the *ipse dixit* of arbitrary authority, but are always objective, and rest upon the proved nature of the realities with which he is dealing. As an administrator, his watchword is "efficiency". As a realist, he is convinced that the road to efficiency is paved with the latest experimental publications. All questions which can be decided upon the basis of measurable objective achievement lend themselves to experimentation; and the modern realist administrator sees opening before him an endless vista of objective researches, and feels that he is at the beginning of a new and almost incalculably important period in scientific pedagogy.

The *community* is also interested in education. It is never wholly realist, idealist, or pragmatist in type. But modern communities, especially since the War, are deeply steeped in realism, so that the outlook of most of us is coloured by the floodlights of "efficiency," "science", "technique", "objectivity", and "rationalization". Our factories, chain and department stores, and sales organizations, all rest heavily upon the realist logic and psychology. In so far as a community accepts, however unreflectively, the almost universal tendency to standardize, to analyze complex wholes into interchangeable unit-parts, so as to make possible efficient mass-production: in so far as it treats as real only what is physical, and evaluates processes and activities in terms of results which are tangible and objective, we can speak of the community as realist in background and outlook.

Such a community welcomes with enthusiasm the realist tendencies in education. In these tendencies, the citizens recognize something familiar. Their first slight objection to what seems novel in the new technique soon passes when they are shown that the new methods represent the use in education of methods with which the citizens are entirely familiar in almost every phase of modern industry. Schools with the aim of basing education upon reality, schools scientifically rationalized by efficiency experts, schools with standardized, interchangeable curricula and examinations, with standardized, interchangeable teachers, and standardized, interchangeable pupils; schools whose standardization is, in every case, based upon objective and scientific experimentation, are schools which almost every adult member of a modern community can understand and appreciate. The realist administrator is as easy to talk with as any efficient business man; and his plans, being all objective, and not mere forcible expressions of opinion delivered *de haut en bas*, can be judged and approved by every citizen. They are simple, clear, and obviously efficient. They are all plainly in accord with the trends in modern life which have

made our civilization the thing that it is; and, on the principle that this is the best of all possible worlds, that whatever *is* is right, that a hundred million people can't be wrong, etc., etc., the modern realist community accepts and welcomes the modern realist tendencies in education.

So much for the realist point of view. To *idealists*, education is always something of a miracle. It is not built up mechanically, mathematically, logically, step by step, but is vital. The organism is alive and growing. It has within itself forces which emerge and are released in its interaction with the environment, and cannot be accounted for in terms of the environment alone. When young birds learn to fly, their flying is not a muscular adjustment learnt step by step, in response to environmental stimulation. The nervous connections grow to maturity from within, and it is only when they have so grown that the stimulus of the environment is met by an effective response. So too the movements and emotions associated with the sentiment of love are not acquired by following the laws of habit-formation. They are not links or bonds of connection impressed by repetition upon the plastic neural tissue, but are the outward expression of an inner growth. The Prince's kiss which awakens the sleeping Princess does not have to be repeated until she acquires the habit. It is because she is already dreaming of her fairy Prince, and is ready for him, that the awakening occurs. Life is, in fact, not so much a matter of responding to environmental stimulation, as of actively selecting and manipulating the environment in accordance with inward impulse, re-shaping it nearer to the heart's desire for life and love, for beauty and companionship.

From the idealist standpoint, education is the Prince's kiss. It awakens to new life only when there is already an inner impulse toward that new life. As the organism ripens into stage after stage of spiritual growth, education provides the kind of environment which this *nisus* demands for its full awakening at each stage. Childhood demands the kindergarten environment indoors, and, outdoors, the parks with their playgrounds, lawns, and shrubberies, their animals and flowers. It demands an environment in which play is both possible and natural, with the companionship of children in the foreground, and protection, assistance, and love unobtrusively in the background. In such an environment, the demand for assistance in learning to speak, read, write, and count, learning poems and stories of child and family life, comes naturally and of itself; precisely as the demand comes to participate in running, climbing, skipping, hiding, singing, and guessing games. The demand to participate in school life proper is equally natural. The

school is not an external stimulus to which the child is taught to respond. It is a natural environment provided to satisfy the child's inner need, and the child takes to it much as the bee takes to the hive provided for the bee's vital requirements.

The idealist *pupil* does not make as definite demands upon the school as his realist brother. He is slow to find himself, uncertain of his goal. He feels drawn toward persons rather than subjects, and has a tendency toward hero-worship. Merely to associate with some of the teachers, altogether apart from taking courses with them, seems to help him. Others, he avoids. However great their objective knowledge, he feels that he has "nothing to learn" from them. When he looks back over his school life, in later years, he finds that the books which were "vital" were not the painfully accurate, up-to-the-last-minute textbooks which bristled with objective footnotes, but the books which, whatever their objective shortcomings, had about them some touch of greatness. Green's English History, Grote's Greek History, Mommsen's Roman History; Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*, Mill's *Logic*, F. H. Bradley's *Principles*; and, of course, the great authors and the great scientists. The teachers who stand out were, similarly, men of vigorous personality. What subjects they taught, whether literature or science, history or philosophy, did not matter. Whether they were realist or idealist or pragmatist in their views, did not matter. What did matter was their vigour, their sincerity, their interest in their work, their strength. It was this toward which their pupils felt drawn, and it was this which made their influence vital and permanent.

Associating with a few such vital personalities, the idealist pupil, in his later teens, first becomes clearly aware of the *nisus* within him, and "finds himself". The objective world, however, baffles him. It satisfies his senses, but leaves his spiritual impulse unsatisfied. If he treats the world as real *per se*, and regards the self as subject to its laws, that degrades the self below what he feels to be its true nature. He therefore tries the experiment of regarding the world as a sort of self. It responds to his subjective demand for unity and organization. He constructs arts and sciences which are not only subjectively satisfactory, but also objective. In the end, he adopts the full idealist view of mind, and thinks of the world as originating in some transcendental act, in which the reflective self comes into being both as subject and as object, enjoying empirical reality as well as transcendental life. Objectively regarded, the self is a world, and, subjectively regarded, the world is a self; and the distinction between the self and its world is not absolute, but is a consequence of the dualism inherent in reflection.

This dualism accounts for the need which the idealist always feels for another person, with whom to interact and unite in his quest for an ever larger, more inclusive, self. That is why, as a pupil, he has leant heavily upon his teachers. That is why, as a teacher, he leans heavily, not only upon those wiser than himself, and upon those who, like himself, are still pursuing the pathway of knowledge, but also upon his own pupils. Intercourse with them helps him almost as much as it helps them. It helps to keep his vision alive and growing. It helps to make his vision more clear and distinct. And finally, the ever-present companionship in spiritual growth is precious to him. It is known as "sharing", and as "platonic love", and is an essential part of the life of the spirit.

As a *teacher*, while he cannot, of course, live any part of his pupils' lives for them, he can help them to find themselves in three ways. He can associate them with his own life and growth. Idealism is infectious, where there is spiritual companionship. He can further induce the pupil not to be too docile. He can encourage him to question rather than to accept, to reflect, discuss, criticize, and decide for himself, and, in this way, to develop his intelligence and reasoning powers, and to begin to live the life of the mind. Finally, he can train his pupils in method, so that they will tackle their problems technically, part by part, in accordance with their powers, and thus develop confidence and thoroughness. In so training them, he is not trying to turn them into personal disciples, little replicas of himself, but into independent thinkers; and, the more independent they become, the better he is pleased. Of Socrates's pupils, only one became a Plato; and, of Plato's pupils, the most famous, Aristotle, became the most unrelenting critic of his master's Academy.

The idealist *administrator* is equally interested in encouraging the pupils to develop into themselves. In prescribing the curriculum and methods to be used in his institution, he is personal and subjective, rather than impersonal and objective. Great literature and great science, ideas which are vital and suggestive, rather than textbooks which are factually correct, but uninspired! Teaching which lets the student think, speak, write, and act for himself, with problems, discussions, and essays taking, wherever possible, the place of lectures! As to examinations, the objective or "new-type" questioning, which makes everything depend upon a youth's "yes" or a maiden's "no", is barred. Its place is taken by the essay-type, in which, by answering a very few questions, the student reveals, not so much the extent of his objective information, as

his stage of development as a person, his powers of insight, of organization, and of clear and vigorous self-expression. That such examinations cannot be made fool-proof, and that it requires real judgment to mark essays, is, of course, admitted. But since when, asks the administrator, has judgment gone out of fashion, and since when have idealists begun to suffer fools gladly?

In his interaction with the community, the administrator's function, as the idealist sees it, is not to "put across" this or that concrete programme. He is not a politician, but an educator, who reveals the community to itself. He brings out into the open all differences of background and outlook, stimulates to the highest degree all powers of insight and initiative, and has every alternative clearly formulated and understood, in order that the final decision of the community may be just to all the evidence, and may represent the considered judgment of the group as a whole.

So much for the idealist. Let us now consider the attitude of the *pragmatist* toward education. He takes essentially the attitude of the reformer, challenging the traditional school system to show cause why it should not be changed at almost every point, in order to fit it into the modern industrial community. He shows that schools tend to develop into little worlds of their own, out of touch with modern industrial life. He draws attention to their "academic" standards of teaching, their "school-boy" notions of honour, their "out-of-date" subjects, and their "anti-democratic" social prejudices. He then proceeds to attack their tendency toward "scholasticism", toward insisting upon formal pre-requisites, whatever the subject dealt with; so many years in high school, so many in college, and so many in the graduate school. The elementary techniques taught so wearisomely are for the most part mechanical, better done by type-writers, adding machines, and microtomes. The pupil should not be fitted into the school, as into some Procrustean bed, but the whole apparatus of education should be adapted to the growing pupil, with his zest for doing this or that specific thing.

The *pupil* with a pragmatist outlook demands of the school curriculum that it should contain "something in it for myself". It should appeal to his natural interests and be directly and immediately enjoyable. It should stimulate and train his natural intelligence along the lines of scientific method. It should enable him to pass from the life of the school community to the life of the larger group without feeling any great divergence of interest and outlook. The realist teacher, with his "Latin for Latin's sake!" and "Science for Science's sake!" seems to him a pure pedant. The

transcendental idealist, with his "contemplation for contemplation's sake!" seems to him an impossible sort of person. His chief demand upon the school is for sound, practical teaching. Everything else is, for him, subordinate to that.

The *teacher* with a pragmatist outlook is fundamentally an empiricist, with all which this implies. From anything ultimate, fixed and systematized, he recoils. He handles only detailed questions, loosely and independently of one another. Every situation, as he sees it, is unique, requiring its own immediate insight and its own especial method of solution. The pupils also are all individual cases. Each pupil has his own interests, and is developing his powers by his own efforts. The teacher can be of assistance only in so far as he fits in with those interests and efforts. He has to be tactful, offering help only where required, co-operating with the pupil, and not doing his work for him. He follows the example of Socrates, never "telling" but suggesting, by helpful questions, how and where the information or skill required is to be obtained. His assistance is incidental rather than continuous, and fragmentary rather than systematic.

The "mental midwifery" practised by Socrates was successful only with small groups. The present-day teacher is often required to handle large groups, and the pragmatist finds it difficult to treat pupils as individual cases under these conditions. However, he can discuss, rather than "lecture" objectively, and can confine his discussion to specific questions. He can try out, in co-operation with his class, various answers, until a satisfactory solution is reached. He can vary the imagery of the problem, sometimes using geometrical diagrams, sometimes referring to literature, sometimes to ordinary social life, presenting the problem as a personal question, in terms of "John and Mary" or "Peter and Paul." In this way, he can keep the minds of his students like kaleidoscopes, bright and attractive, but readily changed, never acquiring a permanent "set". This is difficult, but the Socratic art did not perish with Socrates.

The *administrator* with a pragmatist outlook adjusts the school system, in all its details, to the modern industrial community. Like the realist, he is a trained empiricist, and bases himself upon scientific experimentation, revelling in the technique of objective examinations and of pedagogic researches resting upon the testing of technically matched pupils. But he differs from the realist administrator in three ways. The realist believes in system, and argues to new details from facts already ascertained, and even from "the pervasive characters of reality". The pragmatist re-

gards this faith as a mischievous illusion. He holds that every new question has to be investigated *per se*, and that experimental conclusions cannot be transferred from one field to another, without further *ad hoc* experimentation. In the second place, the realist believes that his researches bring him into touch with "reality", while the pragmatist does not. The pragmatist's "objective" experiments are only useful, useful for the purpose of controlling action efficiently. They do not aim at "truth" in any theoretical sense. In the third place, the realist wants to adjust the school to physical reality, while the pragmatist wants merely to adjust it to the modern community and its needs. The realist believes that the physical environment can and does control ideas, while the pragmatist believes that ideas—especially, of course, his own ideas—can and do control the physical environment.

The modern *community*, with its pronounced realist and pragmatist bias, i.e., with its interest in efficient control of action, entirely welcomes the attitude of the pragmatist administrator. The citizens understand his intention of adjusting the school to the modern community, and of making it as like the community as possible in standards, technique and outlook. His efforts to diminish overhead costs by running the plant all the year round, sometimes even in double shifts; his research department perpetually trying to discover newer and more efficient methods of teaching; his faith in the value of personnel work and of social co-operation in the class-room as well as outside; and the office efficiency of his card-indexes and periodic reports;—all these they understand and completely approve. Finally, his experimental, trial-and-error, attitude toward administrative questions, with its absence of pretension to absolute knowledge, seems to them reasonable, and, as being like their own attitude in business life, entirely commendable.

Let us conclude by bringing together the three attitudes discussed, and see how they work in practice. The class-room situation for the teacher is never simple. Some pupils react only to lecture-notes dictated in realist style. Any attempt to inveigle them into discussion, they resent as unwarrantable interference with the sacred liberty of the innocent onlooker. Others love to feel that there is, within them, something which can sit in judgment and can, with a little assistance from the teacher, develop all sorts of interesting powers. Yet others are impatient of being "lectured at" at all. They want to express themselves, to ask any questions which occur to them, and to follow the argument wherever it may lead. The teacher must thus be a practitioner of many techniques; and it may be supposed that when he lectures, he is a realist, when

he discusses, an idealist, and when he experiments, a pragmatist. In this way the distinctions, so clear in theory, would become blurred in practice.

This, however, is not the case. All teachers, when they lecture, must be able to formulate problems, arguments, and positions. They must also be able to criticize any given position, knocking little wedges into its cracks and splitting it into bits, so as to rebuild the same position, or to construct a different and better position. But when the *realist* sets up Einstein's position in place of Newton's, he shows how and why Einstein's is better as a picture of the *physical world*. With the *idealist*, what looks at first like realist logic and objective information becomes transformed into a smoothly flowing stream of dialectic; and the students are transported, without quite knowing how, into the transcendental realms of the spirit, before they realize that their feet are no longer upon the physical *terra firma*. The *pragmatist* avoids both extremes, but dictates summaries and conclusions, so as to leave his students with a definite record and guide in the midst of their experimenting. The technique of lecturing can thus be used by others besides realists, and used without prejudice to their specific, non-realist outlook.

So, too, with the other techniques. Most realists can and do use the question-and-answer method, and the experimental method. But they do so for their own purposes, namely, to direct attention to the nature and supreme importance of physical reality. No one could mistake a realist, when discussing with his students, for an idealist dialectician; and no one could mistake an idealist, when experimenting, for a radical empiricist, or a self-conscious pragmatist. His transcendental bias comes out so definitely; just as, in the case of the pragmatist teacher, his empirical and experimental bias always comes out unmistakably in his discussions.

Our conclusion then is, that realism, idealism, and pragmatism remain fundamentally distinct, and that the positions constructed by philosophers are of direct concern to educationists in the pursuit of their profession.