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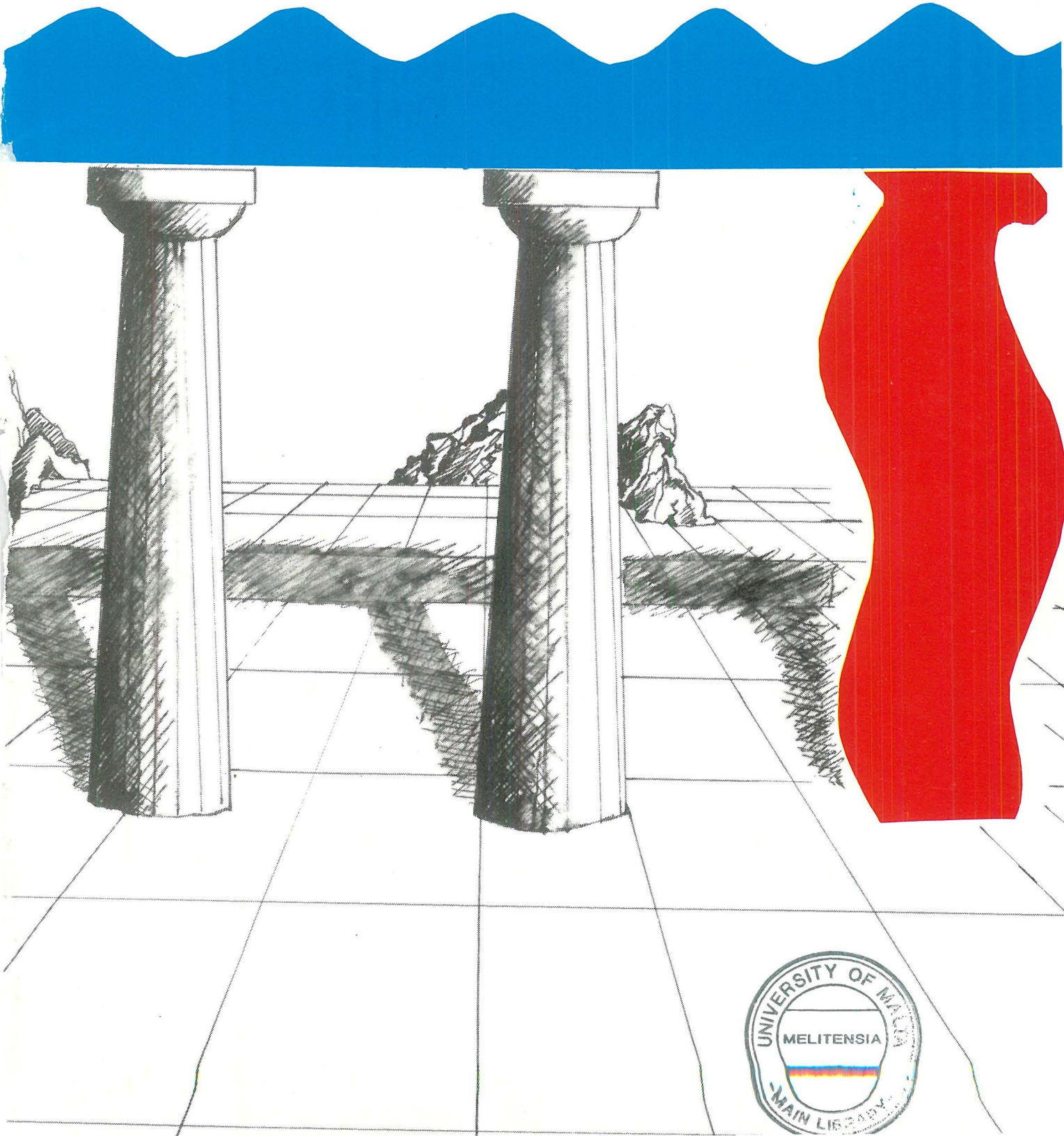

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OPINIONS

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The Executive Editor,
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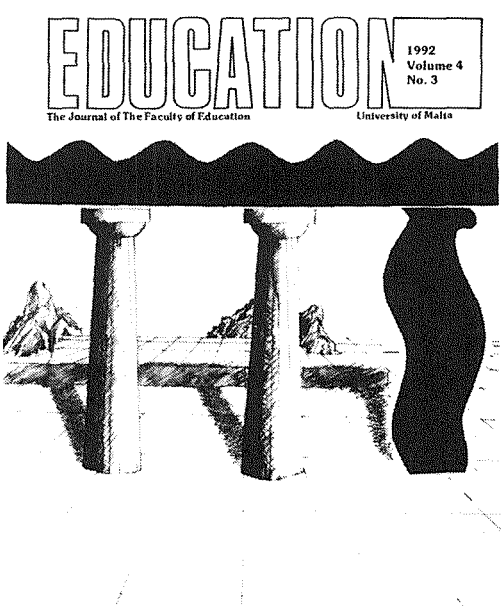

Editorial

This issue features five papers which, in different ways, make a case for self-reflective educational praxis. The first three articles address philosophy as a major foundation discipline, and method, in education. Mark Montebello's close reading of Plato's views on educational transmission alert us to the danger of using the pedagogical relationship to foster, through overt or covert ways, a mode of thinking and valuing which is uncritical and conveniently and self-interestedly conventional. The relevance of Plato's warnings to the way education has been historically - and is still currently - defined in Malta is obvious, especially when Montebello's contribution is placed within the context of the debate on critical education launched in a previous issue of this journal (Volume 3, Number 4).

This is why the interview we are featuring with Wilfred Carr is so appropriate, and helps draw out some of the implications of Montebello's reflections on Plato. For Carr, who has done much to develop a critical theory of education, draws on both a classical and modern philosophic tradition to develop an idea of education which, like Plato's, goes beyond mere reproduction of comfortable values and ways of seeing, to engage emancipatory knowledge, a form of reflectively acquired self-knowledge which enlightens individuals about the origins and ideological purposes of their existing beliefs and actions. Carr dwells on the usefulness of Habermas in developing a kind of educational activity which is constantly self-reflective, and notes the relevance of the emphasis on the dialectic between theory and practice for the development of teacher education.

John Portelli's paper addresses the latter issue directly, building as it does on Carr's work and that of others in the critical education tradition, to disentangle some of the problematic areas concerned with the use of discussion and case study approaches in introducing philosophy to student-teachers. Portelli argues the importance of doing philosophy in order to foster that which Montebello and Carr argued for in the first and second paper, i.e. a critical-reflective-inquiring approach to teaching/learning. Portelli goes further by suggesting pedagogical channels by which this view of education can be sustained. Portelli's evaluation of his own efforts in this regard in itself embodies, practically, the kinds of processes he is promoting formally.

The theme of reflective educational practice as a characteristic of good education is carried through, albeit indirectly, in the last two papers which appear in this issue. Maria Paola Morelli's analysis of the Italian influence, at the end of the 18th century, on the development of administrative structures and pedagogic practice at the University of Malta, lays bare some of the historical antecedents which, to some extent, still mark tertiary education today, as the University is celebrating the fourth centenary from its foundation in 1592. Morelli argues that academic reforms in Italy specifically, and Europe generally, had led to a greater emphasis on secularization and the freeing of research and the flourishing of new ideas. These reforms could not be implemented in the Maltese context due to the use of the educational system by the Church to maintain doctrinal control and unity. Finally, Michael Buhagiar considers another, more contemporary device which regulates the transmission of a special kind of knowledge, mathematics, and which, in its own way, functions to hinder the freeing of the mind and the flourishing of understanding. Buhagiar is here referring to an examination system which, with reference to mathematics education, constrains teaching to unenlightened instruction and learning to an instrumental manipulation of formulae. It is therefore not surprising that Buhagiar is cynical of the good intentions expressed in the National Minimum Curriculum when the context of transmission, with its focus on performance rather than understanding, remains unchanged.

Ronald G. Sultana
Executive Editor.

Education (Malta) Vol. 4 N° 3, pp. 2-9.

Plato on "Sociability" and its Educational Transmission

Mark F. Montebello

A democratic society largely depends on the educational system therein. In attempting to examine the educational prerequisites of a society in accordance to man's dignity, Plato embarks on a vast critique of social systems and educational programmes. In what follows I intend to examine (a) his concept of normativity in relation to conformism in the formation of a society which is closed in nature; (b) his views on the dynamism of knowledge, capable of enhancing human formation; and (c) his way of denouncing the myth of dogmatism while analyzing the nature of educational transmission.

Plato: a Practical Philosopher with an Ideal

The set of circumstances making up Plato's social surroundings were tremendously determined by the political and educational institutions; the former holding in check the economical and industrial arts, the latter, the cultural circles. In proposing his social critique, Plato could do no less than dedicate much time to them. His picture was considerably wide so as to provide a solid foundation to his reflections; and neither was he solely putting forward a political theory, unconnected to other branches of thought.[1] His socio-political interests were eventually the first in time,[2] but subsequently he was urged forward to ever broadening horizons.[3] It seems that his immediate interests were always practical and sociological. All his efforts were directed to the development, the nature and the laws of human society, education holding a prominent place. His dialectic method, developed over the years, and evidenced in his writings, may be considered witness to this.

Basic Notions

Before proceeding further it would be worthwhile to state a few preliminary and basic notions proper to Plato's philosophy. They are mainly three, namely, (i) that the *art of appearance* (as opposed to the *art of measurement*) is the heart of Plato's ethical, sociological, political, and pedagogic critique; (ii) that the most skilled in appearance have the most authority in the State, due to their power of conviction; and (iii) that the more of convenience in a citizen means the less of his conviction. These three observations may be considered fundamental to Plato's analysis of society, without which he would not have proceeded to propose a solution. In other words, they state the immediate premises of his Dialectic Method, a method which incorporates the whole of his thought in a nut-shell.

The *art of appearance* in Plato's thought is identified to *normativity* and *sociability*. The latter term indicates the formal element of his analysis, whereas the former, the material one. Society is characterized with a standard, regular, usual, typical behaviour which constitutes a "*norm*" of normativity. Assimilating such a norm is essentially learning the art of appearance.

Normativity

Normativity, than, in the first place, is a *tekni*[4] (an art; a technique). The word does not have the modern implications of mechanics in industry. It refers to an *ability* which one acquires over and above his natural capabilities as a rational being. It is the know-how of social on-goings; the assimilation of the rules of the game of living well,[5] which does not call for any particular erudition. On the contrary, Plato holds that the ones possessing this "ability", and moreover the ones who attempt teaching it to others, "not only are they themselves ignorant of what is good or bad (...), but the people who (want to learn it) are so too"[6]. They miss the meaning of life itself:

> *As to all the good things that people are supposed to get by application and practice and teaching, where these are lacking in anyone and only their opposite evils are found, here surely are the occasions for wrath and punishment and reproof* [7].

The art of living is not as simple as might seem. Living and living well are absolutely distinct. All live, but few live well. The path of life is very frequently lost. Many a man, opting for the wrong possibilities, walking from alley to alley, acquainting himself with the blind company, giving

heed to foolishness, fails to accomplish his prime vocation: *to live*. Plato would call him "a mere layman (*idioteuein*) in (...) virtue"[8]. The term *idioteia* (from which *idioteuein* is derived; the word may suggest the English "idiot" which is derived from this Greek term) suggests a defenceless, unpractised condition; someone in want of education. In other words, an unskilled and uninstructed person, who, according to Plato would have "the only one sort of ill fare - the deprivation of knowledge" (*epistimis sterithinai*, literally meaning "educationally sterile").[9] This would in fact constitute the "normal knowledge" of society at large.

The ability is particularly distinct from an art in the proper sense of the word. *Measurement* can be called an art for all rights and purposes. But in opposition Plato puts what he calls a *pheinomenou dunamis*, the *power* of appearance.[10] *Pheinomenou* (which is derived from *phaino*) recalls the English words "phenomenology", "phenomenal", "phenomenalism" and "phenomenon", which are all derived from this important Greek word pregnant as it is with meaning. Scanning over its semantic richness, we point out the following meanings: (somewhat actively) to bring to light, to cause to appear, reflect, shine forth; (in the more passive meaning) to come to light, to appear, to be reflected, to be shined forth. In the more technical (philosophical) sense, it would signify what appears to the senses, what is observed, what appears to sense experience, what merely shows. Thus the term in our sense, used in a more negative meaning, would point to what is immediately evident but not necessarily true or realistic; an outward seeming; an external likeness. The real rather than the realistic. *Dunamis*, on the other hand, refers to a might, a quality, a means.

Conformism

In Plato the whole expression *phenomenon dunamis*, then, would be equivalent to a power which is used spuriously, in a systematically illusive and evasive manner: "pseudo-wisdom", "pseudo-virtue", "pseudo-real", "pseudo-truth", "pseudo-science". In the *Euthyphro* it is spoken of as a kind of shallowness (believing what appears on the surface);[11] in the *Apology*, as "doing nothing more out of the way than the rest", and doing nothing "other than most people" do;[12] in the *Meno*, as a "drought of wisdom";[13] in the *Gorgias*, as something more than mere imitation (of the social conducts), but rather being "essentially alike" them, to become like them;[14] in the *Menexenus*, as yielding "to one another in no respect save in reputation for virtue and understanding";[15] and also as "knowledge (...) sundered from justice and the rest of virtue", which is actually "plain roguery (literally meaning to play the knave) rather than wisdom";[16] in the *Phaedo*, as part of the soul that "thought nothing was true except the corporeal, which one can touch and see and drink and eat and employ in the pleasure of love", and avoiding "that which is shadowy and invisible to the eyes but is intelligible and tangible to the love of wisdom (that is, philosophy)";[17] in the *Phaedrus*, as "approaching (...) images through the darkling organs of sense";[18] in the *Republic*, as "the restriction to necessary desires in (one's) education";[19] and also as a quality of persons who,

> *with eyes ever bent upon the earth and heads bowed down over their tables, they feast like cattle, grazing and copulating, ever greedy for more of these delights; and in their greed kicking and butting one another with horns and hooves of iron they stay one another in stateless avidity, because they are vainly striving to satisfy with things that are not real the unreal and incontinent part of their souls.*[20]

The Closed Society

What does it mean exactly to be educated in "normality"?[21] The "normative" society is the static, closed, conservative and conformist society. It is the social structure to which Plato is opposed.[22] The educational system corresponding to such a society would prepare people to be in harmony and become similar to that structure. The order of the day would be: Agree! Conform! Accept as absolute! Identify yourself to the current State! Peace at all costs![23] It is identical to the teaching of the art of appearance, that is, to the formation aiming at the conservation of current behaviour systems. Continuing Socrates' inquietude, Plato sets out to examine that state of affairs, exposing its incongruities and absurdities, and denouncing its inhumanity. He will eventually understand that such a pedagogy is a crime against humanity.

A word from Popper, in his characteristic polemical language, for an attempt at elucidation:

> *There can be little doubt that (Plato) visualized human history in a cosmic setting; that he believed his own age to be one of depravity (...) and the whole preceding historical period to be governed by an inherent tendency toward decay, a*

tendency shared by both the historical and the cosmic development.[24] *(...)*

Plato believed that the law of historical destiny, the law of decay, can be broken by the moral will of man, supported by the power of human reason.[25]

This is very true. Plato knew also, however, that the breaking off would be extremely difficult. And he never dreamt that this could ever be done by many people. He always limited himself to the few, even if the message is heard by all,[26] especially so as time went by. He persistently saw that the general tendency is to conform to the current code of values rather than breaking off from it. And this, Plato will observe, is quite understandable. In the Athenian youth (apart from the general public) it could be clearly seen that they were very much attracted to the rhetoricians in general.[27] They flowed, for instance, to Protagoras when he visited Athens,[28] for, "anxious to gain consideration in (the) city, (they) believed (they) can best gain it by consorting with (him)".[29] The case is the same with all rhetorical orators,[30] including the eristic speakers,[31] the panegyrists,[32] and the politicians:

> Socrates: *Then when the orator who does not know what good and evil are undertakes to persuade a State which is equally ignorant, not by praising the "shadow of an ass" under the name of a horse, but by praising evil under the name of good, and having studied the opinions of the multitude persuades them to do evil instead of good, what harvest do you suppose his oratory will reap thereafter from the seed he has sown?*
>
> Phaedrus: *No very good harvest.*[33]

Knowledge as Dynamic

Such complacent knowledge could be learnt not only by intercourse with the rhetoricians, for here we are dealing with a will to be educated in civics. One could simple make recourse to the public itself. This is an important point, mentioned by the politician Anytus:

> Socrates: *I did not mention to (Meno) the men whom I supposed to be teachers of these things; but I find, from what you say, that I am quite off the track, and I daresay you are on it. Now you take your turn, and tell him to whom of the Athenians he is to go. Give us a name - anyone you please.*
>
> Anytus: *Why mention a particular one? Any Athenian gentleman he comes across, without exception, will do him more good, if he will do as he is bid, than the sophists.*[34]

Anytus is indirectly suggesting the art of appearance. It is the technique of living in perfect concord in and with society (indicated by the comment *"if he will do as he is bid"*, hence obedience, well-discipline, submissiveness, docility), without bothering anyone and anything, and without anyone or anything bothering oneself, that is, to conform to the current convention, is inherent in the people who actually live in that way. It consequently can be learnt without going to any special school or to any special scholar. This will later be called *"learning environmentally"*, where one's surroundings are active educationally on the passive subject. But for the time being we need only establish as an existing phenomena the fact that "normality" is taught; and if taught, it is not necessary and absolute; and also that eventually it need not be the case with everyone to learn it.

The uncritical compliance to the general opinion[35] points to some other facts, namely, that individual persons have a tendency not to be contradicted and opposed.[36] Avoiding to counteract such a tendency only helps to check one's personal maturity, giving the comfortable illusion that one is growing up while in fact one is not:

> *For everybody is delighted with words that are designed for his special temper, but is annoyed by what is spoken to suit aliens.*[37]

Social Psychology

The very personal character of such an observation shows just how much Plato is far-reaching in his social critique. He actually bases his observations on social psychology which enables him to see the flaws in the social structure from the perspective of man's most intimate temperaments. Plato is conscious of the fact that when tendencies such as the one we have just mentioned are left unchecked, the individual soul is consequently led astray and diverted from his path of progress. It is not surprising that he will finally end up talking or thinking irrelevantly and incoherently, wandering "amid the multiplicities of multifarious things".[38] We have a marvellous example of such wretched people in the *Theaetetus*:[39]

As a result of all this the speakers become tense and shrewd; they know how to wheedle their master with words and gain his favour by acts; but in their souls they become small and warped. For they have been deprived of growth and straightforwardness and independence by the slavery they have endured from their youth up, for this forces them to do crooked acts by putting a great burden of fears and dangers upon their souls while these are still tender; and since they cannot bear this burden with uprightness and truth, they turn forthwith to deceit and to requiting wrong with wrong, so that they become greatly bent and stunted. Consequently they pass from youth to manhood with no soundness of mind (ekontes tis dianoias) in them, but they think they have become clever and wise.[40]

Well said and terribly true! Dianeo (from which *dianoias* is derived) indicates a mental disposition. In our text it is in the negative, showing that the subject is ill-disposed to a sound mental state. By associating with such people, or rather by not associating with the right type of people (namely, with the man of measure, the man of value), the individual is caught in the dangerous game of convention and convenience. Life for him becomes a enclosure with little hope of escape; a disease which corrupts his soul in a dramatic and permanent manner. Such a person, Plato would describe as "he who did not know at the start that he ought never to have accepted a lover (*eronti*) who was necessarily without reason, but rather a reasonable non-lover (*mi eronti*)".[41]

The *eronti* (derived from eros, which, apart from love, means desire),[42] here mentioned in the context of the teacher of the art of appearance, points to the fact that the adherents were somehow "desired". Plato is saying that when one is so (arduously) desired he should not give in so easily without suspecting some hidden strategy. The fact that this suspicion is neglected not only shows the lack of sensitivity such adherents had in this regard, but also the promptness with which such masters grasped and held on to their adherents. It is these that Plato calls somewhat facetiously "reasonable non-lovers"; but the gravity of the case is seen in his following words:

The affection of the non-lover, which is alloyed with mortal prudence and follows mortal and parsimonious rules of conduct, will beget in the beloved soul the narrowness which the common folk praise as virtue; it will cause the soul to be a wanderer upon the earth for nine thousand years and a fool below the earth at last."[43]

Human Formation

This state of affairs cannot but handicap society, depriving its subjects from a formation compatible with their human nature; a nature which is open to the future, to innovation, to betterment, to growth. Human nature deserves our highest respect and attention. We cannot run the risk of destroying what is life in us, the dynamism from which our civilization evolved and which brought us to our stage of progress. Humankind must retain its vitalism, sometimes at the cost of putting aside the instruments which are there to aid our fragile nature. We are the subjects of our life-span, and it is up to us to never slip into the objectiveness which bars us from ourselves. The ideal of our conscientious living is the most high we possess, and to which it is worthwhile and fruitful to dedicate ourselves. To give ourselves to the absurd and blind obedience of convention and convenience is to loose what is most precious to us, namely, ourselves. Again the word to Plato:

Not a single man of all who live beneath the heavens could ever become wise if these were his practices from his youth, since none will be found to possess a nature so admirably compounded; nor would he ever be likely to become temperate; and the same may truly be said of all other forms of virtue.[44]

The Myth of Dogmatism

One can imagine how sad it was for Plato (as it is for us today) to see such a situation perpetuated beyond hope. All the more so to see candidates enthusiastically dedicating themselves to a way of life which they think and believe will emancipate their being, whereas it only contributes to their own poverty, slavery and destruction. They actually waste their lives stubbornly yielding to the current of their environment, refracting from any correction or sound sense. Plato rightly points out that such an obstinate will to be educated in conventionality, simply learning by heart the rules of the convenient game of society, is in fact to be held as ignorance of the true wisdom.[45] It is the false recourse to absoluteness and dogmatism; the hiding place of our unsurmountable fears, demanding wants and senseless failure. It is true folly;[46] the deprivation of our moral will and the power of our reason.

We are here speaking of a deprivation which is identical to ignorance of the art of measurement. For Plato this is a grave bereavement.[47] J.G. Frazer sees this important concept in a wider picture which is valuable and worth noting:

> *The Ideal theory was started from an ontological, not from a logical, point of view, and that, accordingly, at first Plato did not, as he afterwards did, assume an Idea corresponding to every class-name.(...) The Fact that injustice, for example, produces forgetfulness of the Ideal world surely shows that there was no Idea of Injustice to be remembered. Again in Phaedr 248c, to be tainted with evil and to forget the Ideal world are represented as simultaneous.*[48]

This observation calls our attention to the fact that the loss of virtue, or rather of the life of measurement, means falling off from the human ideal. In other words, it cannot, strictly speaking, be considered as an acquisition of something. On the contrary, it is a deprivation, a loss.

The transmission of "sociability" (and "normativity") is Plato's major immediate preoccupation. Here he enters into the techniques of the continual diffusion of the art of appearance by way of all the means of education. He distinguishes a direct way of communication, and an indirect one. The former would correspond to the schooling of the rhetorician, and in particular, to that of the sophists. The latter would be "learning environmentally".

Educational Transmission

The Sophist, knowing that education was held highly amongst the Hellines,[49] relied on his notoriety for constantly having adherents to hear his lectures.[50] Teaching rhetoric (and thus "normality") meant that he taught nothing other than falsehood.[51] He possessed knowledge himself, and imparted knowledge to others, only as long as it was *safe*,[52] in the sense that it never opposed, criticized or rocked the established state of affairs of no-one and nothing. He eventually never taught any "dangerous"[53] matters, but always those "demanded". This means that the sophist's criterion of truth was the other. He always re-acted; his teaching material was never an action coming from himself, from the free exertion of the power of his intellect. His education, in all rights, can be called simply "convenient". The sophist *made* others "wise"[54] (as opposed to guiding and leading others on to knowledge and the discovery of scientific truth); he turned them out to be (without actually being in fact) "wise". This he did by "making" them "gentlemen",[55] exercised in "normativity" and "sociability", giving them the instruments to appear "wise". And that which he taught others, he himself learnt just in the same way.[56]

"*Learning environmentally*" is considered by Plato to be a more serious case than learning through direct transmission. For it imbued the whole of the wide spectrum of the systems of education. By "learning environmentally" we mean that teaching transmitted unofficially and unsystematically by one's very surroundings. It is learnt from one's surrounding situations and circumstances.

The *Protagoras*,[57] shows forcefully how subtle such an education is, and how difficult for the subject himself to protect himself from it. From his most tender years he becomes unconsciously trained into "normality" and "sociability". One can understand how difficult it will later be, what violence he will have to exert over himself, to liberate himself from it. It will eventually be already difficult to understand the falseness and wrong of such an education. In prison, before his execution, Socrates would bring forward a similar case, and suppose that his accusors (representing the "normative" society) would say to him that he is breaking his compacts and agreements with them, even if he "were not led into them by compulsion or fraud".[58] He had learnt these agreements and compacts from his social environment.

In the *Meno* we find an interesting brief allusion to this important matter. Socrates, holding[59] that virtue is the desire and ability for good, presses his case further saying that the desire "belongs to our common nature", whereas the ability is not. It has to be acquired. In other words, "good men cannot be good by nature."[60] Virtue, then, is strictly speaking, not the desire, but the ability. The environment must be instrumental to develop this ability and not destroy it.[61] The Dialectic Method would undoubtedly do the job:

> Socrates: *Now do you imagine he would have attempted to inquire or learn what he thought he knew, when he did not know it, until he had been reduced to the perplexity of realizing that he did not know, and had felt a craving to know?*
>
> Meno: *I think not, Socrates.*[62]

Dialectic would give the subject the consciousness of his poverty and ignorance, thus urging him forward to search. It is the subject himself, then, who would "teach himself" with his inquisitiveness and inquietude. It is for this reason that Plato held that there are no "teachers of virtue".[63]

In the *Republic* the matter is slightly shifted to emphasize an interesting point. Plato observes that when a specially talented student is submitted to such a treatment and education, the result can be more devastating than with other less intelligent candidates, "unless some god comes to the rescue".[64] The testimony of Plato himself would be:

> *We know it to be universally true of every seed and growth, whether vegetable or animal, that the more vigorous it is the more it falls short of its proper perfection when deprived of the food, the season, the place that suits it. For evil is more opposed to the good than to the not-good.*[65]

Notes

1. Plato's political views cannot be considered without the metaphysical and the religious dimensions of his philosophy. On this point see K. Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 1 (London 1989), pp. 84 and 88. See also his *Conjectures and Refutations* (London 1989), p. 9. Plato's authoritative scholars emphasise this point constantly. See G. Reale, *Storia della Filosofia Antica*, 2 (Milano 1988), pp. 43 and 354; *Per una Rilettura di Platone* (Milano 1984), p.53; B. Jowett, *Select Passages from the Introductions to Plato* (London 1902), p. 48; J.C.B. Gosling, *Plato* (London 1983, p.1; J.G. Frazer, *The Growth of Plato's Ideal Theory* (London 1930), pp. 10-15; and H. Kramer, *Platone e i Fondamenti della Metafisica* (Milano 1982), p. 313.

2. For Plato's initial political and social interests, and also for his eventual break with politics, see (from his first two periods of thought) *Republic* (Rep) 496c-e, 517a, 557d; and *Epistles* (Ep) 324d. See also Reale, *Storia*, p. 285; and his *Rilettura*, p. 149 (the development after the break); A.D. Winspear, *The Genesis of Plato's Thought* (New York 1956), pp. 65, 75 note (on the Conservatives), 77 (in relation to justice), 80, 112 (on the Progressives), 1171, 211, 270; Popper, *Open Society*, 1, pp. 7, 19, 83, 91, 130, 155, 169, 196; and his *Open Society*, 2, pp. 50, 61 (in relation to racism) and 281.

3. From his ethical problematic, Plato proceeds to reflections on the world of *physis*; to superphysical being; to the "care of the *psyche*"; and finally to the meditations over *"Areti"*. See Reale, *Storia*, pp. 43-47, in the context of Plato's discovery of the super-sensible, and the serious problems related to the interpretations of Plato's works.

4. See *Laches* (Lach) 186c.

5. Plato uses the word *techni* here in an improper sense. He prefers to use the word in a positive meaning, which here would be out of place. The usage in this sense is somewhat ironical.

6. See *Protagoras* (*Prot*) 313d. The phrase is used for the sophists and their adherents.

7. *Prot* 323d, e.

8. See *Prot* 327a.

9. See *Prot* 345b.

10. See *Prot* 356d.

11. See 6b.

12. See 20c.

13. See 71a.

14. See 513b.

15. See 239a. The citation has a slight ironical ring to it.

16. See 247a.

17. See 81b.

18. See 250b.

19. See 561a.

20. 586a. A remarkable text; another masterpiece of world literature found in Plato's *Republic*.

21. It is particularly valuable to analyse Plato through the widening concentric circles of his thought, which can be described as the following:

(i) *The Man of Measurement - The Man of Appearance.* This level is the most basic, the heart of Plato's thought. Here we would have the reflection on the *Real* and the *Good.*

(ii) *The Humility of the man of virtue - The Pride of the man of imitation.* The behaviour of the man of measurement is always that of one who never presumes, as the man of appearance constantly does, that he has arrived at any scientific truth. His position is one of systematic hypothesis, whereas that of the man of appearance is one of systematic certitude and dogmatism.

(iii) *The Wisdom of the virtuous man - The Opinion of the man of convenience.* The Man of Measurement beholds knowledge which qualifies as wisdom, that is, a science of science, since it underlies all man's being and activity. The man of appearance has only opinion, which is as far from true as much as he is afar from the possibility of any scientific advancement.

(iv) The *Remembrance* of man's ideals - *The teaching of man's social behaviour.* The man of measurement leads individuals to a human, mature and responsible development, which is not content with superficialities, but with high, magnanimous ends. He guides the subject to a scientific preparation on his laborious way towards the truth. In other words he teaches him how to think critically. The man of appearance, on the other hand, is not interested in this. His main aim is personal acquisition and gain.

(v) *The scale of Values of the interior man - The scale of Values of the exterior man.* These differ considerably. Here, however, we have Plato's final stage: the establishment of an ethical code which enhances the development and progress of society. We have here proposed a particular way of living which is in concord with the true nature of man.

22. The diametrical opposite of such a social model would obviously be a society which is non-normative, dynamic, open, progressive and non-conformist. However it is equally obvious that in all of its absoluteness such a society is difficulty, at least if carried too far into the extreme. Plato himself will realise this, as the dialogues of his third period show, and hence will reduce his notion of such a society to the concept of the individual. This is another matter, and (maybe) more practical and realistic. A non-normative, dynamic, open, progressive and non-conformist (as opposed to the anarchist) person is quite impossible and important in the social structure. It is indubitable that such a man is incongruous with the notion of "structure", and may suffer considerably for this matter, this however would constitute his mission. In this regard, Plato's writings have got ample references.

23. For the idea that "normativity" is equal to a conventional manner of understanding "virtue" (and thus being a pseudo-virtue), see *Prot* 324a ("virtue" as compliance), 325a, 349e; *Gorgias* (Gorg) 481c, 505b, 512d; *Greater Hippias* (H.Mai) 288d; *Menexenus* (Mex) 238c; *Phaedo* (Phaed) 66c,

69a; ReOp 353e, 365c, 586a; *Phaedrus* (Phaedr) 240e, 241c, 244d and 246d (a negative sense to this).

24. At this point Popper tells us (by way of note; see *Open Society*, 1, p. 210) that "apart from these scanty allusions (it is difficult to know to which of the scanty allusions he is referring: the chapter up to this point has no allusions at all!), there is hardly anything to indicate that Plato took the upward or forward part of the cycle seriously. But there are many remarks, apart from the elaborate description in the *Republic* and that quoted in (the preceding note)(he is here referring to *Laws* 676b,c - 677b), which show that he believed very seriously in the downward movement, in the decay of history. We must consider, especially, the *Tinaeus, and the Laws.*" I need hardly say after this that it is eventually Popper's proofs of his accusation that are scanty. His arguments are thoroughly unconvincing.

25. *Open Society*, 1, p.20. The context is what Popper calls "the myth of origin and destiny" and Plato's theory of forms or ideas.

26. For Plato's idea that the possibility of such a thing is shared by all indiscriminately, see *Prot* 319c, 322d; *Gorg* 461e; *Rep* 518e and 551c. See also H. G. Gadamer, *Studi Platonici*, 1 (Rome 1983), p. 45; and Popper, *Open Society*, 1,p. 152.

27. For Plato's reflection that the youths impressed themselves easily, see *Prot* 315a; *Euthydmeus* (E. dem) 303b; *H. Mai* 282b, e; *Rep* 492c; *Theaet* 162d; *Phaedr* 260c; and *Ep* 328b.

28. See *Prot* 314c.

29. See *Prot* 316c.

30. For a comprehensive idea of Plato's concept of rhetorics, and the convincing by rhetoric (and oratory), see *Apology* (*Apol*) 1b; *Lysis* (*Lys*) 209e; *Gorg* 448e, 452e (on persuasion), 456c, 459a, 465c, 502a (as regards certain types of poetry), 508c; *H. Mai* 284c, 304a; Mex 235d; *Symposium* (*Sym*) 198d; *Rep* 492d, 603a (as a mimetic art); *Theaetetus* (*Theaet*) 164c; *Phaedr* 260a, c, 261c, 262c, 263b, 268a, 269d and 272e. See also Reale, *Storia*, 2, p. 214; Gadamer, *Studi*, 1, pp. 39-44 (somewhat general); Popper, *Open Society*, 1, p. 140; and *Conjectures and Refutations* (London 1989), pp. 399 and 401.

31. The eristic disputations were aimed at victory rather than truth. For Plato's view on the subject, see *Meno* (Men) 75c; E. dem 275e, 276e; Phaed 90c, 91a; Rep 454a, 603a (in relation to mimery); *Theaet* 164c; *Phaed* 262c and 272e.

32. For Plato's idea of the *egkomiazo* (panegyric) and the *egkomiastis* (panegyrist), see Sym 199a; Rep 603a (in relation to mimery); and *Phaedr* 262c.

33. *Phaedr* 260c.

34. *Men* 92e.

35. For Plato's ideas on this point, see *Prot* 313b; *Crit* 47c; *E. dem* 276b, d; *Gorg* 458a (negative sense to this), 473e, 481e, 510d; *Phaed* 83e, 84a; and *Rep* 492c.

36. The Dialectic Method of Plato will actually work as a mechanism against such a thing. It will develop in the subject a sense of "humility" due to a certain personal security. It is interesting to note that the Dialectic Method, if upheld and practised, is instrumental in helping the subject to a personal and emotional maturity and responsibility.In other words, it gives a human formation to the subject.

37. *Gorg* 513c.

38. See *Rep* 484b. The Greek original is not so musical. Shorey, *Republic*, 1 (Cambridge 1930), p. 89 (note h), informs us that "wandering" (*planodis*) is the mark of error. He refers us to *Lys* 213e; *Phaed* 79c; *Phaedr* 263b; *Parmerides* (*Pann*) 135e; and *Sophist* (*Soph*) 230b.

39. The immediate context of Socrates' words is the brilliant comparison of the rhetorician's situation with that of a court-room.

40. *Theaet* 172e.

41. See *Phaedr* 241b,c.

42. The Greek mentality connected (as we do today) love to desire. Plato frequently uses this significance, and other synonymous terms, such as *philos*, to his advantage to drive home certain concepts. In the Lysis, for example, he uses the term philos in the context of his theory of Ideas, to speak of our "attraction" to (our "desire" of) Ideas and Ideals.

43. *Phaedr* 256e. The reference to "nine thousand years" and to "below the earth" in this beautiful text is obviously simply a manner of speaking, having no literal import.

44. *Ep* 326c.

45. For the idea in Plato, see *Prot* 313d; *Crit* 47d; *Phaed* 66b; *Sym* 194b; *Rep* 382b, 409a and 504c.

46. See *Rep* 585b.

47. For ignorance of the art of measurement as the loss of something fundamental, see *Prot* 358c; *Apol* 21d, 29b; *E. cem* 281d, 286d; *Gorg* 507a; *H. Mai* 294d; *Rep* 365c and 382b.

48. *The Growth of Plato's Ideal Theory* (London 1930), p. 49. The context of this interesting extract is precisely the discussion that there are no Ideas in Plato's thought of evil things.

49. For this idea in Plato, see *Lach* 186b; *Prot* 313a; *Euthyphro* (*E. phro*) 3c; *E. dem* 275b; *Rep* 377b (a negative sense to this), 492e and 494e.

50. For the sophist's dwelling on notoriety (and hence on his self-pride), see *Prot* 314b, 315c, 317c, 318d, 337b; *Apol* 22a; *E.dem* 296c; *Rep* 493d and 494a. See also Gadamer, *Studi*, 1, p, 40. Plato understands that this constituted yet another asset in the ruin of education. It must be also said that the sophists "suspiciously guarded in all ways (their adherents against everybody" (*Phaedr* 240e).

Two basic matters determined such a ruin, namely, the following: (i) *The fees*. The sophist, as long as he received the money, did not bother whether he imparts any education or not. His mind was at rest that his pay is coming in, and thus did not worry whether he received his adherents' advancement. (ii) *His notoriety*. The only preoccupation he actually had was to keep students coming to him. He therefore had to develop certain techniques with which he kept his adherents fixed to his classes and never running the risk of losing his income.

This critique can be applied to our own type of teaching and lecturing today in our educational institutions. We immediately understand that the situation is worse than that which Plato considers as very serious. First of all, lecturers today need not preoccupy themselves with the (sophist's) problem of attracting their students to the classes (problem (ii) mentioned above). Further unlike in Plato's time, qualifications are today a necessity. Lack of qualifications today means that one will most probably remain unemployed. In Plato's time this was out of the question. Secondly, today's lecturers are everywhere paid a salary, whether one teaches or not. One's only obligation is to lecture.

Plato opts for pedagogy which is a vocation, a service. He envisaged from early on the dangers which will materialize if such a thing was abandoned. Today we unfortunately live in the shadow of Plato's fears.

51. For Plato's views on this point, see *Prot* 313d, 323c, 324b; *Gorg* 481b (directly connected with rhetoric), 511a, 513b; *Rep* 409a, 491e, 561a; and *Theaet* 194e.

52. For Plato's thought on this point, see Lach 188c; E. dem 278b, 289c,296b; Gorg 502e, 513b; Phaed 83e; Rep 492e, 494a; and Theaet 180c.

53. For Plato's idea on this point, see *Lach* 186c; *Prot* 313c, 328b; *H. Min* 376a; *Men* 80a (such teachers do not "benumb" anyone); 91e, 95c; *E. dem* 278b (the "sport of the sciences"), 288a, b: *Lys* 216c; *Gorg* 474b, 486c, 502c (including Greek tragedy), e, 503a, 504e; and *Rep* 494a.

54. For this interesting and subtle point of Plato, see Prot 312a; *Charmides* (*Char*) 163c; *Gorg* 455a, 485a, 519c; *H. Mai* 285b, 294d; *Rep* 518c, 592a; *Theaet* 201a; and *Phaedr* 240c.

55. See, for Plato's view of this, *Lach* 186c; *Prot* 319a; *Char* 160e; *Gorg* 484d; *Rep* 350d, 474e, 550b, 592a; *Phaedr* 239e and 252a (a negative sense to this).

56. See *Men* 93a.

57. 325c-326e. It is a remarkable text from Plato's hand. The same matter is expressed in the context of the theatre in *Prot* 327d. The theatre, today's cinema, is yet another aspect of the same pedagogical system. Plato signals the case when in one of his plays *Pherecrates* the poet brought on the scene a character who was supposed to represent a convict. Plato's point is that in this way the public is learning that such and such a character is equal to a criminal (even if maybe, according to some subjective judgement, he is in fact none other than another "Socrates", be what may).

58. See *Critas* (*Crit*) 52e.

59. See 78b.

60. See *Men* 89a.

61. For the idea that "normality" is passed on, see *Prot* 323c, 324b, *Men* 86c (the teaching of "non-normativity", or at least its possibility), 90b, 93b; and *E. dem* 282d. In Rep 550b the same point is stated: "He is not by nature of a bad disposition but has fallen into evil communications."

62. *Men* 84c.

63. See *Men* 89e. In *Men* 93b-e Plato brings the case of Themistocles and his son Cleophantus. The son was completely different from his good and able father. This only makes the same point that virtue is not taught or learnt. Again in *Men* 95d Theognis the poet is quoted (Bergk, 33-36, in *LCL* p.354) in order to stress the same point: "(...) for from the good wilt thou win thee lessons in the good.(...)". Note the insistence on "winning" the good, and not learning it.

64. See *Rep* 492a. This is only half-jokingly said.

65. *Rep* 491d.

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Philosophical Foundations For A Critical Educational Science: An Interview With Wilfred Carr

Q.1 The main concepts of your proposal for a critical educational science are, for us, the three closely related concepts of "practice", "science" and "critique". In our opinion, what is of most importance is your attempt to provide a conceptual synthesis of "practice" and "science" as mutually constitutive (for a "practical science" and for a "scientific practice") and for the consequent reformulation of the concept of an educational science. Is this a correct way of interpreting your work?

A.1 Yes it is. As you say, the concepts of practice", "science" and "critique" are central to much of my work. To these I would like to add two more: the concept of "theory" and the concept of "education" itself. You are also correct to emphasise my attempt to reintegrate these concepts by showing how they are dialectically related. Let me try and explain why I regard the reformulation of these concepts as crucial in any attempt to reconstruct the idea of an educational science.

The motivation for much of my work is a conviction of the need to detach educational theory and research from the positivist tradition which has dominated the ways in which they have been conducted since the nineteenth century. Because of the strength of this tradition, educational theory is still regarded in Britain primarily as a form of "applied science" which uses value-free empirical knowledge as a basis for resolving educational problems and for critically evaluating educational practice. When educational theory is interpreted in this way, the concepts of "theory", "science", "criticism", "practice" and "education" all acquire a particular meaning. Moreover, once we accept these meanings, a number of conceptual dualisms and distinctions become inevitable - the distinctions, for example, between knowing and doing, theory and practice, science and ideology, facts and values. In education, these distinctions are now socially embedded in an institutionalised division of labour between teachers who "practice" but do not "theorise", and educational researchers who "theorise" but do not "practice". Because of this teachers are commonly portrayed as theoretically impoverished practitioners and educational theorising is assumed to be the exclusive preserve of an academic elite.

The way in which I would like my work to be read is as a sustained critique of these positivist distinctions and the institutionalised division of labour which they support. On the basis of this critique, I have tried to formulate a conception of "educational science" which interprets practice as ineradicably theoretical and which construes science as a practical process of rational and critical self-reflection. Such an educational science would eliminate the segregation of teachers and theorists which positivism has bequeathed.

Q.2 About the concept of "practice", could you explicate your general treatment of this concept. In this context, could you say what are the main elements in your reconceptualisation of an "educational practice"?

A.2 My general treatment of the concept of practice arose from my dissatisfaction with the positivist ways in which the relationship of educational practice to educational theory is commonly understood. Central to this commonsense understanding is the positivist assumption that practice is everything that theory is not. "Practice" is particular, concrete and involves doing something; "theory" is general, abstract and involves knowing something. But, in education, these appositions rarely make sense. When I ask myself "what should I teach?", I am asking a practical question about what to do, which is general and abstract. When I ask "is intelligence innate?", I am asking a theoretical question which is clearly intrinsic to many practical educational situations. The basic issue which emerges is: how can we characterise educational practice as being both general *and* particular, both abstract *and* concrete? Can we articulate a concept of educational practice which can reconcile these appositions?

In looking for an answer to this question, I turned to Hans-Georg Gadamer's attempt to re-establish the classical Aristotelian tradition of

"practical philosophy" [1]. Like Gadamer, the main elements I draw from this tradition concern Aristotle's exposition of the epistemological presuppositions of *praxis* - morally informed action aimed at the realisation of some worthwhile "good". For Aristotle, *praxis* is different from *poesis* - instrumental action aimed at producing some pre-specified object or artifact - because the ethical ends to which it is directed cannot be "made" or "produced", they can only be pursued *in* and *through praxis*. In *praxis* means and ends cannot be separated.

Put simply, my argument is that educational practice cannot be made intelligible as a form of *poesis* - instrumental action guided by determinate ends and governed by fixed rules. It can only be made intelligible as a form of *praxis* - action guided by ethical criteria which are immanent in educational practice itself: criteria which we tacitly use when we distinguish genuine educational practice from that which is not; good educational practice from that which is indifferent or bad.

When viewed as a species of *praxis* it becomes clear that the kinds of practical knowledge guiding educational practice is not technical knowledge about how to improve the effectiveness of action undertaken to achieve some specific goal. "Practical knowledge" is knowledge of how to apply general ethical and educational principles to particular cases. Practical educational reasoning thus always requires what Aristotle called *phronesis* or "practical wisdom" - a capacity to combine a knowledge of general educational principles and values with sound practical judgement about when and how to apply these principles and values in a particular educational situation. *Phronesis* is thus the crucial term which integrates the general and the abstract of "theory" with the particular and the concrete of "practice". When educational practice is understood in terms of the language of praxis then its separation from educational theory no longer makes any sense.

Q.3 About the concept of science. What are the main components of your concept of science? What are the epistemological features? What, in this context, is an "educational science"?

A.3 The concept of science to which I appeal in my work is the concept of science which emerged from what is now known as the "post-empiricist philosophy of science"[2]. For my purpose, the main epistemological features of this philosophy of science can be summarised as follows. First, scientific theories are under-determined: although scientific theories are empirically constrained, they are not empirically confirmed or refuted. Second, there is no theory-free language for reporting observations: observation always entails the use of concepts which interpret what is being observed in accordance with some prior theoretical scheme. Third, scientific inquiries always occur within the context of some overall paradigm which incorporates some metaphysical assumptions about the nature of their object of study. Fourth, the distinctive feature of "scientific inquiry" is not its empirical method but the critical norms and standards of rational discourse which are shared and accepted by a community of enquirers. It is this shared intersubjective commitment to impersonal standards of rationality - standards which are designed to ensure that beliefs and practices can be critically assessed and that bias, dogma and personal prejudice can be minimised or eliminated - which is the hallmark of scientific enquiry. On this view the essential feature of science is not its "method" of enquiry or its "logic" for testing and confirming empirical statements. It is that science is a social activity conducted within a critical community whose members are committed to free and open dialogue, respect for argument, a tolerance of criticism and the other norms of rational discourse.

One of the benefits of this post-empiricist philosophy of science is that it makes it possible to distinguish between a science "of" or "about" education and a genuine *educational* science. The former simply uses psychological or sociological paradigms in order to produce scientific theories about education. An educational science, however, uses an educational paradigm which incorporates epistemological assumptions drawn from our understanding of education itself. It is an "educational" science because it offers an educational perspective and, because it is an educational perspective, it is a "practical" science concerned with problems of what should be done rather than a theoretical science concerned with what is the case. It is also an educational science in the sense that it is itself an educative process designed to produce that kind of reflective knowledge which education itself aims to cultivate and promote.

Q.4 The ways in which you use the related concepts of "self-reflection" and "critique" are very close to the ways they are used in Habermas' theory of emancipatory interest. These concepts are for us, the foundation of an enlightened view of

education. What, for you, are "self-reflection" and "critique" in an educational context?

A.4 You are quite correct to emphasise the centrality of the concepts of self-reflection and critique to my philosophical arguments and also that these arguments are heavily influenced by Habermas' theory of knowledge constitutive human interests[3]. However, the starting point for my use of these concepts is, once again, my recognition of the adverse consequences of positivism for educational theory and research. One consequence of positivism's insistence that only "neutral" facts can provide a foundation for valid scientific knowledge has been to relieve us of any obligation to think critically about the origins of our existing beliefs and practices. Because of this, the self-knowledge we acquire by reflecting on the social and ideological roots of our existing beliefs and practices is denied any epistemological validity. What Habermas' theory of "knowledge-constitutive interests" provides is a philosophical justification for "emancipatory knowledge" - a form of reflectively acquired self-knowledge which "enlightens" individuals about the origins and ideological purposes of their existing beliefs and actions. The method outlined by Habermas for producing this kind of knowledge is the method of *ideology-critique* - a method which encourages individuals to consider the rationality of their beliefs and actions in a broad social and historical context and to explore the source of their irrationality in the ideological context out of which they emerged.

In an educational context, this foreshadows the emergence of an educational science which produces that form of self-knowledge which can emancipate teachers from the irrational beliefs and misunderstandings that they have inherited from custom, tradition, habit and ideology. By using the method of critique, educational practitioners would be able to acquire greater self-knowledge which would help them to resolve some of the contradictions they experience in their work.

Q.5 We think that the concepts of self-reflection and critique demand a general frame of values to be used as a reference. What is this frame of values? What is its theoretical status? Could you explicate its normative foundations?

A.5 Of course the notions of self-reflection and critique require a normative framework and the framework I have outlined draws on the Aristotelian theory of practical reasoning as ethically informed reasoning. How can this kind of practical reasoning be philosophically justified? Although the justification I have tried to elaborate draws on the work of Jürgen Habermas it is also much influenced by the work of the British educational philosopher R.S. Peters. For Peters, the ethical basis of the educational aim of rational autonomy can be justified by an analysis of the *a priori* presuppositions of ordinary practical discourse. What such an analysis reveals is that in the very act of engaging in discourse about practical questions, we thereby reveal our commitment to the educational aim of rational autonomy and to the values of freedom, equality, tolerance and respect for others which are constitutive of the rational life. These are the aims and values in terms of which an educational *science* is epistemologically justified, because they are the aims and values which an *educational* science seeks to foster and promote.

Q.6 When we read your philosophical work we think immediately of teachers critically reflecting on their practices and the conditions under which they practice. Is this a correct interpretation? If so, how do you see a teacher becoming critically engaged in educational practice?

A.6 Yes your interpretation is correct. In *Becoming Critical: Education Knowledge and Action Research*, which I wrote with Stephen Kemmis [4], we try to show that one concrete way in which teachers can become critically engaged in their practice is by using the methods and procedures of action research. It needs to be stressed however, that the ways in which action research is now being used with teachers often displays many positivist elements. In particular, much educational action research employs technical interpretations of the concepts of "self-reflection" and "critique" which completely fail to appreciate their central meaning and importance for reconstructing action research as a form of critical educational science[5].

Q.7 What are the consequences of this for the organisation and conduct of teacher education?

A.7 There are in my view, many such consequences, but I would like to stress two. One obvious implication is of the need to reconstruct teacher education in terms of the concepts and language of praxis. Within teacher education, at present, theorising is something that is done in isolation from practice and which then has to be "implemented in" or "applied" to practice. Similarly, educational practice is treated as some kind of non-theorised performance to which theory

can somehow be attached. One of the aims of my work is to support an approach to teacher education which treats theory and practice as dialectically related so that each informs, and is informed, by the other. In such an approach, teachers would theorise their practice by reflecting critically on their understanding of their practice and the circumstances in which these practices are embedded. Similarly they would practice in ways which were informed by their general educational values and theoretical principles. In this kind of teacher education, theorizing and practising would not be two separate activities but mutually constitutive elements in a continuous dialectical reconstruction of thought and action[6].

Another implication concerns the conception of professionalism that should inform teacher education. In many teacher education programmes it is assumed that the professionalism of teachers derives from their expertise and skill in applying theoretical knowledge to the everyday problems of teaching. What I would want to argue, however, is that teachers' professionalism derives from the fact that they "profess" educational values and practice under a professional obligation to promote these values in their work. If teacher professionalism is understood in this way, teacher education would necessarily portray teaching as a practical art of translating abstract educational values into concrete educational practice. And it would unavoidably be concerned with helping teachers to confront the numerous non-educational pressures and non-professional constraints which undermine their work as professional educators[7].

Q.8 In recent years, we have seen an increased use of Habermas' work in educational contexts, not only in terms of epistemological issues but also in terms of the ethical foundations of moral education, in social and political theories of adult education and in critical pedagogy. We are, therefore, interested in your own view of the importance of Habermas' work and about the ways in which this is now being received in education. In what context do you see the importance of Habermas' work? What are the educational problems to which it is addressed? What purposes does it serve?

A.8 As your question makes clear, critical theory in general, and Habermas' work in particular, are now beginning to penetrate various areas of education. However, in my view, some of the ways in which this is being done are rather disturbing. For example, some educational sociologists have simply equated critical theory with Marxist sociology - even though the intentions of critical theory are to overcome the uncompromising determinism of orthodox Marxism and to provide space for the role of reflexivity and human agency in the process of practical change. But a more serious way in which Habermas' work is being misrepresented by educational theorists and researchers concern the efforts that are made to "apply" his critical theory to educational practice - even though the view of critical theory as something to be "applied" to practice is one of the positivist assumptions that Habermas' goes to some length to reject.

I would argue that the real educational significance of Habermas' work is not that it provides a *source* of "theory" to be applied to various aspects of education such as moral education or adult education. Rather it provides us with intellectual *resources* - concepts, ideas, arguments, insights and the like - which we can reflectively and critically appropriate in order to address fundamental educational issues and concerns. As my answers to some of the previous questions should make clear, the ideas and arguments of Habermas which I regard as having the greatest significance are his idea of, and arguments for, a "critical social science" - a science which as Habermas puts it "has practical intent": Habermas' argument is particularly compelling for education because it replaces the elitism and authoritarianism inherent in the epistemological foundations of a positivist educational science with an epistemological form of justification based on the principles of democratic discourse and debate[8].

Q.9 We think that we can go along with the main normative concepts of your work: democracy and autonomy. Should we understand these concepts in the context of Habermas' theory of Communicative Action? How do these concepts modify or extend the British tradition of the philosophy of education?

A.9 When I first read Habermas' theory of Communicative Action, and in particular, his argument that rational discourse requires a democratically organised form of social life, I was immediately reminded of R.S. Peters' book, *Ethics and Education*[9]. In this, Peters argued that education was intrinsically related to the ideals of rational autonomy and the democratic form of social life which it presupposed. Like Habermas, Peters pursued this argument by using a transcendental argument which makes explicit how a commitment to individual autonomy and a

democratic society is itself presupposed by the very act of engaging in ordinary practical discourse.

When read together, Habermas and Peters' philosophical arguments have several important consequences. In the first place, they make it abundantly clear that the educational aim of developing individual autonomy and the political aim of creating more democratic forms of social life are not two independent aims: they are interdependent and closely interrelated. Second, locating the work of R.S. Peters within the context of the philosophical project of Habermas, enables us to reinterpret Peters' philosophy as a modern exposition of the classical view of education as an essentially humanising and liberating process: "humanising" in that it is the process of developing the essential human capacity for enlightened rational thought; "liberating" because, through this process of rational enlightenment, individuals can begin to emancipate themselves from the dictates of ignorance, habit and tradition and bring their lives under greater rational self-control.

An important consequence of this re-interpretation of Peters, work is that it requires us to reconsider our understanding of the analytic tradition of philosophy of education within which Peters' work is usually located[10]. Within this tradition, education is treated in a largely a-social and unhistorical way, so that the analysis of educational concepts often proceeds without any reference to their historical origins or to the social context in which they are embedded. In my view, this limitation can only be overcome if the British tradition of philosophy of education is modified and extended so as to accommodate more dialectical methods of philosophical enquiry. Only by doing this can the philosophy of education resist the temptation to interpret education as a timeless and universal concept and instead recognise that education is a culturally-embedded and historically-located social practice which can only be adequately analyzed by recognising its constitutive relationship to the particular forms of social life by which it is produced and which it, itself, serves to create and sustain.

Notes

(1)See, in particular, Gadamer (1981).

(2)For a detailed discussion of the post-empiricist philosophy of science see Hesse (1980).

(3)Habermas (1972).

(4)Carr and Kemmis (1986).

(5)I have made this criticism in more detail in Carr (1989a).

(6)This approach to teacher education is discussed in an American context by Beyer (1988). See also Carr (1989b).

(7)For an elaboration of this view of teacher professionalism, see Carr (1989c).

(8)I have described this view of the relationship between critical theory and educational studies in Carr (1987).

(9)Peters (1966).

(10)I try to do this in Carr (1986).

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The "Discussion - Case Study Approach" In Introduction To Philosophy Of Education Courses

John P. Portelli
Mount Saint Vincent University

* *My mind felt knotted, paralysed, intimidated by the word philosophy. I had taken a course in Rhetoric in 1987 and was thoroughly intimidated by my professor to the point that I suffered from severy anxiety. Many fellow students experienced this tension and that particular professor was feared. I carried my fears into class that first day of philosophy of education. How would I survive? Why was I here?*

* *I came into class in September feeling unsure because of my lack of background in philosophy.*

* *When I first came to class I had an image of what this class might be like because I had heard other people talk about philosophy courses and how boring they are.*

* *When I came to philosophy class at the beginning of the term I was scared because I had never taken a philosophy course before. I didn't know what to expect. I also came in with what I would call a narrow view of what education is all about. I admit I had an "executive view" and I was traditionally minded.*

* *I must admit that my first week in this course was just horrible ... What made it even worse was that I didn't even want to be in this philosophy course because I couldn't see this course would help me as a future elementary teacher.*

* *At the beginning I found it difficult to read an article with no solution. Coming from a science background where a solution was necessary, I was not encouraged to think critically.*

* *I have gone through school being reinforced for the correct answer and punished for the wrong one. My teachers never thought about asking why we thought our answers were correct. We were never asked to back them up. Nor were we ever asked to critically examine issues and discuss our views on them. Issues were something where the teacher would tell you what point of view you should take so you could "speak intelligently about the subject!" We definitely went through the education system at a time when Raggedy Ann and Andy were very popular! Sit quietly and answer when you are asked a question and everything will be fine.*

These selections, taken from B. Ed. students' reflective commentary at the end of a 10 week introductory course in philosophy of education, capture the popular expectations, stereotyped impressions or feelings that pre-service education students normally hold about foundations courses especially philosophy of education: scepticism, intimidation, boredom, uselessness, fear and practical irrelevance. A grim though very real picture! The delicate task of teaching introductory foundations courses becomes more difficult and also tragic when one learns, as stated in a couple of the above selections, that most students come with a strong and long background of "traditional teaching" in which complacency, uncriticallness, and the urge to acquire the right answer, which the teacher possesses, to get the highest grade, are implanted explicitly via the formal curriculum or implicitly via teaching styles. These qualities are essentially incompatible with a foundations perspective, and, some believe, even with the very notion of education. These expectations, impressions, feelings and qualities almost compel those who

teach in teacher education programmes to reduce the foundations requirements and give in to the "esteemed model of the teacher ... [ ] ... technologist, technician or applied scientist" (Giroux and Mclaren, 1987, p.269). And, hence, to strengthen the commonly expected aim of teacher education institutions: "to provide students with the requisite technical expertise to carry out whatever pedagogical functions are deemed necessary by the various school communities in which students undertake their practicum experience" (Giroux and McLaren, 1987, p. 269). It, therefore, becomes crucial, from a foundational perspective, that our teaching does not contradict the very aim of our discipline.

With such considerations in mind, during the last three academic years, I have adopted a "discussion- case-study approach" in the required introduction to philosophy of education course at the pre-service level. This paper argues for this approach by offering a rationale for its use and by identifying and briefly criticizing some of the popular but negative views about the nature and role of philosophy of education in teacher education. The second part will briefly describe the approach, comment on the students' reaction to it, and make some suggestions.

PART I

Why are foundations courses, including philosophy of education, viewed as being incompatible with other pre-service courses and not helpful to education students? The popular perception is that philosophical questions and concerns are trivial and irrelevant because they are too theoretical and, therefore, can be safely ignored by the practitioner. Some argue that, since philosophers have offered different and opposing views, teachers do not have anything to gain from philosophy of education. Similar views are also held with regard to theory and research in general. As Carr and Kemmis (1986) put it, "teachers regard research as an esoteric activity having little to do with their everyday practical concerns" (p. 8). This is not surprising if one holds that teacher education programmes are highly dominated by "technicism" which is characterized by a "how to" or "quick-fix approach", as well as elements of anti-intellectualism, extreme pragmatism and vocationalism (Apple and Tietlebaum, 1985; Adler and Goodman, 1986; Beyer, 1986; Popkewitz, 1987; Beyer, 1988a; Beyer 1988b; Giroux and McLaren, 1988; Beyer, 1989). This perspective is also reflected in the work and attitude of teachers who, as Ohanian (1988) maintains, "demand ... carry-out formulae, materials with the immediate application of scratch-and-sniff stickers... as though each of us were heading to operate a fast-food franchise" (p. 56). Ohanian believes that such a perspective arises from (i) a mistaken belief that there are "instant, stir-and-serve recipes for running a classroom" (p. 56) and (ii) a over-emphasis of administration on test scores. This technicism, according to Giroux and McLaren (1988), is based on "the logic of instructional technology and mandated by the state to provide requisite technical and managerial expertise" (p. 161). And this perspective has led to the deskilling and disempowering of teachers, discouragement of a critical view of schooling and an acceptance and reproduction of current practice (Apple and Weis, 1983; Giroux and McLaren, 1988; Beyer, 1988a).

Given such attitudes, it is not surprising that "the dominant approach to the preparation of teachers emphasizes a combination of courses in educational psychology and in the methodology of the various content areas" (Beyer, 1989, p. 22). The influence of technicism and the popularity of extreme pragmatism and vocationalism in teacher education lead almost naturally "to an isolation of the educational encounter so that the sort of educational issues that are crucial in the foundations of education tend to be regarded as irrelevant or even counterproductive" (Beyer, 1989, p. 22). Not only are these educational issues disregarded, but through the use of the dominant technicist approach, students learn that "being a teacher ... means identifying knowledge that is certain, breaking it into manageable bits, and transmitting it to students in an efficient fashion. Being a student means acquiring this knowledge and learning how to use it in a context which does not include criticism and has little patience with analysis" (Beyer and Zeichner, 1982, p. 20). Within this approach, anything that deviates from the above norm is deemed useless and unimportant. But the foundations, if done well, of their very nature ought to challenge this approach as well as the practices that go with it. This dichotomy or conflict between the foundations perspective and technicist practices is also recognized by some teachers.[1]

The separation between foundations and other courses arises both because of the dominant practices found in teacher education described above, and the widespread attitude towards the foundations and research held by teachers. But I also believe that "foundations instructors must bear some of the responsibility for the distance which exists between these areas and the discontent

which results" (Beyer and Zeichner, 1982, p. 23). This latter point leads to issues concerning the nature and role of philosophy of education, the relationship between theory and practice, and the way philosophy of education courses are conducted.

One can identify at least two approaches adopted in the teaching of philosophy of education. The first deals with the traditional "isms" in philosophical discourse – such as realism, idealism and progressivism – and then attempts to identify what educational prescriptions follow from these "philosophies". Within this approach, which is usually associated with tradtional or pre-analytic philosophy of education, some argue that philosophy of education and educational theory become almost identical.The second approach, which arose as a reaction to the first, is associated with analytic philosophy of education. This approach to philosophy of education deals with the analysis of central educational concepts. Philosophy is viewed as "concerned with questions about the analysis of concepts and with questions about the grounds of knowledge, belief, actions, and activities" (Hirst and Peters, 1970, p. 3).

Which ever approach one adopts, one still needs to address the question of what teaching method is to be used in philosophy of education classes. In a recent article which comments on the methods of teaching philosophy of education, Johnston and Applefield (1988) write:

> *The approach typically used to teach educational philosophy is based upon utilization of philosophical concepts and principles to allow students to engage in a process of analysis of historical and contemporary educational practices. Classroom activity is typically characterized by students reading assigned material and attending lectures which describe identified philosophical positions. They then discuss this material and finally analyze the philosophic underpinnings of a text, policy, or personal belief. At a more existential level, this approach may be described as one in which faculty lecture to students and grumble among themselves about lack of student engagement with questions. Students commonly memorize material for an objective exam and, in a final flourish to attain relevance, generate a written statement of their philosophy of education to undermine the teaching practices they would adopt (pp. 34 and 36).*

Given the concern that philosophy of education courses do not relate to other courses in education, do not illuminate practice, do not resolve anything, are not helpful for the students' chosen profession and that students do not have enough experience or practice to make sense of them, I have attempted to use and evaluate the "discussion - case-study approach" with six groups of B. Ed. students over a period of three years (1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91) totalling 153 students.

The rationale for using this approach rests on at least three points:

(1) My view about the nature and role of philosophy of education.

> Philosophy of education is viewed as the critical inquiry of educational concepts, values, and practices. Philosophy is seen as "an activity; it is something you do rather than a body of subject matter you study" (Barrow, 1981, p. 14). And, therefore, as Gramsci concludes, "philosophy is not ... the intrusion into everyday life of an alien esoteric otiose knowledge but an essential dimension of essential human experience ... it is the criticism and superarching of common sense" (Quoted by Carr, 1986, p. 1).

(2) The importance of doing philosophy if one values a critical-reflective-inquiring approach to teaching.

> Several complaints have been raised about the "traditional pedagogical practices of preservice education" – practices followed by professors who at the same time preach the value of inquiry instruction. Unfortunately, as Ross and Hannay (1986) note: "Students often encounter the reflective inquiry model as content to be memorized for an upcoming examination rather than as a process used to solve real problems" (p. 11).

(3) My belief that philosophy of education has something to offer to the resolution of practical, educational issues.

PART II

The approach adopted is heavily based on a combination of large-group and small-group discussions of case studies as well as readings related to issues raised in them. Lectures, which were kept to a minimum, were given when either the students asked for further clarification or when

I felt some background to the issue(s) at hand would be helpful. The students were assigned at least one case study for each class, which they were encouraged to read and think about prior to class, as well as related readings[2]. The students were also assigned, on a weekly basis, to submit a question or questions or a short reaction to the readings. While these questions could form part of the agenda in their small-group discussions, they gave me an idea of the kind of issues that I needed to address either individually or in class.

While the use of case studies has been adopted in several disciplines, such as medicine, law, clinical psychology and business administration – in the first two instances the use of cases goes as far as a hundred years ago – the meaning of case studies and the purpose of employing them varies (Harrington, 1990-1991; Merseth, 1991; Boehrer and Linsky, 1990). In my context, a case study was taken to consist of "an account of an event or events in the life of teachers and schools (Perry and Perry, 1969,p.1). It is a story or narrative of an incident or series of incidents in a teaching context that raises problems of, for example, a pedagogical or ethical or political nature, or a combination of all. In our context, contrary to some other ones, a case study is not meant as an example to support or explain a point or "a morality tale or fable"[3]. The reasons for using case studies include: (i) to provide students with a context which raises a controversial issue or issues; (ii) to give students the opportunity to explore the different aspects of the issue or issues by analyzing, discussing, and providing arguments for a position they might hold in resolving the issue; (iii) to help students relate the readings to practical concerns and develop practical judgements; and (iv) to help students clarify their own views and reasons for them. This perspective of the use of case studies is different, for example, from the one proposed by Harry S. Broudy. He insists that the use of case studies ought to enable educators to develop "a set of problems that can legitimately claim to be so general and important that all who are qualified to teach and to teach teachers should be familiar with them and their *standard interpretations and solutions*" (Broudy, 1990, p. 452, emphasis added). While one cannot deny that there are some issues or problems that may arise in different teaching contexts and being aware of such issues would be worthwhile, the generalizability and standardization proposed by Broudy can easily lead us to the vision of professionalism associated with technicism. Moreover, this perspective, unfortunately, may also diminish the importance of taking the specific context into account. And, hence, Broudy himself is perplexed: "why is it so difficult to infer from what is going on in one third grade what one will find in another third grade five miles away?" (1990, p. 452). From my perspective, cases are neither meant to be prescriptive (in the sense of showing prospective teachers the only way to proceed) nor fully generalizable. As Harrington concludes, "cases provide students of teaching with opportunities to begin to see the context specificity of the teaching and learning process and to understand that it is impossible to know anything in general about teaching (declarative or procedural knowledge) without knowing something in particular (conditional/contextual knowledge). Cases thereby reveal the inherent complexity of the teaching and learning process" (1990-1991, p. 3). In essence, discussion of cases can demonstrate the inevitability of "the contingency of teaching" (Van Manen, 1990).

How did the students react to this approach? To answer this question adequately, I analyzed the students' course evaluation carried out by the university, as well as their responses to a survey I conducted at the end of the course. For details of these evaluations see appendix A. The students' course evaluation ratings and written comments with regard to (a) their improvement of their ability to think critically, (b) the value of the philosophical readings, (c) the value of philosophy of education in relation to their professional goals, (d) the value of philosophy of education in clarifying and resolving practical educational issues, and (e) the value of philosophical discussions, show that the use of the "discussion - case-study approach", while being faithful to the nature of philosophical inquiry, has helped in correcting some of the popular misgivings about philosophy of education. For example, an analysis of the university administered evaluations indicates that in all areas evaluated (including increased ability to think critically, the value of readings, and fulfilling personal goals of a university career), the scores for this course are either on a par with or above the average of scores obtained by other pre-service education courses. The students' evaluations and comments in general discredit the popular, but negative, views about the foundations[4]. Notwithstanding the students' initial expectations and impressions, by the end of the term 89% of them identify the discussions as being the most helpful activity in the course, 90% of them found the case studies to be either extremely helpful or very helpful, 69% of them stated that the issues raised through the case-studies related to issues dealt with in other courses, and 87% of them

found the discussion of the issues and case studies either extremely helpful or very helpful in resolving some of the practical issues. The following students' comments ought to give a good impression of why they found the discussions and case-studies beneficial:

* *They encourage you to think past the issue on the surface and you benefit from listening to others' opinions.*
* *They enable us to "do" philosophy.*
* *They give the opportunity to voice concerns and opinions and hear those of others.*
* *They help one see something that perhaps one did not consider before.*
* *They give one the opportunity to share ideas, criticize and relate readings with real life experience.*
* *They prompt critical and reflective thinking.*
* *Case studies provide insight into areas that one had not yet experienced or might not have thought would occur in the classroom.*
* *I feel that I have learned to think more critically, with more patience. I think that I have learned to discuss an issue better than before, at least with some objectivity. I also look at children differently.*
* *Being introduced to new ways on how to handle different situations, I realized how closed minded I had been.*
* *After participating in the discussions I found that I was better able to deal with situations faced in some of the practical educational issues. I could see many sides and try to deal with the issues.*
* *We discussed issues from all sides and became more accepting of other's opinions.*
* *The discussions of case studies allowed us to see extreme cases, as well as everyday incidents we can expect to encounter as teachers.*
* *You could feel the reaction of others and that you were not alone thinking in a certain way, or that others were as confused as you, or that you had an opinion on a certain topic and you knew where you were standing on the issue.*
* *They made me hear the views of others and relate them to my own. Some views were very different from my own and some of them I may not have thought of without the open discussions.*
* *It is one thing to make a statement about how things ought to be, but entirely different when it comes to putting things into practice. The issues/case studies revealed many problems one could encounter.*

The approach defended in this paper assumes a certain nature and role of philosophy of education, as well as a certain perspective to the theory/practice relationship. Both of these assumptions contrast with the "technicism" prevalent in teacher education programmes. As I said earlier, this dominant view aims for a one-to-one correspondence between theory and practice. Theoreticians, who do the thinking, are expected to offer prescriptions that work; teachers, who follow the directions, as practitioners, are expected to implement these prescriptions. Within this perspective, theory is meant to offer quick solutions that apply to all cases or contexts, and the simpler, more concrete or direct the suggestions the better, because teachers will carry them out more efficiently. As Pinar and Grumet observe, theory "has become a mere appendage ... judged and justified solely according to its ability to predict and control those [human] affairs (1988, p. 96). Such an atmosphere erases "the boundary between the actual and the possible by acknowledging the possible only in its existing and predictable manifestations in the practical world" (Pinar and Grumet, 1988, p. 96).

From the critical-foundational perspective, the "technicist" understanding of the role of theory is deemed to be too reductionist and problematic. As Entwistle argues, there can never be a one-to-one correspondence between theory and practice, that is, one that "predicts accurately every contingency in a practical situation" (Entwistle, 1988, p. 26). The role of theory is "to evoke judgement rather than rote obedience," to bring "critical intelligence to bear on practical tasks rather

than merely implementing good adivce" (Entwistle, 1988, p. 27). Or, as Pinar and Grumet put it, the role of theory is "to consciously question [the practical], interrupting the predictable with analyses that point to other possibilities" and "to restore the contemplative moment in which we interrupt our taken-for-granted understandings ... and ask again the basic questions practical activity silences" (1988, pp. 98 and 99). The students' comments with regard to the use of case studies and discussions and the way the issues dealt with in this course relate to other courses[5], indicate that the students were becoming aware of the role of theory defended in this paper and throughout the course. I am not claiming that this is *simply* the result of this course. Nor am I claiming that in order to bring about some concrete change in teaching all is needed is an awareness of this kind. However, the majority of the students' comments show that the issues dealt with in the course as well as the approach adopted have helped them to become aware of the need to consider these issues within their teaching, to realize the importance of thinking for themselves, to appreciate criticism, and value "patience with analysis". Let me offer some of the students' own voices in support of this:

* *The discussion of the issues and case studies caused me to be more critical about how to teach and many considerations about teaching, students and the classroom that I wouldn't have considered to be very important before this course.*

* *I would go to the discussions with my opinions, however, others often raised questions and issues that I failed to think about which sometimes changed or jodified my prior opinions. Isn't this open-mindedness?*

* *Different views were expressed, and some were modified as a result of looking at and considering possible arguments for and against these views. Discussions encouraged critical thinking.*

* *I have discovered that I will have to use a lot of my own judgement when I'm out there in the real world teaching.*

* *While I may have had vague notions of what a teacher should or should not be before, this class has forced me to explore those hazy notions and deal with hard questions. I may not have found all the answers, but I have learned to inquire, to reflect and to discuss these serious educational issues.*

* *The contradictions in our education system and society have become even more apparent to me than they were as a parent. I take some comfort in the statement that only by uncovering these contradictions is it possible to find some hope for change.*

* *During the first class we were asked to identify an issue that troubled us. I wrote "mainstreaming". I wanted to know how to handle kids of varying ability in a whole class situation. I didn't want to think about it, I wanted practical hints on how to deal with it in specific examples.*

* *"That's OK in theory, but in practice it works like this ... " made me nervous. There were uncomfortable silences when it was brought up, and it was brought up often enough for me to get the message that there was something wrong with it. I agreed that there was something unsettling about this statement, because everyone else was worried about it too.*

* *Now I know what made me edgy. The big "BUT" right there in the middle is a tough stopper. Any person making this statement wants thought to end with the end of the statement. They want to package a problem and forget about it.*

* *I was hoping for these kind of skills when I arrived here in September last year. It feels like a decade ago!*

* *The most important thing I have learned is that there is no dichotomy between theory and practice; what you practice in the classroom is your theory — THERE IS NO TIME TO TRANSLATE IN SCHOOL SITUATIONS. This may seem like theory through default, but it is not.*

* *Somewhere in the readings this year, this idea was expressed much better. But until I knew it on my own terms, it was useless to me. When I was taught, it didn't stick. When I learned, I mean really understood, it became part of me.*

* *So, where I saw my initial issue as "mainstreaming", I now understand that issue in terms of equality, democracy and human rights.*

* *I had no answers to teaching problems before, and I certainly have no answers now, but there is a difference. I have a sense of the depth of the issues, and I find them all dependent on each other. The discussions seemed circular before in an unproductive way; now the circular discussions seem productive in that they bring out all the aspects of a problem for consideration. This complexity may make it impossible to find a perfect solution, but it makes for a more reasonable, thoughtful solution.*

* *I still don't "know" anything, but I'm aware of a lot more!*

The presentation, analysis and defence of the "discussion - case study" approach has not been provided as a panacea to all the problems that we encounter in teacher education programmes. It has been presented as an example of a possibility available to us – a possibility that has brought about some positive changes. As a result of the use and reflection of this approach, I propose two suggestions. First, that while we should continue to improve the teaching of philosophy of education courses, we also need to combat and eliminate "technicism" in teacher education. If the latter fails, then philosophy of education courses are doomed to be seen as being incompatible with the other courses offered in teacher education. The philosophical perspective will remain perhaps the necessary or required perspective but the odd and disliked one.

My second suggestion, which is not unrelated to the first, is to introduce the philosophical perspective, even if partially, in other courses offered in teacher education programmes. This, of course, implies at least in some instances (I imagine in most instances), that philosophers of education have to take curriculum matters more seriously and even be willing to co-teach some of the other courses. This suggestion also implies that those who teach the so-called "curriculum and instruction" courses have to learn to be more patient and open to the foundational perspective[6]

Notes

1. Consider, for example, the following journal entry by a graduate student and an elementary school teacher with fifteen years of teaching experience: "In the public schools that I have been in, teachers who criticize or try to change the system — those who don't believe in what they are told to teach or do — are not valued. They are disciplined by principals and administrative personnel. School board officials value those teachers who act only as technicians, who believe in the status quo, and who do not question even their own beliefs. Teachers are made to believe that their own feelings, beliefs, and ideas are not as important as the "material" that is there for one to teach. The job description is not to take a stand on what should be taught, but to teach what is already there. Those teachers "technicians" are rewarded by becoming administrative personnel, who then make decisions regarding curricula. A lot of teachers who don't want to be relegated to the role of practioner (not thinkers) leave the profession. If this control of knowledge is so predominant at this level, how can there be any substantial advances in changing the focus of how knowledge is organized in the classroom?".

2. The readings included selections from the writings of John Dewey, Jane R. Martin, Maxine Greene, Harold Entwistle, William Hare, Mary Warnock, P.H. Hirst, R.S. Peters, R.F. Dearden, P.S. Wilson, John Holt, Ann Margaret Sharp and Paulo Freire. Several of the case studies used are available in Fenstermacher and Soltis (1986). Other case studies, based on my own teaching and my work with teachers, were also discussed. During the third year of adopting this approach, half of the students taking the course, were spending a day and half per week in schools. By the middle of the term, several of these students presented cases of their own based on their school experience.

3. The following is an example of a case study I used. I developed this case which is based on a real incident I encountered a couple of years ago.

Rebecca had been an elementary school teacher for 12 years. For the last 3 years she has taught at the Grade 6 level. As part of the Language Arts class Rebecca has introduced a weekly activity on local news. The activity involves students selecting a newspaper article, presenting it to the class and then, if there is enough interest, discuss any issue or issues raised in the article. In the past these discussions have gone well. Moreover, although several controversial issues had been discussed the children seemed to handle differing views quite tolerantly. And, to Rebecca's relief, no parents had complained about this activity.

Unfortunately this year Rebecca was faced with some delicate situations and hard decisions to make. Some parents had complained that it was not part of the school mandate to discuss issues related to religion and moral values. A parent accused her of promoting permissiveness. With the principal's support, Rebecca had organized a session for parents to explain the intent of the activity and that this was consistent with some of the goals of public education publicized by the school board: to develop the disposition of critical thinking and to foster an awareness and understanding of distinctive human values. Although the majority of the parents agreed, some still complained forcefully and walked out of the meeting. Rebecca decided to pursue the activity. After all, most of the children seemed to benefit from the discussions.

The following month one of the students brought an article entitled "Abortion Bill to Be Introduced: More Abortions Performed at Clinic". On that day there wasn't enough time to fully investigate this article.

That evening Rebecca struggled with several questions. She knew that abortion was a very hotly debated issue in her community. Supporters of both sides of the issue had

demonstrated recently. The children she taught must surely be aware of the issue. But she wondered whether or not she should pursue the topic given the reaction this might instigate from some of the parents. Moreover, the curriculum guide for health very clearly indicated that the topic of abortion should not be dealt with in class prior to Grade 7. Rebecca thought that if she were to restrict this discussion the students may feel she is contradicting herself. On the other hand, should she risk creating more protests from parents to the extent that she would not be able to continue having any discussions?

4. The following examples of students' comments support the point made here:

* *This course is very useful because it addresses the context in which the other courses will take place and inspires one to think about personal teaching goals and styles.*

* *This course opened up a whole realm of teaching issues which are most important but yet are unaddressed in the methods courses.*

* *The issues we discussed could be related to life in general, problems that could arise in anyone's daily life.*

* *I found this course to be a compliment to the methods courses, this one helped me to formulate some basic ideas of the whole educational process and to put things into perspective or to question things.*

* *I found myself questioning a lot of other areas such as professors' teaching methods, their views on teaching practice etc. This course helped me to think about all areas.*

* *Other courses I have deal very little with issues/topics dealt with in this course. This course was much more relevant.*

5. The observation that the issues discussed "helped one think about all areas" is made by several students. As a student put it, "Philosophy of education is evidently not limited to the philosophy of education class but permeates not only the other courses, but every course I could relate an issue or idea that was dealt with in this course. I gained more from this course than from any of the others."

6. A shorter and earlier version of this paper was published in *Paideusis*.

Appendix A

At the end of each course, the University conducts course evaluations. The evaluations consist of two questionnaires. The first, "Teaching Evaluation Questionnaire" consists of 27 questions, each question having 5 possible replies from which students have to select one. The second, "Student Evaluation of Teaching", consists of 2 questions. The purpose of the second one is to give the students the opportunity to write their anecdotal comments on the course and the professor's teaching.

TABLE 1
Results of questions 11, 12 and 19

N = 288

	N	Question 11 Avg	Un%	Ed%	Question 12 Avg	Un%	Ed%	Question 19 Avg	Un%	Ed%
S86	9	1.33	90+	90+	1.67	85	67	1.75	70	50
F86	56	1.64	90+	75	1.91	70	50	1.73	70	50
F87	52	1.42	90+	90+	1.73	80	62	1.75	70	50
S88*	17	1.71	90+	70	1.53	90+	77	1.47	86	65
F88*	52	1.50	90+	86	1.89	70	50	1.46	86	65
F89*	49	1.34	90+	90+	1.64	85	70	1.48	86	65
F90*	53	1.28	90+	90+	1.67	85	67	1.34	90+	70
Grand avg		1.45	90+	90	1.72	80	62	1.56	80	60

S = Summer
F = Fall
* = "Discussion - Case-study Approach" used

Question 11:My powers to think, criticize, and/or create have been improved as a result of this course: (a) strongly agree, (b) agree, (c) undecided, (d) disagree, (e) strongly disagree.

Question 12:The texts and other readings assigned for this course were: (a) very poor, (b) poor, (c) fair, (d) good, (e) excellent.

Question 19:This course has been successful in promoting the personal goals of my university career (that is, in helping me get what I want out of university): (a) very successful, (b) somewhat successful, (c) undecided, (d) somewhat unsuccessful (e) very unsuccessful.

Table 1 presents the results with regard to the 3 questions from the "Teaching Evaluation Questionnaire" that focus on the nature of the course rather than on the professor's teaching for the Introduction to Philosophy of Education course I have taught at Mount Saint Vincent University since the summer of 1986. The table provides the average ratings for each of these questions from my course, the percentile on the university scale (based on the evaluation ratings of 594 classes) and the percentile on the Department of Education scale (based on the evaluation ratings of 50 classes). Table 2 presents the ratings for each response category for Questions 11, 12 and 19.

Tables 3 - 8 present the quantitive results of the survey I conducted on the last day of the course (1988, 1989 and 1990). The survey consisted of 5 questions. In each question the students were invited to comment on their reply if they wished.

TABLE 2

N = 288

Question 11 (Critical Thinking)

	F90	F89	F88	S88	F87	F86	S86	total	%
strongly agree	37	38	29	8	32	27	6	177	61.45
agree	14	9	20	7	18	22	3	93	32.29
undecided	-	-	2	1	1	6	-	10	3.4
disagree	-	1	-	1	1	1	-	4	1.38
strongly disagree	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	.69
no reply	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	.69

Question 12 (Readings)

	F90	F89	F88	S88	F87	F86	S86	total	%
very poor	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	.69
poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
fair	1	4	4	-	4	9	-	22	7.6
good	27	23	35	9	31	34	6	165	57.29
excellent	23	12	12	8	17	13	3	98	34.02
no reply	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.34

Question 19 (Promoting Personal Goals)

	F90	F89	F88	S88	F87	F86	S86	total	%
very successful	36	29	26	12	22	25	3	153	53.12
somewhat successful	16	17	22	4	21	22	4	106	36.80
undecided	1	3	4	-	8	7	1	24	8.33
somewhat unsuccessful	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	3	1.04
very unsuccessful	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	.34
no reply	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.34

TABLE 3

Question 1: Which of the course activities have you found helpful
N = 153

	No. of replies	%
DISCUSSIONS	136	89
NO MENTION OF DISCUSSIONS	14	9
NO REPLY	3	2
LARGE-GROUP DISCUSSIONS	14	10
SMALL & LARGE-GROUP DISCUSSIONS	38	28
SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSIONS	44	32
DID NOT SPECIFY KIND OF DISCUSSION	40	30

In addition to discussions, 32 students mentioned readings, 34 mentioned the case studies, 27 mentioned the lectures, 17 mentioned the papers and 9 mentioned the video.

TABLE 4

Question 2: Did you find the case studies helpful?
N = 153

	No. of replies	%
extremely helpful	68	44
very helpful	70	46
average	13	9
somewhat helpful	2	1
not at all	-	-

TABLE 5

Question 3A: Did you find the readings helpful in clarifying and discussing some of the practical educational issues?

N = 153

	No. of replies	%
extremely helpful	42	27.5
very helpful	76	50.0
average	28	18.5
somewhat helpful	5	3.0
not at all	2	1.0

TABLE 6

Question 3B: Identify three of the most helpful readings
N = 153

Reading	No. of choices
John Dewey, *Experience and Education*	48
Maxine, Greene, "Teacher as Stranger"	44
J.F. Soltis and G.D. Fenstermacher, *Approaches to Teaching*	41
William Hare, "Open-Mindedness in the Education of Young Children"	33
Jand R. Martin, "The Ideal of the Educated Person" or "Education: A Journey of Alienation or Integration?"	31
Harold Entwistle, "The Relationship between Educational Theory and Practice: A New Look"	24
Mary Warnock, "The Neutral Teacher"	20
R.F. Dearden, "Controversial Issues and the Curriculum"	18
Charles Clark and P.S. Wilson, "How to Base the Curriculum on Children"s Interests"	18
P.H. Hirst and R.S. Peters, selection from *The Logic of Education*	14
Ann Margaret Sharp, "Philosophical Teaching as Moral Education" or "What is a Community of Inquiry?"	11
D. Berliner, "The Executive Functions of Teaching"	9
John Holt, selections from *How Children Fail*	9
Susan Ohanian, "On Stir and Serve Recipes" (used in 1989 and 1990)	18
Ira Shor, "Interview with Ira Shor" (used in 1990)	16
Paulo Freire, "A Letter to North American Teachers" (used in 1989 and 1990)	14
Ron Reed, "Philosophy for Children: Aims and Methods" (used in 1990)	8

TABLE 7

Question 4: Did the issues and case studies relate to issues/topics dealt with in other courses? Why?

N = 153

	No. of replies	%
extremely well	32	21.0
very well	4	48.0
average	25	16.5
somewhat	19	12.5
not at all	2	1.5
no reply	1	0.5

TABLE 8

Question 5: Did the discussions (small-group and large-group) of the issues and case studies help you to resolve some of the practical issues? why?

N = 153

	No. of replies	%
extremely helpful	50	33
very helpful	83	54
average	11	7
somewhat	9	6
not at all	-	-

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The Educational System of the University of Malta: Italian Influence and Pedagogic Projects

Maria Paola Morelli°

The study of the origins and development of Universities is important because it shows how these Medieval institutions to a large extent shaped and organized a new culture. The history and traditions of universities, their very creation, but, most of all their development from an organizational and teaching perspective are the starting point, in this specific research field, to determine the educational context and the cultural function performed by universities during the eighteenth century.

The innumerable essays and studies relating to the structure and the cultural function of European universities are rich and fruitful, whereas their pedagogic and educational issues seem to be neglected. This research will focus on this particular sphere. Education becomes an element of "individual and collective growth", as it is connected with the currents of thought responsible for its development [1].

We shall focus mainly on the development and supplementing of national and foreign educational projects which contributed to the cultural evolution of the Maltese society by performing an essential task in preventing the interruption of historical continuity. Accordingly, attention will focus on the origin of the Maltese university system, clearly derived from its religious background and modelled on Italian educational patterns.

Thus it is better to make clear that in these remarks on education and its related activities, it is important to consider the political and social context of the European universities at the end of 1700.

The University Reforms in Europe

To summarize this process, it is opportune to look at the signs of reforms and revitalization that involved the university world in different parts of Europe. Various factors helped to promote the development and the process of renewal of the universitary system [2]. From the ideological point of view, this promotion contributed to spread enlightened themes, including the possibility of reforming institutions to set up a new social system.

In England and in the Netherlands the impetus of renewal was brought about by the aspirations of the middle class, businessmen and the increase of the professional class. In the rationalization projects of government structures carried out in France, Prussia and Austria by the enlightened monarchies, the reforming force was aimed at improving educational levels by an exact norm which regulated the public character of lessons, the rules for doctoral examinations and for competitive exams of teachers. In Central Europe the trend to rationalization was aimed at repressing the autonomy of colleges of Theology, Law and Medicine to assume control on the professions[3].

In many Italian and European universities the corporative structure dissolved slowly to leave direct control to the monarch. This was particularly the case of the Universities of Pavia, Padua and Turin [4]. At Pavia the reform of 1771 involved all fields of the university organization (see the following historical scheme).

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UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA

before the reform of 1771

SENATE:	- it assumed the general administration;
BISHOP:	- he received the oath from teachers; - he conferred the doctorate according the formula *"auctoritate qua fungimur";*
COLLEGES:	- they examined the ability of candidates for the doctorate (Theology, Law, Medicine).

after the reform of 1771

GENERAL MAGISTRATE OF THE UNIVERSITY:	- it assumes the general administration; - it was composed by four governmental officials;
BISHOP:	- he kept the privilege to invest solemnly the academic degrees according the formula *"Apostolica et Regia, qua in hac re fungimur, auctoritate";*
COLLEGES:	Theology - they were present during the finals; Law Medicine
TEACHING STAFF:	- it judged the ability of candidates.

During the second half of the 18th century, many universities took important steps towards a new structural and teaching asset according to two fundamental directives, secularization and centralization, which influenced the ideal purposes of the Italian and European university reforms of the eighteenth century.

The University Project of Malta

Malta's university project, consequently, fitted the trends of central Italy in the late eighteenth century, while it differed substantially from the organizational standards of northern Italy. The organizational structures of the Maltese university, since its founding constitutions in 1771, is basically similar to the approach taken by the Rome university of *La Sapienza*. Thus, a definition of links and similarities concerning the school system, as well as teaching subjects and methods, will help in determining the university pedagogic perspective through the implementation of its educational goals. [5]

The University of Malta was created as an ecclesiastical association promoted by the Order of the Knights of St John. It did not evolve as a free association of students and teachers, but was rather a means to ensure, in the doctrinal and theological field, the unity of the catholic world through a complex educational system.

In the period under study, the Rome academic institution as well as the Maltese university, featured a system clearly inspired by Christian principles whose managing power was held by the papal administration [6]. Hence, the climate of universities within the Church rule, even more stifling than elsewhere, was not suitable for a free research or the flourishing of new ideas and, consequently, the teaching activity failed to arouse the learners' interest [7].

Moreover, the trend to secularization expressed by other universities was impossible in an ecclesiastic organization that reconfirms the power of chancellor and consistorial lawyers.

As regards the university organization of Rome it is opportune to utilize the following historical scheme (A) that underlines the hierarchic and ecclesiastic organization of the university system of *Archiginnasio*.

(A) UNIVERSITY OF ROME

(reform of Benedetto XIV - 1748)

THE POPE CHANCELLOR	- he is responsible for the co-ordination between studia and ecclesiastic authorities as regards economic, administrative and jurisdictional activities;
COLLEGE OF CONSISTORIAL LAWYERS (12 members)	- they are responsible for the organization of the university; - they are elected by the Pope among elements of noble origins; - they elected the Rector of the university; - *jus doctorandi;*
COLLEGES OF PHYSICIANS: (12 members)	Protomedico Counsellors - *jus doctorandi* Censors Mayors
COLLEGES OF THEOLOGIANS:	- 3 holders of important ecclesiastic offices; - 5 representatives of religions orders (Dominicans. Augustinians); - 2 teachers of theology and the Holy Scriptures; - it is considered to be the most authoritative among colleges; - *jus doctorandi;*

RECTOR	- he has civil, scientific and cultural competence (potuit imprimi); - he is elected within the Council of Consistorial Lawyers;
TEACHER	- he appoints by papal permit; - he has a fixed appanage; - there is an economic levelling among teachers; - there is the incompatibility between profession and teaching;
READER	- he appoints by competitive exam (he is presided by the chancellor and the consistorial lawyers); - he has a temporary function;
LESSONS	- TYPOLOGY: daily lessons; - METHOD: university and elementary lessons at home.

Moreover, the Maltese organization was characterized by a pyramid shaped structuring of functions and competencies. As a matter of fact, it is stated in the constitutions that "*ogni ben regolato corpo deve aver il suo capo da cui egli dipende, ed in cui egli influisca*" [8]. Such a structure was actually presided over by the Protector and magistrate of the University, who was in charge of the administrative and jurisdictional management regarding professors and enroled students, as well as of the awarding of degrees [9].

The post of rector, on the other hand, involved supervision over the organization and management of related elements such as the methodology applied to the various subject matters, the appointment of the teaching staff and the students; disciplinary and curricular performance. Evidence suggests that the rector took part in private and public debates [10].

Besides, the rector was assisted by the dormitory rector, whose task consisted in "*invigilare sulla condotta, lo studio e l'indole dei collegiali*" [11].

This hierarchical system, in its specific subdivisions, set out that administrative as well as teaching and non-teaching staff was to be totally subject to the rector and to the protector of the university (see historical scheme B) [12].

The Maltese rector's counterpart within the Rome university organization had widely-differing tasks. In fact, the rector's competence extended to the judgement over whatever might occur, even between strangers, within the walls of *La Sapienza* "(...) *per tutti li beni e rendite dell'Universita* in *qualunque luogo posti (...) per li lettori, scolari, inservienti e dipendenti in qualunque modo*" [13].

The rector's jurisdictional function for civil and criminal cases also applied to the more peculiarly cultural and scientific ones. The formula "*potent imprimi*", for instance, was absolutely necessary for printing any legal document from the council of consistorial lawyers [14].

In this respect, it is worth reminding that in the university *La Sapienza*, the appointment of the rector by professors and students was an important first step in the process to achieve a self-governing status and independence from Church authorities. This independence had not been achieved yet in the Maltese institution because of the deep-rooted and strictly hierarchical organization of the Order of the Knights, within which competencies and responsibilities were highly defined.

(B) COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITY OF MALTA [15]

ROLE	*RESPONSIBILITIES*
VICE CHANCELLOR OF THE ORDER OF MALTA	- for civil and jurisdictional; - for the conferring of doctorates;
RECTOR	- for administrative, didactic and disciplinary activities; - for the conferring of degrees of Master of Arts-Bachelor-Doctor instead of the Protector;
VICE RECTOR	- for assisting the Rector in his functions;
SECRETARY	- for bureaucratic procedures (school calendar, list of teachers, disciple, programmes, text-books);
DORMITORY RECTOR	- for assisting the Rector in the organization of dormitory and collegians;
CONCIERGE	- for the care of entry-keys of the University;
SERVANT	- for the domestic organization of the College; - for the functions carried on by the cook, under-cook and dormitory servant;
CHAPLAIN	- for the celebration of Mass and the teaching of catechism;

SACRISTAN - for upkeep of the church, in which task he was supported by two clerics.

(C) COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

(teaching and temporary staff)

PROTECTOR RECTOR HEADMASTER - it is composed by Protector-Rector and 3 Censors elected within the faculties of Theology-Law-Medicine;

THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE - Composed of Doctors, Readers and teachers who are in possession of the professional diploma;
- it has the faculty of judgement and vote to confer academic degrees;

COLLEGE OF LAW it is composed of Doctor and Readers of the same faculty in possession of the professional diploma;
- it has the faculty of judgement and vote to confer academic degrees;

MEDICAL COLLEGE - *idem.*

TEACHER - he took an oath in front of the Inquisitor to teach the Church doctrine, as well as an oath of obedience to the Protector;
- he could practise the profession of teaching if he possessed the professional diploma;
- he enjoyed a fixed fee;

READERS - they supported the official teachers;

SCHOOL TEACHERS - they taught in the "*scuole inferiori*" of Valletta;

CHIEF LIBRARIAN - he was responsible for the maintenance and the keeping up to date of books and the editing of new index and catalogues;

UNIVERSITY PORTER - he had a subsidiary function.

The Educational Process

In addition, the educational process of the Maltese university system was carried out through a grading of levels which varied according to the student's development skills.

SCUOLA INFIMA - the course lasted one year;

GRAMMAR SCHOOL - the course lasted two years;

SCHOOL OF RHETORIC - the course lasted two years;

MASTER OF ARTS - it was the course necessary to obtain the title of Master of Arts;
- it was the preparatory course common to the faculties of Theology, Law and Medicine;

BACHELOR - the course lasted two years in one of the three faculties chosen by the student;

LICENZA - the course lasted two years in one of the three faculties chosen by the student;

DOCTORATE - the degree could be obtained at the end of the fifth academic year.

The different education levels consisted in: "*scuola infima*" (primary school), corresponding to the first acquisition of instrumental knowledge (reading, writing, calculating together with general computing notions). The teaching methodology was characterized by the elementary use of the imitation technique, applied by providing examples and repeating by heart the previously-explained rules.

The second level was the grammar school (similar to secondary or postprimary school) subdivided in two years, where fundamental notions of human knowledge were outlined through a gradual emergence of the subject matters such as Latin language, Italian language, Christian doctrine, history and geography. This methodology made use of textbooks written both by Latin and Italian authors, namely *Avvertimenti grammaticali di Lingua Italiana*, by Buonmattei, *Metodo d'Imparare la Lingua Latina Volgarmente*, by Parretti and *Lettere Italiane* by Bembo [16].

Parretti's textbook used the method of questions, provided universal grammar rules as well as vulgar interpretation of the Latin language. The author himself explains: "*Giacche si vede in esperienza che i Figliuoli in tanto apprendono qualche Piecetto (...) non perche si ricordino delle parole latine (...) bensi delle volgari, che uditono reolicatamente dalla viva voce del Maestro*" [17].

The educational pathway of the Maltese school system was evidently affected by the Italian methods of teaching.

The third level was the school of rhetoric (similar to upper secondary school) and completed the learning of humanities: Latin literature, rhetoric, Italian literature, Greek and Roman history. The knowledge acquired was appropriate to qualify the student for future University admission.

The educational pathway culminated in a degree in one of the three faculties of theology, medicine and law, which was reached through a grading of introductory levels: Master of Arts-Bachelor-Licenza.

The Doctorate, was obtained at the end of the fifth year of attendance and study in one of the mentioned faculties and required passing two oral exams, that is:

a) oral discussion of the candidates concerning the defence of two theological, legal or philosophical theses:

b) evaluation of acquired knowledge concerning the explanation of theological, legal or philosophical themes, previously presented by the candidate within the College of University (see historical scheme D).

(D) FACULTY of THEOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF ROME*	UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
SUBJECTS:	SUBJECTS:
- Theology;	- Moral theology (by order of Benedetto XIV);
- Holy Scripture;	- Holy Scripture;
- Disputes and Dogmatics;	- Dogmatic theology;
- Ecclesiastic history;	- History of the Church and of Jerusalem; - Canon law

FACULTY of LAW

UNIVERSITY OF ROME	UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
SUBJECTS:	SUBJECTS:
- Canonical institution;	Civil law (including Civil institution and Jerusalem-statute);
- Civil institution; - Criminal institution;	- Canonical law (including the "Decreto di Graziano" and the Council of Trent);
- "Decreto di *Graziano*";	- Natural law;
- Pandette;	
- Civil or Canonical or Criminal law	

FACULTY of MEDICINE

UNIVERSITY OF ROME	UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
SUBJECTS:	SUBJECTS:
- Theoretical medicine;	- Theoretical medicine;
- Practical medicine;	- Practical medicine;
- Surgery and Anatomy;	- Surgery and Anatomy;
- Botany;	- Botany;
- Chemistry;	- Chemistry;
- Treatise on theoretical medicine;	
- Treatise on practical medicine.	

UNIVERSITY OF ROME**	UNIVERSITY OF MALTA**
SUBJECTS:	SUBJECTS:
- Course in humanistic studies;	
- Course in Greek;	- Course in Greek;
- Course in Arabic;	
- Course in Syrian language;	
- Course in Hebrew;	- Course in Hebrew;

* University curriculum in force under Pope Benedetto XIV;

** Courses subsidiary to the study of Holy Subjects;

NB "*Laurea ad honorem*" introduced in 1754; "*Laurea premio*" introduced in 1788/89 for the University of Rome only.

Didactic and Methodological Criteria

The teaching method was modelled on the *praelectio*, that is a reading with commentary on and explanation of texts. The planning of the subjects to teach consisted in a mere selection of contents and cultural expressions, so as to ensure continuity with traditional culture. Lessons were of two kinds: "chair lessons" and "domestic lessons". The former, according to the usual practice, were

held in the University building and consisted in direct teaching, as the teacher acted personally in relation to the students. This methodology, in particular, made use of practical demonstration in the teaching of sciences and oral explanations. The loud reading of a text in the old form of *lectio*, and the explanatory lesson were also parts of oral teaching.

Domestic lessons, on the contrary, were held in the teacher's private home. The teaching methods used in the universities of Rome and Malta, were therefore quite similar. The university calendar, daily timetables including recreation time, textbooks and marks were carefully fixed. Students were not allowed any contact with the external world. Even the sending and reception of letters was controlled by the rector.

On the whole, the universities of Rome and Malta were structured on a traditional order, both from an organizational and a teaching point of view. Learning methodologies were accepted only at an instrumental level, in so far as they provided the underpinning for basic language rules and elementary operations in mathematical sciences. As for the subsequent levels of education, the learning system consisted mainly in forms of indoctrination, stressing merely superficial factual knowledge concerning philosophy, ethics and law which effectively hampered the positive development of the student's personality.[18].

Universities still clinging to medieval concepts could not, therefore, benefit from academic reforms sweeping across Europe and Italy at the end of the eighteenth century [19]. Sapienza University was a case in point since its general approach to learning was too old-fashioned to integrate the innovatory currents[20]. The traditions regulating educational processes at the University of Malta, on the other hand were an obstacle to the very perception of the need of reform.

Abbreviations Used

ADM:Archives of Malta

ASR:Historical Archive of Rome

Bibliographical Notes

1)M. Laeng, *Nuovi lineamenti di Pedagogia*, 1987, pp. 9 ss.;

2)L. Stone, *L'universita nella Societa*, Bologna 1980, pp 465 ss.;

3)W. Fischer, P. Lundgreen, "Il reclutamenta e l'addestramento del personale tecnico e amministrativo", in *La formazione degli stati nazionali nell'Europa occidentale*, by Ch. Telly, Bologna 1984, pp. 297-359;

4)B. Peroni, "La riforma della universita di Pavia nel Settecento", in *Contributi alla storia dell'Universita* di Pavia, Pavia 1925; Maffei Scipione, "Un parere intorno allo studio di Padova sui principi del Settecento" in *Atti del R. Istitut.* Ven, tomo 69, second part, pp. 575-591, year 1909-1910; Maffei Scipione, *Parere sul miglioramento della R. Universita di Torino alla S. M. Vittorio Amedeo II*, Verona 1871, p. 26; M. Roggero, *Il sapere e la virtu: Stato, Universita e Professione nel Piemonte tra settecento ed ottocento*, Turin 1987;

5)See ADM 575 f. 495ss.; A. Mifsud, "Appunti sugli archivi di Malta" in *Archivium Melitense*, vol. II, n. 13-16; 1912-1913, pp. ss,; M.R. di Simone, *La "Sapienza" romana nel settecento*, Rome 1980, pp. 30 ss.;

6)Bonifacio VIII was the founder of the *Stadium Urbis* in 1303 cfr. E. Morpurgo, Roma e La Sapienza, Rome 1881, pp. 6 ss.; V. Borg, "Developments in education outside the jesuit 'collegium melitense'" in *Melita Historica*, vol. VI, n. 3, 1974, pp. 216 ss.;

7)Di Simone, *La Sapienza*, op. cit., p. 17;

8)See ADM 575 f. 486 t.;

9)Ibidem f. 487;

10)Ibidem;

11)See Laurenza, Il *primo rettore e i primi statuti dell'Universita di Malta*, Malta 1934, pp. 13 ss.;

12)See ADM 575 f. 486 t. for example, the interesting section on regulations;

13)See ASR, University of Rome p. 81, ff. 121-122;

14)Di Simone, *La Sapienza*, op. cit., p. 41; F.M. Renazzi, *Storia dell'Universita di Roma*, Rome MDCCCIII, p. 59;

15)See ADM 575 f. 459 ss.; Constitution for the new studies of the University and for the College of Education of Malta;

16)See ADM 575 f. 484;

17)F. Porretti, *Grammatica della lingua latina*, Venice, 1804, pp. 4 ss. (the first edition was published in 1727);

18)R. Titone, *Psicodidattica*, Brescia 1977, p. 35;

19)B. Peroni, "La politica scolastica dei principiriformatori in Italia" in *Nuova Rivista Storica* A XII, Fasc. III pp. 267-269, for this subject of university reform cfr. Peroni, "La riforma dell'Universita di Pavia nel Settecento" in *Contributi alla Storia dell'Universita di Pavia*, Pavia 1925 (the plan of reform was published on the 31 of Octover 1771). Schipa, "Il secolo decimottavo" nel vol. *Storia dell'Universita di Napoli*, Napoli, 1924, (the reform took place in 1777);

20)Di Simone, *La Sapienza*, op. cit., p. 328;

Education (Malta) Vol. 4 N° 3, pp. 32-37.

Improving Students' Understanding: A Priority In Mathematics Education

Michael Buhagiar

Introduction

The Maltese National Minimum curriculum (NMC) (primary level) speaks of "the satisfaction to be derived from the achievement of success in learning" and lays down that "tests and examinations ... ought to be used by the teachers as tests of understanding and by the children as an opportunity to show their talents" (Education Department, 1990, pp. V-VI), while the secondary level NMC sets as one of the aims of secondary education "the training of the young mind in the pursuit of knowledge and reason" (Department of Information, 1990a, p. 587). Ironically, the NMC's recommendations are expected, rather naively, to function within the existing educational structures characterised as they are by examinations with selectivity in mind[1]. In this article I contend that even though "understanding" may have become today a fashionable educational term, what actually goes on in class is not as rosy as some would like us to believe. Moreover, I suggest that the prevailing present mentality of equating educational success with examinations pass rates should gradually subside in favour of greater emphasis on the processes within.

How real is Children's Mathematical Understanding?

Junior lyceums provide education for some of the more academically inclined students in the Maltese secondary schools.[2] Notwithstanding this, when I recently discussed the concept of area with some form three junior lyceum female classes[3], most students, irrespective of their mathematical achievement as measured by conventional tests, gave unsatisfactory answers when asked to elaborate on the meaning of area. Many opted to recite formulas (eg. length x breath; half base x height; etc.) and only a few were able to associate area to a measure applied to indicate the extent of a surface. None could recall the basic principle involved in area measurement: namely, the selection of a certain area (say, 1 cm^2 or 1 m^2 just to mention some standard measures) called the unit, and the definition of area measurement as the number of such units needed to completely cover the object to be measured.

The situation with male classes should not differ significantly from this[4]. Keeping in mind that area measurement is introduced in the school mathematics curriculum from as early as year IV in the primary school and appears throughout the rest of the primary and secondary mathematics syllabi, the above students' responses give weight to Hart's opinion (1978, p. 38) that "topics which one feels have been covered ad nauseam in school still seem not to be quite understood". Similarly, Buhagiar (1990) concludes that a remarkable number of form one state school students have still not yet come to terms with some basic measurement concepts and skills met at primary level. For instance, he reports that 11% of these students lack the ability to use a ruler: instead of counting the gaps these children count the endpoints, or they start counting at 1 not 0. Such findings should undoubtedly induce the conscientious mathematics teacher to ponder on the real nature of the students' mathematical understanding.

The crux of the matter seems to gravitate on what constitutes understanding. Many mathematical educators have different views about it. For instance, Haylock (1982) maintains that to understand something means to make cognitive connections. The more connections the learner can make between new and past experiences, the greater and more useful the understanding. On his part, Skemp (1976) describes two types of understanding: instrumental and relational. Understanding is instrumental if the learner knows how a skill is performed but not why it works, and relational if both are known. Later, Skemp (1979) adds logical understanding which he distinguishes from relational understanding. Logical understanding is evidenced by the ability to demonstrate that statements follow of logical necessity.

Judging by the previously cited responses, the level of understanding of the concept of area of the vast majority of form three junior lyceum students is apparently in Skemp's (1976) terminology still instrumental. I believe that the situation with area secondary school students would be identical to this, if not worse[5].

Apparently, most students can select the right area formula and work out its algorithm correctly while having only a rather vague idea, if any at all, of what area is. The cognitive connections prescribed in Haylock's (1982) definition of understanding are even less evident. For instance, only a handful of the students with whom I discussed the topic were even remotely aware of the close connection between the area furmula for rectangles (l x b) and one of the area formulas for triangles (0.5 [b x h]).

Understanding as Distinct from Manipulation of Formulas

Area measurement is just a case in point: daily contact with students of different age-groups doing various mathematical topics reveals that they are apparently learning many mathematical skills at the rote manipulation level. Consequently, computational algorithms have frequently little meaning even for those students who can successfully apply them. Mathematical formulas are not seen by students as neat conclusions to mathematical reasoning based on logical steps, but rather as heavenly manna sent to help alleviate their woes. Although it may be that students are often exposed to mathematics in unconnected lumps without any reference to the holistic nature of mathematical knowledge, it appears that formulas are perceived by students in a vacuum irrespective of whether or not these are so presented. The research project "Children's Mathematical Frameworks" (CMF) concludes that even when students aged 10-11 years are guided to arrive at a mathematical formula through concrete experiences and adequate tabulation, in three months time they are unlikely to link the formula to the tabulation (Hart, 1987).

Children's ability to manipulate formulas and work out algorithms correctly without any or little understanding of the underlying concepts is one of the problems which I feel mathematics educators should address. But do mathematics teachers actually look upon this as a problem? I dare say that many teachers consider this more of a strategy than a problem to be solved. Perhaps this is the teachers' way of beating the Maltese educational system which tends to set the same levels for all students irrespective of personal abilities[6]. It may be, as suggested by Brown (1982), that teachers are teaching by rote in an attempt to compensate for children's lack of understanding. While questioning the wisdom of this policy, Brown (1982, p. 460) sustains that the best strategy with low achievers is to "abandon all teaching of routine skills ... (and) ... to concentrate instead on building up a network of mathematical relationships (schemas) ... with the use, where necessary of concrete materials ...". Teachers should keep in mind that although rote learning can lead to instrumental understanding, it neither helps students to make connections nor to develop relational understanding, let alone logical understanding.

I fear that Maltese teachers are unlikely to put into practice Brown's (1982) advice as our highly competitive educational system, geared towards "success" at the 11+ and 16+ examinations, hardly allows time for "... practical ... experience ... the most effective means by which understanding of mathematics can develop ..." (Cockroft Report, 1983, p. 84). The Education Department's "policy of continuous school-based assessment of students, *complemented* (my emphasis) with national end of-year examinations" (Department of Information, 1990b, p. 87), may sound unfamiliar to many a teacher's ear given the present educational set-up which tends to sacrifice understanding for the sake of attainment.

Assessing Understanding

On examinations, the NMC (secondary level) regulates that "every effort should be made to introduce cumulative assessments and to play down the negative aspects of examinations" (Department of Information, 1990a, p. 589). While one can argue that this indicates the education department's dissatisfaction with its own examination system, I believe that our outdated assessment system, which rewards teaching based on drills and rote learning to the detriment of mathematical concept development, is mainly to blame for children's lack of understanding. The continued improvement of teachers' pre-service and in-service education will not have much value unles complemented by a system conducive to concept learning.

As an initial step I suggest that the present conventional assessment methods should be eliminated in favour of the gradual development of diagnostic testing instruments in line with the "Chelsea Diagnostic Mathematics Tests" developed by the "Concepts in Secondary Mathematics and Science" (CSMS) research project (Hart, 1981)[7]. Rather than the computational skills of the students, the CSMS test papers examine the understanding of the processes and underlying ideas. This will offer the mathematics teachers the possibility of concentrating on concept development, relegating

computational skills to a definitely secondary role. One may even consider whether oral testing, which the NMC (secondary level) suggests for inclusion in languages and the normative core subjects (ie., religious education; civics and environmental attitudes; and sport) (Department of Information, 1990a), can be adopted in mathematics examinations.

In spite of Skemp's (1982, pp. 25-26) warning that "in general, concepts of a higher order than those which a person already has cannot be communicated to him by a definition, but only by collecting, for him to experience, suitable examples", many mathematics teachers are rushing through the syllabus splashing formulas and definitions all over in a fervent desire to finish it on time for the all important annual examination. All this, when definitions are supposed to add precision to the boundaries of a concept already formed, and to state explicitly its relation to other concepts. Ideally, children should become active learners as they develop their own understanding of those mathematical concepts held by mathematics educators and by the students themselves to be relevant to the present and future needs of the students.

Teachers cannot successfully help students improve their mathematical understanding unless they have insights of students' thinking in relation to the concepts being developed. For this purpose, Bell et al. (1986) recommend the Piagetian method of asking a child probing questions about a carefully chosen situation, which they claim to be very powerful. Woodward (1982) illustrates such a situation: Heidi, described by her teacher as an excellent seventh grade mathematics student, could calculate the area of rectangular shapes by using the appropriate formula and algorithm. The child's ability to manipulate the formula could easily have led her teacher to believe that she had understood the concept of area had Heidi not subsequently uttered a seemingly insignificant statement which suggested otherwise[8]. The teacher wisely acted upon this statement and her follow-up incisive questions revealed that not only did the child not associate the area of a shape to its size, but that she could not even functionally distinguish between area and perimeter.

The "Successful" Mathematics Teacher

In a world where certification does not necessarily imply learning, the "successful" mathematics teachers are regrettably those who manage to develop easily memorizable drill schemes in a bid to coach their students to tackle the usual type problems. A final rush through the past papers, something which students have become accustomed to and are likely to demand, seems to crown their glory. Drills, I would say, do have their place in the mathematics curriculum as "some concepts can be introduced from exercises that ostentatiously have their origins in drill exercises, that initially appear to have no connection to the concept involved" (Olson, 1979, p. 399). It is rather the drill for drill's sake of the traditional curriculum that should be replaced by greater emphasis on understanding.

Teachers who bother to look beyond examinations to delve into the realm of mathematical reasoning hardly ever get the praise they deserve. For one thing, they are unlikely to finish their syllabus by the end of the academic year. Faced with the delicate dilemma of deciding between what they know is right but is unlikely to bear fruit given the system, and what they know to be wrong but is more likely to deliver the goods, an uncomfortable balance between the two extreme positions is usually sought: concepts are presented briefly with formulas and rote computations following almost immediately. What usually ensues is a "superficial coverage of topics ... (which) ... leaves students with little sense of understanding and accomplishment, fewer opportunities for problem solving and less development of skills" (Bybee et al., 1990, p. 93)[9].

The form three students referred to at the beginning of this article, when hard pressed, did vaguely recollect images of themselves finding areas of flat shapes by counting the number of squares. However, they could not relate the counting of the squares to the area formulas. This reflects their uneven transition from the practical and concrete mathematics, the very basis of concept development, to the formal and abstract mathematics, the type of mathematics usually assessed by conventional examinations. The resulting mathematical lacunas, which should have been avoided in the first place, although often identified, are hardly ever remedied later on.

A Mathematics Programme based on Understanding

Richards (1990) cautions that mathematics programmes should be designed so that children work from their own points of understanding. Regrettably, the pedagogical dictum of "moving from the known to the unknown" is often

neglected by the many mathematics teachers who consider themselves primarily, if not solely, responsible for the coverage of the present year's syllabus irrespective of students' mathematical background. Are these teachers to blame? Each year's mathematical syllabus is already too vast in itself to allow teachers the necessary time to devote to the much needed remedial work. Teachers' efforts are further hampered by a syllabus which at times exposes children to mathematical topics incompatible with their level of cognitive development.

Actually, this all boils down to the curriculum "depth vs breath" debate. Logic dictates that if children need more time to learn concepts than is presently allotted during the scholastic year, either fewer concepts should be introduced, or else a leveling down of content takes place. While an answer to this delicate dilemma is, I feel, beyond the scope of this article, one augurs that all ensuing debates centre round children's understanding. Educational planners should keep in mind that "less may mean more" if what is meant by "less" is that as fewer topics are introduced the teachers would eventually have more time on their hands as to be able to direct their teaching towards concept development and provide the much needed remedial education. Providing students from the early stages with a good grounding in mathematical knowledge would undoubtedly accelerate their future studies.

The postponement of the first official examinations until the end of the fourth primary year offers teachers in the first three years the necessary time and tranquillity to concentrate on the development of mathematical concepts. It would indeed be unforgivable were these teachers to stick to their traditional methods in presenting mathematics as a collection of often unconnected skills and techniques, as I suspect some still do, even though they are give this opportunity. More than anything else, people's unwillingness to change often emanates from the fear that the unknown holds. The education department can help in this respect by regularly holding in-service courses. Besides presenting the latest methodologies, such courses should function as a medium which encourages debate on the educational, philosophical and sociological aspects of reforms. A consulted and informed teaching force is more likely to accept and work in favour of planned changes.

The primary and secondary mathematics curriculum should seek to address the needs of all students; whilst stretching each individual student's potential to the full, it should guarantee the minimum acceptable level of numeracy for all[10]. A curriculum which is primarily, if not exclusively, geared towards student's preparation for further mathematical activity, may eventually only benefit that minority which actually continues with its mathematical studies. Our educational system, regardless of the well-sounding phrases (eg., the primary and secondary NMC) does not in practice cater for the individual student except for some extreme cases (eg., support teaching in year III). It has for years promoted, maybe unintentionally, the more able students to the detriment of all the rest, even though it may well be that the very gifted succeed in spite of their schooling. For instance, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) (1980, p. 18) feels that "the student most neglected, in terms of realizing full potential, is the gifted student of mathemtaics", while Sinkinson (1982) argues that the abler students, who usually employ "own methods" when solving mathematics problems instead of the formal "thought" ones, are somewhat penalised by a system which looks unfavourably on "child methods" and is more likely to accept the formal thought methods.

Within state schools, albeit the need for restructuring and reform are so evident, isolated efforts by the individual teacher, however competent and well-meaning, can actually jeopardise students' attainment notwithstanding the considerable gains in mathematical understanding. Of its very nature, Malta's highly centralised educational system forbids individual initiative. In this respect, secondary private schools are at an advantage. They are in a better position to organise their teaching to suit the personal needs of their students, even though they eventually have to face the 16+ examinations, something which I fear tends to dictate their teaching methods in much the same way as it does for the state schools. Primary private schools without access to secondary education within their own system are similarly affected in their educational efforts by the 11+ examinations.

The Reflective Practitioner

The views expressed within this article might sound familiar to many mathematics teachers as they are likely to have been repeatedly debated within the four walls of many a staffroom. The hitch of the situation is that this is where the debate usually ends. The numerous "reforms" thrown down teachers' throats over the years have reduced teachers to a seemingly helpless lot. As a

consequence, teachers tend to neglect one of the primary duties towards the community: in conjunction with parents and other interested community members, teachers can form part of a catalyst force urging for reforms. Granted that reforms in Malta only materialise with the Education Department's blessings, history has shown that such reforms stand a better chance of success if they are accepted by and reflect the needs of the parties concerned[11]. Teachers should and ought to be consulted on all matters regarding their immediate and related areas of interest. The "slot-filler" mentality in which teachers are just numbers to be juggled about according to the latest rules of the game ought to stop to be replaced by system based on collective bargaining leading to fruitful agreements.

While eagerly awaiting the implementation of the much publicised 1988 Education Act's calls for school autonomy and decentralisation, a parallel line of action ought to ensue: conscious efforts should be directed at changing teachers' current passive mentality into a more reflective and active one. The reflective practitioner, Van Manen (1991, p. 153) contends, is a "professional who reflects in action through constant decision making ... guided by the theoretical and practical principles of his or her discipline - even though these principles may be operating in a more or less tacit fashion". Reflective participation, even though restricted by the nature of our centralised system, is somehow possible within the four walls of the classroom where the Maltese teacher enjoys considerable autonomy. However, as soon as the teacher steps out of this domain all initiatives of participation are immediately blocked, and any efforts by teachers to break through this barrier are looked upon unfavourably and may be even interpreted as a treat to school authority. Presently, teacher's participation in the running of their schools is limited to yearly elections of their representatives on the school councils. These councils, more often than not, do not, and cannot, function properly handicapped as they are by gross financial limitations and no real decision-making power[12]. This is hardly the ideal setting in which teachers can participate as reflective practitioners.

Planning towards the Future

Although not all Maltese mathematics educators may agree on the direction towards which to steer our energies, I believe that all concur that curricular changes are needed rather urgently. These changes, however, can only be effective if implanted into an educational system conducive to their practical application - something which our system definitely is not. One hopes that frank discussions among all interested parties would lead to national educational policies based on the widest possible consensus geared at improving children's understanding. Richardson (1988) warns that unless the focus is shifted from performance to understanding, teachers will be interfering in, rather than helping with,the development of mathematical concepts in children. It is high time that Maltese curriculum planners and teachers heed this admonition. Basically, it entails a quality leap of looking beyone the question "What can this child do?" to "What does this child understand?". The forthcoming setting up of the Secondary Education Certificate Examination (SEC) in mathematics by the University of Malta, provided due consideration is given to assessing children's understanding, may eventually prove the right opportunity to start gradually building anew[13].

Notes

1.Bezzina (1991) argues that unless the NMC alters the way schools function, something which he contends it does not, the whole exercies (ie., the implementation of the NMC) would eventually prove futile.

2.Figures published by the Department of Information (1990b, p. 87) show that about 75% of the total year VI population (state & private) applied for the May 1990 junior lyceum entrance examinations, 43.6% of the entrants were successful. This percentage represents approximately 32.7% of total age group.

3.These classes, five in all, are taught mathematics by the author in a female junior lyceum. In this particular school,form three students are grouped into classes according the their option choices. Usually, classes are of mixed ability. The author feels that the classes referred to in this article (5 classes out of a total of 10 form three classes) are representative of the mathematical ability spread of the form three population of this school.

4.Buhagiar (1990) concludes from a study on Maltese form one state school students that the performance of male and female students on area concepts is comparable.

5.Suffice it to mention that the Schools Council Low Attainers in Mathematics Project and HMI school surveys suggest that the practice of routine skills is given the highest priority with low attainers (Brown, 1982).

6.Notwithstanding the rigid streaming meant to permit all students to move at their own pace, by the end of the academic year all students are expected rather illogically to have practically covered the same ground.

7.For detailed information about the purposes and uses of these tests see Hart et al. (1985).

8.Heidi calculated correctly the area of two given gardens and established that the two areas were equal. However, she still thought that one garden was bigger than the other.

9.Although Bybee et al.'s (1990) article actually refers to the science curriculum, the author feels that their conclusions are equally applicable to the mathematics curriculum.

10.The meaning attached to "numeracy" here is as defined by the Cockroft Report (1983, paragraph 39). The report rejects the notion (found in many submissions) that numeracy merely describes the ability to do basic calculations. Instead it should

include feeling "at home" with using numbers, and to be able to understand their use by others.

11.Consider the failure of the comprehensive system. Introduced in Malta in 1972 it was definitely dropped in 1981 with the opening of the first junior lyceums heralding the return of selectivity.

12.School councils are regulated by section IV of the 1988 Education act (Department of Information, 1988, pp. 282-283).

13.The first Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) examination in mathematics by the University of Malta is to be held in May/June 1992.

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Book Review

Godfrey Baldacchino

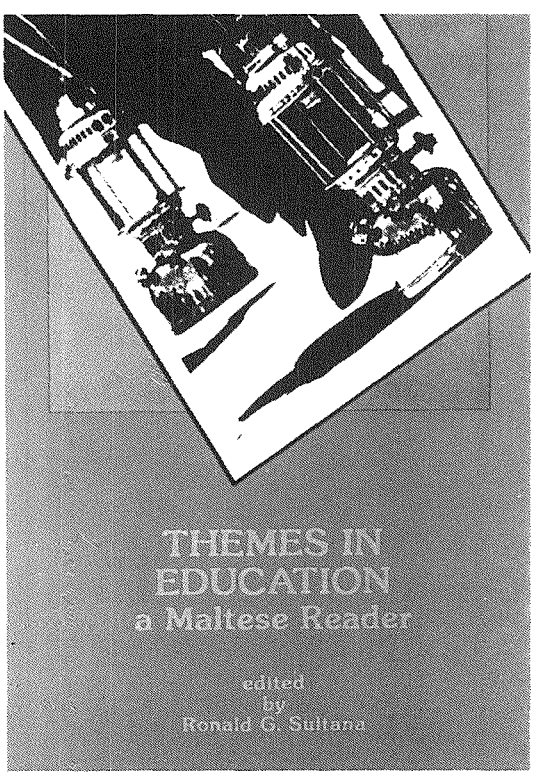
Ronald G Sultana, Ed.: *Themes in Education: A Maltese Reader*, Msida, Malta, Mireva Publications 1991 xxv + 297pp + bibliography Lm6.95, I.S.B.N. 9-781870 - 579087

"Teacher: *Page 26 number 14. Pay attention, please. Alison will you read? (She does) Now how much have I got Roberta?*
Roberta: Lm36.26.
Teacher: *How many articles? So our answer is articles. Roberta is stuck.*" (p 290)

Nothing could be more trivial. A simple slice of life which is repeated every day, with some variations, in the world's classrooms. It is a reality so common that it encourages an appealing naivete', a perfunctory abandonment to the visible trappings, the "reality" of the situation. Asking oneself "What is going on here?" may appear to be disarmingly simple and obvious. Yet, a critical immersion into such and similar social situations would reveal a hitherto invisible drama, a nexus of tensions, forces and contradictions which influence the structures, process and people involved. Culled with the help of an "educational imagination" (*pace* Wright Mills), there is usually much more to trite social cameos than meets the eye.

From Common Sense to Good Sense

It is with this primary charge of problematizing - meeting the challenge of moving from complacent common sense to critical good sense - that a team of academics associated with the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta have brought to light an edited collection of papers which address a selection of key themes in the theory and practice of education. The volume brings to bear the complimentary research interests of Faculty staff, teased out as these are with the corroborative support of various secondary texts, self-executed primary research projects and framed within the organized discipline of educational and social theory. A useful and supplementary source of data is a selection of the mostly unpublished, undergraduate and (since 1990) graduate work carried out under supervision by Faculty students over the years.



Global Attributes

Before venturing into detail, I would single out two particularly important general attributes in which this text definitely breaks new ground: The creation of a customized professional textbook for the training of Maltese student teachers at tertiary education; and, following on this, the firm rooting of the publication in Maltese data and Maltese situations, with the proper theoretical and comparative baggage to contextualise "what is going on here".

Underlying Philosophy

The inspiration for the text is drawn from the circuit of praxis - That all learning begins with practice; one learns by doing; one reflects intelligently on performance, generalising and conceptualising from the experience and using this new found knowledge and insight to experiment and perhaps refine future practice. Central to this process is both the vital role of grounded and therefore relevant, "practical theory", as well as the critical investigation of what is tacit and implicit in such practices. It is the latter which distinguishes the reflexive educator from the practitioner impervious of the implications of a social predicament in which s/he

unwittingly belongs as actor, product and victim. This technique, which is described in the book's introduction by Paul Hirst, distinguished author and now a retired Professor of Education, informs the pedagogy pioneered at the University of Cambridge and carried over by the Faculty of Education at Tal-Qroqq.

Reviewing the Main Corpus

The rest of the volume consists of eleven papers, penned by nine different authors. The sequence is not haphazard but it follows "a basic pedagogical principle whereby readers are invited to engage firstly in articles which are non-technical in nature, but which encourage critical reflection on educational practice generally.."; (secondly) by "papers increasingly engaged in higher levels of theorizing and more abstract principles of a general nature drawing on the foundational disciplines of philosophy, sociology and psychology.....; (thirdly and lastly) by "educational theory which is more firmly grounded in Maltese data and which demand skills in the appraisal and the critical interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data" (p.xiv). Let me play the game by the editor's rules and review each contribution within its purported sectional context.

General Reflections on School Practice

Ronald Sultana's launching essay on *motivation* confronts the pedagogical foundations of process-centered stimulus-response theory (representative of a "How do we lead an individual to learn something?" stance) with those of child-centered, humanistic education (grounded in the tenet that everybody wants to, and can, learn). The author makes no bones about his own philosophical standpoint and forcefully identifies the ethical and even practical preferences of the latter approach in inducing contemporary educational practice. Tempering enthusiasm with cold reality, Sultana comes up with what Fenech later calls a "low visibility class" (p.52) of so-called: "uneducables" as an example of an empirical context which approximates the humanistic and motivating brand of education for which he has made his case. I would be the first to agree that a number of the so-called structural impediments to schooling can be progressively managed, adapted and transformed by committed educators, especially when these are collaborating on such an overtly political task (see also Sultana on this in page 252). I'm afraid however that the selected example may read as a declaration of failure, rather than as powerful evidence of the practical success of the preferred motivational theory. How indeed - one may challenge the author - does a more "typical" classroom environment, with its teacher-student ratios, ossified bureaucratic setup, prescribed syllabi and exam orientation, match up to the ideals of liberatory education?

Kenneth Wain's contribution examines, in a lucid unfolding style, the role and nature of *discipline* in the classroom. The essay exposes the political, philosophical and moral considerations which underlay the practice of teacher discipline, its relationship (as cause, effect, as a means or an end in itself?) to "order" and what order itself implies.

The argument examines different forms of discipline and bases for teacher authority and contrasts these with the political morality which is supposed to characterise a (morally desirable) democratic society. Perhaps Wain here stops short of assessing whether indeed a democratic society in practice actively propound the mobilising values with which he ascribes it, rather than sticking to the purely socialising ones, even of the self-regulatory brand. Democratic institutions may only pay lip service to the noble virtues of self-actualisation. The hidden agenda, as it works out, is not necessarily a dysfunction of the system's democratic character. That "authoritarian schools cannot be appropriate training grounds for the future citizens of democracies" need not necessarily read as a critique of autocratic school practices; it may spell out a discrepancy - perhaps unintentional and inevitable? - between the theory and practice of democratic life, which schools in a sense cannot help but mirror and reproduce.

Joseph Fenech's contribution is a (perhaps too formalistic and mechanistic) perspective of the *decision making/planning process* and of the different kinds of decision making practices. The author, by reproducing a selection of classroom events, drives home the imperative of acknowledging the ongoing construction of meaning, conscientizing the teacher alias decision-maker of the subliminal and unconscious motives and rationale behind his/her choices, pregnant as these are with implications on self, situation and students.

Discipline Grounded Abstract Theorization

Classroom talk is the subject of investigation in the article by Charles Mifsud. The paper is a well-balanced account of the peculiar patterns of

classroom discourse and the rationale behind their investigation, hovering confidently between a literature review and perusal of locally gleaned case material. The author spices the account with a useful discussion on problems associated with research methods and design. The awareness of practical technical limitations in educational field research is one vital issue which other authors fail to address head on. Sadly, a key consideration in understanding language in the context of educational practice in Malta - the investigation of the English-Maltese dual fused code - is notable in its absence. It is nevertheless an obvious, prime candidate for empirical investigation, and stands out sharply in the extract from an audio-recording of a year 5 English(?) lesson (pages 71-2). This is not even hinted at by Mifsud. In the whole volume, only a "note" by Darmanin (p 297) addressed this "theme".

Posing the question "What are schools for?", Charles Farrugia provides a balanced and comprehensive sweep of *schools and their curricula*. After a somewhat lengthyish preamble (which would have been quite comfortable were the paper being presented in splendid isolation), the author digs his heels into the subject matter, and explores the multiple directions in which schools purportedly seek to develop people, an agenda not without its inbuilt contradictions and antitheses. A quite insightful and unexpected surprise here is the personal statement, almost confession, by the author of his guiding and inspiring educational philosophy. Such a declaration of what is usually unacknowledged (and absent in the other articles of the volume) increases the richness of the piece.

Joseph Grixti (the one former member of the Faculty among the volume contributors and now working in Australia) negotiates the tightrope between diagnostic/formative and summative/exam-based *assessment*. With a series of counter-proposals to the widespread position that exams are necessary, he builds a case for continuous assessment as the alternative, diagnostic tool. His is a damning critique of examinations and of their effects on schooling and students. Yet, scratching away the idealist rhetoric, Grixti may be hard put to defend the empirical validity of his alternative option: continuous assessment may also be abused of; it may be perhaps even more prone to manipulation and personalisation. Nevertheless, continuous assessment may itself end up perpetrating the age-old social inequalities - not least because of the diagnostic procedures utilised, the teacher perceptions and ideologies which infuse the hidden curriculum. But this is in itself an invitation for further beckoning research initiatives.

Joseph Mifsud comes next with a second article on *assessment.* As with Grixti, the underlying position here is that "assessment and teaching practices for all pupils must shift from a purely exam-oriented assessment tradition to an ecological (and therefore evaluative) one" (p 126) even though remaining aware that "formal examinations... are the most efficient and simple strategy for selecting and excluding students: (p 120). I feel that the focus of this article shifts uneasily from fieldwork results to theoretical pronouncements and policy recommendations. It appears most valuable when looked at as a select review of literature on assessment models.

Educational Theory steeped in Maltese Data

Mary Darmanin's first contribution deals with the issue of *gender and subject choice*, focusing on the production of gender differentials in Maltese secondary schools. Darmanin discusses authoritatively how gender issues are influenced by class considerations and how these in turn stamp such matters as subject choice, exam results and career prospects among school children; the promotion prospects and headship and counselling placements of teachers as well as curricular design and text bias. The author places these issues within the wider context of gender identity construction and reproduction in school, framed as these are by the invisibility of women in most social situations except for their uncontested colonisation of a few, invariably domestic, roles.

Partly on the basis of the same fieldwork and database, Frank Ventura indulges in an attempt at assessing the reasons and influences (apart from ability) behind the differential choice of science subjects between boys and girls in Malta. The interplay between *Gender and Science* is based on performances and GCE results in different schools, broken down by gender and science subject over the secondary school age continuum. Ventura's analysis here is more technical and descriptive than Darmanin's, and emerges as the most scientific paper in the volume in both style and analytic design.

Next, Ronald Sultana tackles the debate about *class and educational achievement,* highlighting the relevant issues by drawing on a variety of empirical research work and locating

Maltese educational practice within its parameters. He comes out strongly and uncompromisingly in a crucial area of research which he has helped pioneer locally, addressing whether education in Malta has influenced, if at all, the quality and nature of class boundaries. His theoretical review of "Why working class kids fail" is systematically elegant and pregnant with challenging propositions. In the process, he suggests further enticing areas of local educational research, especially of the diachronic, "origins and destinations" type. My main concern here is with a rather uncritical interpretation of the concept of social class: Sultana is aware that there are different contending criteria for class identity as well as different premises for ranking social inequalities. Whether this is a case of "Am-Brit fallacy" remains yet to be empirically tested in Malta.

Mary Darmanin's second article on *schooling and class brings* the volume to a close. This article is a breadth of fresh air with its ethnographic focus. At last, here we have real-life teachers (albeit with unduly pompous non real-life names) who occupy center stage and act their part as the interface-or should one say chalkface? - of various constraints and as definers of their clientele, rather than anonymous numbers or cardboard types acting as faithful and submissive reproducers of "the system". The author/investigator is a shrewd observer of classroom practices with a forceful pen (though at times convoluted grammatical constructions). The article exemplifies the situational embedding of different pedagogies resulting from a complex set of features including teacher biography and career, pupil intake and ability, institutional bias and resource base...

A Critical Overview

I will not be accused of missing the wood for the trees, and it is here that perhaps my main criticism must be levelled. Firstly as is common with so many edited volumes locally and overseas, the articles do not readily conform to the same academic standard. Apparently, different authors had different audiences in mind when writing their contribution; and the editor could perhaps have managed a better standardisation of the final product. It is perhaps also an editorial sin not to have economised on bibliographical entries. Footnotes are laden with the dead weight of full citations which are then reproduced in the final bibliography. This would have saved space and made the text more concise, less bulky (and less costly?) One also fails to understand the logic behind the inclusion of two articles on assessment and another two on gender in education, the latter even sharing a similar database, leading to a duplication of remarks and data. (For example, compare Darmanin's Table IX on page 180 with Ventura's Table 1 on page 184). I am willing to accommodate both Sultana's and Darmanin's articles on social class not so much for their distinct focus but because of even more distinct, indeed complementary, methodologies. This volume admittedly delves into "themes in education", and makes no claim to being comprehensive. But a sharper focus would have permitted a problematisation exercise on still other relevant themes. Many are already suggested in the text itself. I could add a few myself: An ethnography of pupils (a regrettably invisible voice and force in the volume); and assessment of pedagogy at the University; issues in post-formal adult education. Finally, why should such a prestigious publication be accompanied by a modest number of (regrettably often strategically placed) typographical errors? Did you know that 7% of interviewed private school boys want to become "pilates" (p 153) and 4% of girls "lawyers" (p 152)?

Rising to the Challenge

But these are petty errors which will no doubt be corrected prior to the next print run. I am probably now being unduly wicked and my spite may be mistakenly interpreted out of proportion: Although - or perhaps I should say because? - the editor has thought fit to insert in the text that I am his good friend and colleague - I will only give credit where it is due. I cannot thus be hesitant in recommending this volume wholeheartedly. It stands out as a major initiative in Maltese academic collaboration not easily paralleled; it justifies the recourse to students projects under supervision; it is a professional example of a self made text, a compendium of handy "practical theory" for the budding teacher; a handbook of theoretically grounded "themes" based on contemporary Maltese educational practices to concerned academics, a resourceful exponent of the culture of informed inquiry and scrutiny which reaffirms the relevance of academic pursuits when addressed to the nitty-gritty issues of the real world.

The text is exactly what Roberta needs. It can gather and us unstuck: shaking adult students and concerned educators out of the reverie of meaningless and chaotic routine; widening our appreciation of the complexities of the trivia of schooling and classroom practice.

Book Notice

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Notes on Contributors

MICHAEL BUHAGIAR is a part-time assistant lecturer in tha area of Mathematics Education at the Faculty of Education, the University of Malta. He holds B.Ed(Hons.) and M.Ed degrees from the same University, and is a member of a panel entrusted with the drawing up of a syllabus for the Secondary Education Certificate Examination (SEC) in Mathematics by the University of Malta. Presently, he is teaching mathematics at Sir Adrian Dingli Junior Lyceum for girls.

PROFESSOR WILFRED CARR teaches philosophy in the Division of Educaton at Sheffield University. He is the author of numerous articles in educaton, and his book with Stephen Kemmis entitled *"Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research"* (Falmer Press, 1988) has become a best selling textbook in a number of countries. He recently edited another book for Falmer, entitled *"Quality in Education"*. Wilfred Carr has been invited to act as an external examiner in the Faculty of Education's philosophy programme.

MARK F. MONTEBELLO is visiting lecturer in ancient philosophy at the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, and at the Institute of Religious Studies. He holds degrees from the Maltese Dominican Studium, the University of Malta and the University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Urbe, Rome. He specialises in Plato's critique of conformism and conservatism in a closed society. He is currently preparing his doctorate, studying Plato's criterion for effectively distinguishing pathological from sympathological (charismatic) madness. He is a member of the Order of Preachers.

DOTT.sa MARIA PAOLA MORELLI carried out her graduate and post-graduate studies in Pedagogy in Italian Universities, and is currently engaged in doing further research on the emergence and development of pedagogical systems. She carried out research at the University of Malta from Februàry to June 1991, having been awarded a research grant by the Maltese Government and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Dott.sa Morelli's work in comperative education has been published in a number of specialised journals.

DR. JOHN P. PORTELLI is an Associate Professor at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. On completing his doctorate in philosophy, he was a lecturer at McGill University (1982-85) and Killam Post-doctoral Fellow at Dalhousie University. Since 1982 he has worked actively with teachers (in Montreal and Halifax) to promote and develop critical-reflective teaching via 'Doing Philosophy with Children'. His other major research interests include: the hidden curriculum and democratic classroom procedures, and possibilities and problems in critical/feminist pedagogy. He co-edited *"Philosophy of Education: Introductory Readings"* (1988) and *"Reason and Values in Education"* (forthcoming, 1992). From January to June 1992 he is Visiting Professor in the Department of Educational Studies, the University of Malta.

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