
BOOK REVIEW

Philosophy of education: An introduction, by T.W. Moore, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982.

T.W. Moore's book, in the words of the general editor - R.S. Peters - provides a suitably "clear and balanced" introduction to the philosophy of education and to the International Library series of which it is part. Certainly, given a particular conception of philosophy and of philosophy of education, Peters' assessment of Moore's introduction is completely justified. Conceived as an initiation into the "worthwhileness" of analytic philosophy of education, Moore's contribution is everything one might expect of it. Indeed, the influence of the "London" school, of which Moore might be said to be a disciple, conditions most of what follows. The preoccupation with concepts and with conceptual distinctions - between "teaching", "educating" and "indoctrination" for instance - and the arguments Moore constructs to maintain liberal-analytic conclusions, all, in the main, might have been accurately predicted. They represent, so to speak, Moore's stock-taking of the achievements of twenty or so years under the analytic paradigm since its inception by Peters and Hirst.

To be sure in Moore's hands there has been a general loosening up of the analytic approach. Various historical positions once treated with disdain from the ahistorical vantage point of the analytic approach are readmitted to the realm of educational study to be treated as competing "theories", and the fruits of analysis - conceptual truths - are not pursued with quite the same vigour. Nevertheless, Moore's Introduction clearly stands in the analytic mode and can be seen to fashion what are now familiar analytic products. A few examples are called for to illustrate the point.

The educated man considered as a worthwhile end in education is a basic assumption central to the logical structure of a general theory of education in Chapter Two. (To be fair, Moore supplements this account with a consideration of the assumptions about human nature underlying some "historically important theories of education" - those of Hobbes and Skinner on the one hand, and Froebel and Dewey, on the other, which are taken to reflect a distinction between mechanistic and organic views of man). Chapter Three is then concerned with the type of knowledge required to bring about the educated man. The chapter is prefaced with a discussion of the nature of knowledge - rational, empiricist accounts are briefly considered together with the Kantian synthesis. The distinction between "knowing that" and "knowing how" surfaces and there is some discussion of the classical justified true belief account. Then follows a review of the "major" theories of the curriculum - Hirst's, Oakeshott's and the utilitarian view. The sociology of knowledge thesis receives a paragraph. The conclusion is that various kinds of knowledge - "useful knowledge, knowledge likely to produce happiness, knowledge required to produce a rational mind, knowledge which turns a human animal into a human being" - are all "acceptable to some extent and that taken together they provide an adequate justification of the traditional curriculum," (p. 64). There are further chapters on teaching and educating; education, morals and religion; and the social philosophy of education.

The main and fatal flaw of this introduction as one to philosophy of education is that it is entirely dependent upon the acceptance of the analytic approach as the approach in the philosophy of education. Although it is a view offered "cautiously" (p. 1), Moore does not argue for the philosophical assumptions on which the view is based. Rather it is offered without a consideration of either the criticisms that have accumulated over the years - or the alternatives that have emerged.

It is, then, highly partisan, and serves only to perpetuate the myth that there is one and only one “true” approach in the philosophy of education.

Moore’s book has little original to offer to a body of literature already over subscribed.

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