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BOOK REVIEW

**Introductory studies in philosophy of education**, edited by Philip Snelders and Colin Wringle, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982-83.

**Education and the Value of Knowledge**, by M. A. B. Degenhardt.

**Can We Teach Children to be Good?**, by Roger Straughan.

**Means and Ends in Education**, by Brenda Cohen.

A new series entitled *Introductory Studies in Philosophy of Education* has been launched under the joint-editorship of Philip Snelders and Colin Wringle. The aim of the series is "to provide a collection of short, readable works" that are both relevant and accessible to teachers who have no philosophical background. Each book will start from a practical problem in education, and having canvassed the main philosophical approaches to it, will end by suggesting "a coherent standpoint even when it does not claim to provide a solution", (Editors foreword). To date, three titles in the series have been published: *Education and the Value of Knowledge* by M.A.B. Degenhardt; *Can We Teach Children to be Good?* by Roger Straughan; and *Means and Ends in Education* by Brenda Cohen. No prospective titles of forthcoming books have yet been advertised but the general impetus of the series can be gauged quite clearly from those already published.

One might describe the series as a sort of post-Peters/Hirst, analytic philosophy of education which has retained certain features of the traditional model while dispensing with others. While each book attempts to deal with a substantive educational problem or issue in a way that implicitly seems to recognize limitations of conceptual analysis, the content and style of each is distinctively of the analytic mould. Thus, although Cohen, for instance, in her approach to the techniques and activities of learning and teaching, recognizes that it is preferable not to "shelter behind semantic distinctions" - which is, in effect, to substitute "a linguistic problem for a moral problem", (p. 2) - her bibliography, content and style reflects the continuing influence of this methodology. In fact, all three publications display a certain British philosophical insularity which springs, in part, from the narrow considerations of Peters, Hirst and their philosophical associates, and, in part, from a general lack of acknowledgement of the American and Australasian literature. To give but one example, in Degenhardt's discussion of theories on the value of knowledge neither Michael Young's work nor that of Kevin Harris or Michael Matthews, warrants even a mention. Certainly, within the confines of such a narrow outlook each book, indeed, lives up to the general criteria mentioned by the series' editors; but given the opportunity of establishing a new series in these times of economic instability it is difficult to understand why the editors and individual contributors have not seen fit to lay out more carefully the general orientation, or to address the question of alternatives in the philosophy of education. One might have thought that if a new publishing venture in philosophy of education was worth initiating, it would be worthwhile only in virtue of some overall "advance" in perspective. As it is, this reviewer is left with the impression that this series might easily become a misleading vanguard of a post-Peters analytic philosophy of education which will, through the institution of set texts, serve only to discourage critical reflection of the methodological inadequacies of the analytic paradigm in the next generation of students, and, thus, help prop up a failing conservatism.

These texts provide good introductions to the interests and concerns of the liberal-analytic conception of education, Within this paradigm they meet the stated aims of the editors in that they are short, readable, relevant and accessible. Each book includes approximately one hundred pages of text, with an additional bibliographic essay and index, and retails for \$12.25 (NZ).

In *Education and the Value of Knowledge*, Degenhardt deals in a straightforward way with a problem in curriculum justification: are there independently valid grounds for choosing a curriculum? Having introduced the problem in the first chapter, the author devotes himself to reviewing and criticising existing theories in the second, which comprises the bulk of the text. His treatment of naturalistic theories of justification is well-organized, running through various conceptions of humankind from "Rational Man" to "Imaginative Man" and "Man as Striver". There is, of course, reference to Hirst's view; to Peters on "worthwhile activities"; and to R. K. Elliott and J. P. White. Undoubtedly, the most interesting chapter is the final one which attempts to argue against the exhaustiveness of the old-age distinction between knowledge conceived of as means to an end, and as an end in itself. Here Degenhardt proposes a third kind of knowledge which falls into neither value category but helps us to determine our ends; through shaping our world view. Although the argument serves to endorse a traditional curriculum structure, Degenhardt suggests that its practical implications make necessary certain reforms in the teaching of traditional disciplines for "the guiding intention will be to teach that area in such a way that it helps people to work out a 'world view' or 'philosophy of life'" (p. 91).

Straughan's *Can We Teach Children to be Good?* starts from the familiar position that it is the function of philosophy to clarify the concepts used in formulating statements and arguments, and to examine the justifications offered for them. The author demonstrates the application of this general conception to moral discourse in the opening chapter by reference to what he calls the "moralistic argument" which concludes, in light of increasing permissiveness, lawlessness etc., and the decline in traditional values, that "standards of behaviour among the young have fallen and schools have therefore opted out of providing a clear moral lead," (p. 2). Straughan's approach is a meta-ethical one: in answer to the question, What does it mean to be good? (Chapter Two) he is led to emphasizing distinctions between an evaluative and descriptive sense of "moral", and between form and content. The latter distinction provides him with the structure for the next two chapters. In Chapter Three he examines the various ways in which philosophers have sought to describe the form of morality, (Hare's prescriptivism; Ayer's emotivism; Satre's existentialism; and something he calls "principle application") and investigates the implications of these views for the form of moral education. In Chapter Four, he repeats the exercise with the content of morality and moral education focusing on the various appeals made to authority, nature, human welfare, and reason to sanction certain sets of principles. The final chapter which addresses the question of the title in the light of the previous analyses, concludes that moral education is "of both a descriptive and an evaluative kind, can and should be tackled in a number of different ways," (p. 105) in a number of different contexts by both parents and teachers.

Brenda Cohen's *Means and Ends in Education* begins by distinguishing through a series of examples, three different approaches to the study of educational processes: instrumental, learner-oriented and liberal. These subsequently become the basis for the organization of the book. The first part consisting of three chapters in an examination of the behaviouristic approach running through classical conditioning, operant conditioning, the application of technology to the learning process and ending with a discussion of the concept of free will. Skinner is the central figure to whom reference is made on these issues. The learner-oriented approaches which make up the two chapters of the second part are considered in terms of discovery methods, and the notions of self-expression, self-direction and autonomy. Finally, in the third part, comprising two chapters, "Teaching, Training and Educating" and "Education and Indoctrination", reference is made to the work of Peters and Hirst. The conclusion is both a summary of the different assumptions underlying the various approaches and an apology for the liberal approach in terms of its ideal.

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