

PART - I

CHAPTER – 1

ON PHILOSOPHY, EDUCATION AND PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Philosophy and education are considered indispensable and necessary for the individual and for the society as well. Both have their problems to deal with. But, until philosophers and educators come to grips with the pressing practical problems of education in an open, pluralistic society, the philosophy of education will lie as a dead hand upon the schools. Practice unguided by theory is aimless and wandering, inconsistent and inefficient. The successful resolution of problems in education as elsewhere, always requires critical reflection and deliberative action.

So, education and philosophy are inextricably related in any society, for education is essentially a socio-philosophic enterprise. As a socio-philosophic enterprise education must be based on the root epistemological assumption that it is possible to have knowledge and the root axiological assumption that it is better to know than to be ignorant. It is a social enterprise because all societies deliberately attempt to transmit some collection of facts and information, skills and abilities, attitudes and values, to succeeding generations in the hope of achieving cultural endurance.

The problems of education are the problems of philosophy despite the anti-intellectual tendencies of some educators to condemn educational theory on the grounds that they are 'on the finishing line of educational practice' and have no time for such intellectual niceties as deciding whether they are doing what they could or should be doing. Education and philosophy are in a way, inseparable because they have the same end-wisdom and they have also the same means inquiry, which alone can lead to wisdom.

Though education and philosophy cannot be separated, either in theory or in practice, they can be distinguished. That is why philosophy of education is a distinct but not a separate discipline from either philosophy or education. It takes its problems from education and its methods from philosophy.

So, the question naturally arises about the nature of the two, philosophy and education. And also it may be asked what is the relationship of philosophy and education? In a sense the domain of philosophy is neatly categorized, and in this sense the realm of philosophy can be sub-divided into manageable proportions: metaphysics, axiology and epistemology.

Metaphysics or the theory of reality, is the name given to the philosophical attempt to grasp the ultimate or essential characteristic(s) of the universe in a simple yet all-inclusive manner. It is an attempt to answer the ontological question, "what there is"? So as to yield a unifying description of, and to give meaning to reality. Philosophy offers three major positions as to the sum of reality considered quantitatively. Some philosophers who admit that the furniture of the universe are infinite in the number of particulars, nevertheless claim that reality is reducible to but one principle. This is the idea of monism. Others argue that reality consists of two or more irreducible principles. Those who find themselves able to sort reality into two neat piles, neither more nor less, adhere to the principle of dualism; while those who are unable or unwilling to reduce reality to one or two, or any specifiable number of parts, follow the principle of pluralism.

Regarding the substance of reality, philosophy offers four major alternatives. The first is a monism that considers the ultimate nature or constitution to be mental or spiritual, a position identified as idealism; the second is, also monistic, one that asserts

that reality is essentially material or physical, a position common to many forms of Realism; the third is a dualism that holds that reality combines both the spiritual and the physical, a position common to other forms of realism most notably Thomism; the fourth alternative, refusing either to be monistic or dualistic, says that reality is in a state of constant change and creation and therefore literally as well as philosophically infinite as to go gender and number, a position that can be identified as Pragmatism.

The metaphysical content of philosophy thus deals primarily with the problem of reality, and is an attempt to discover and describe, and sometimes define, what is real and what it means to be real conclusions that are irreversibly built into an educational system.

Axiology, or the theory of values and value judgements in Ethics and Aesthetics, is that part of Philosophy concerned among other things with good and bad, right and wrong, means and ends. It tries to formulate a consistent theory for ethical behaviour. Once the good has been identified it is then possible to speak of morality, to use the words and concepts of ought and should. Axiology consists of an analysis of the moral beliefs, judgements, and concepts in the creation or discovery of a theory of value.

The two major approaches to axiology turn on two different answers to the question "Are values independent of, or dependent upon, mankind?" Those who reply that values are fundamentally independent of man and society, although they do indeed obligate man and society, believe in a generic theory of value called objectivism or the intuitive and vocational theories of value. Those whose responses affirm the complete dependence of value upon man and his actions and deny that value can exist independently of humanity believe in a generic theory of value called subjectivism or the naturalistic and emotive theories of value.

The intuitive theory of value is usually associated with objectivism, idealism and some variants of realism. It holds that while it may be difficult but not impossible to define an ultimate set of value, an ultimate and absolute set of values nevertheless does exist in the objective order of things. These values are to be discovered by intuition. They are not dependent upon the existence or behaviour of mankind. Moreover, once man discovers and recognizes these values he is obligated to regulate his individual and social behaviour to accord with these moral prescriptions.

The rational theory of value is associated with Thomistic varieties of realism. It also holds that values are objective and ultimately independent of man. The discovery of value however, comes as a result of human reason and supernatural revelation rather than human intuition, and the compelling of such values is enhanced by the fact that man will do right when he knows the right by reason.

Naturalistic theories of value deny that we find values readymade in the natural or supernatural order of things. Since values do not pre-exist in the cosmos, independent of the interests and efforts of men it is ideological to speak of 'discovering' values. Values, therefore are not intuited in a flash of insight, or revealed in a transcendental moment, or even discovered in a fit of pure reason, but created by man out of his experienced needs and desires. They are bio-social, invented and used and tested by individuals and societies to serve the purpose of guiding human behaviour. They are as 'natural' as language. A naturalistic approach to axiology, generally associated with pragmatism and the more empirical variants of realism, thus involves an instrumental theory of value in which judgements of value are not absolute and infallible but relative and contingent. Naturalistic theories of value are generically subjective in nature; but this does not mean that such theories assert that values are automatically equivalent to

any individual subject's whim or will or interest. It means, however, that values can only grow of human wants and needs when these are critically examined and hence are relative to and dependent upon the human condition.

The emotive theory of value insists that moral and ethnical concepts are not judgements of fact but merely expressions of emotions or attitudes. It is important to realize that the emotivist does not deny the existence of values. Concepts of right and wrong, good and bad, which are taken so seriously, can never be more than emotional judgement or conviction of an individual or group.

Epistemology (philosophy of mind in particular), or the theory of knowledge, is that segment of the philosophic quest that seeks to identify the ground and nature of truth and knowledge, and perhaps this is the most important part of philosophy or education. The epistemological question is 'How do you know?' If to know means to have measured what can be known without a standard? Thus the epistemological question inquires not only into what we know but also into how we come to know.

Regarding the answer to the question "Can we know?" We are provided with three categories used to identify epistemological positions. The first is the response of dogmatism. It asserts that in order to know anything at all we must first have some knowledge that meets two criteria; it must be certain, and it must be un-inferred. The dogmatist, having laid down these criteria, then asserts that we do in fact have some certain and un-inferred propositions, and thus responds to the above question affirmatively that we can or we must know something for sure and certain. The second answer is given by scepticism, a response that denies the possibility of having any knowledge at all. The sceptic agrees with the dogmatist that in order to have knowledge one must first have some certain and un-inferred premises; but the sceptic denies the

existence of such self evident premises. As a surveyor the sceptic can trust no marker absolutely, not even his own. The third response is fallibilism, an epistemological point of view that rejects out of hand the criterion demanding the availability of certain and un-inferred premises before knowledge can be said to exist. When he asserts that the possession of certain knowledge is improbable if not impossible, and yet at the same time asserts that we do have reliable knowledge, the fallibilist clearly must be satisfied with knowledge that can never be completely certain. The fallibilist must emulate science in posture and learn to be content with knowledge that is open to change, rather than final; relative, rather than absolute; probable, rather than certain.

About the question 'how?' the idealist finds many roads to knowledge, but the best and surest, he believes, is to rely on that part of human nature that is attuned to divine nature, the mind. For the idealist then, since knowledge consists of ideas and since ideas are products of the mind, knowledge is a product of mind – a product resulting from the mental processes of intuition and reasoning. Further, since intuition can yield certain knowledge, the idealist is an epistemological dogmatist.

So too is the realist, or at least if he belongs to one of those species of realism that are often called classical realism. The classical realist relies primarily on the rational faculties of mind to crack the code of experience and decipher the truth. When filled with reports of observation, language holds truth in coded form that reason can unravel. Given the objective, ontological world of the classical realist, and given his theories of mind and perception, our knowledge of the external world comes to us best through reasoning about reports of observations. Even though either observations of reports or both may from time to time deceive us, we can always rely on our reason and, on this

basis the classical realist is sure in the belief that certain knowledge and absolute truth exist, and human reason is capable of finding and capturing them.

In so far as the Thomist*¹ is in the mainstream of classical realism, his positions are similar. In addition, however, the Thomist puts his faith in revelation as well as reason, for while the mind by its own processes may acquire knowledge and reach truth, knowledge and truth may also be given through revelation to the mind. There is truth finding and truth giving. The Thomist, as are other kinds of classical realists, is an epistemological dogmatist.

Branches of realism known as modern realism, pragmatism and logical empiricism rule out intuition and revelation as reliable sources of knowledge on the ground that neither is open to public, repeatable, empirically confirmable inspection. Once having eliminated these as dependent sources of knowledge, the naturalist is left with ordinary human experience and his ability to reflect and reason on that experience, as the sole source of knowledge and truth. But human experience is notoriously fickle and human reason is known to err; thus the naturalist is and must be an epistemological fallibilist.

Epistemology, then, is that task of philosophy which involves the identification and examination of criteria of knowledge and truth. Those criteria would sufficiently set a task that is assuredly full of rich meaning for education, since the minimal, if not the maximal, goals of education certainly include the acquisition of knowledge and the pursuit of truth. What you have when you say you know, when you have earned the right to say it, and how you went about getting of one all key questions in epistemology and in education.

Education

The significance of philosophy in the solution of educational problems becomes apparent when we try to define education. The problem, of course, is that since there is a multiplicity of philosophical view points there is no one clear, concise, agreed upon definition of education. Education is defined as: (1) the process of drawing out of children ideas that lie implicitly embedded in their minds; (2) a process of developing abilities that are innately parts of one's human nature; (3) a process of activating the brain so as to acquire, record, and store organised bodies of fact and value; (4) a process of writing and rewriting social experience on the tabula rasa of the individual; (5) as a process of raising children to make them adjust to and live in a certain kind of society.

These definitions of education imply somewhat differing conceptions of education. But these definitions suggest three conclusions: first, education cannot be all of these things, for some of them are contradictory and thus cannot co-exist with each other to form an adequate definition; second, whatever else education may or may not be it is evidently a process, for this is a concept common to each of the alternatives; and third, a more careful inspection of these alternatives reveals at least two basic and apparently fundamentally different approaches to the process of educating, one side of which views education as the process of drawing out and building upon internal abilities dormant in the children, while the other sees education as the process of assimilating information external to the child and injecting it into him.

Education can also be defined as the process of identifying and developing some primary abilities, if we assume that an original and integral part of human nature is the possession of some set of abilities; abilities that are common in kind to every man, but that vary in degree with different men. Education is thus the process of making manifest

what is latent in each child. Those who adhere, to this view believe that education can be described by analogy*² to the growth and development of flowers. The child is the seed in which as yet unrealized potentials lie dormant; the teacher is the gardener whose loving, tender care will help unfold these hidden promises; and education is the teaching gardening process by which these unseen capacities will become visible through the judicious choice and application of the proper chemical fertilizers.

Another approach to education places more emphasis on the ability of man to acquire information by inquiry into the nature of the external world. Here inquiry is more a process of taking in what exists outside the learner, rather than a process of bringing out what exists internally in him. According to this view the child being educated can be likened to a sponge. While the natural absorptive powers of the child-sponge may be limited by its internal constituting, the kind and amount of material taken in depends not so much on internal as on external conditions. The child-sponge not only receives but retains, and though there is always some natural drainage and evaporation to be expected, the child can discharge most of the absorbed material, in slightly altered condition, when squeezed by the teacher.

A third view sees education as transaction – the process of give and take – between man and his environment. It is a process in which and by which man develops or creates the skills needed to modify and improve attitudes or dispositions that guide his efforts in this reconstruction of human as well as physical nature. According to this view, classroom education can be described by analogy to the stone sculpture. The artist and his material ‘work together’ to create a shape that is organically suited to the nature of the material and expressively suited to the abilities of the artist. Education is dynamic and interactive rather than static and directive.

Given both the plasticity and resistance of human nature, the teacher-artist works both on and with his material. Ink so far as the material will yield to the talents of the sculptors, and in so far as the craftsman knows the nature and limits of his media and material, the cooperative teaching-sculpting process results in the transformation of human material from something dull and rough into something smooth and polished.

Each of these three definitions – education as manifestation; education as acquisition; and education as transaction – is based on some conception of the nature of man and his universe. If human nature is a fixed universal commodity shared by all men, then the education men receive should also be common and fixed; but if the human nature differs with their biological and social histories, then their education should be less common and more individualized, less fixed and more flexible. If man is essentially or intrinsically good then his interests, purposes, and activities are likely to tend to be good and his education can safely allow this goodness to emerge; but if man is initially bad, then his education should be used to weed out the evil sprouts of this bad seed which is the common inheritance of all men as part of the patrimony of their human nature. Further, he must be trained to be good and shown how to suppress the bad in him.

Thus it would be strange indeed to define education, as the unfolding of the latent powers of mind unless one first postulated that mind is the common and unique possession of man. But if we agree with the idealist that the entire universe is ultimately mental in composition, then it is only consistent to argue that the great, ineffable mind of the universe is reflected in the mind of man. The purpose of education is to develop and train the mind so that it is in harmony with the cosmic concert.

It would be equally strange to define education as acquisition of information about the external world if one did not first posit the physical reality of that world as well as the ability of man to learn and teach about it. Hence if we agree with the realist that matter is not reducible to mind, but that mind is in reality ultimately material, then it makes sense to argue that the differential of man is his material brain and it is this and not some immaterial or non-material mind that is to be educated.

Again, it would also be strange indeed to define education as one kind of interaction between man and his environment unless one first asserted that man and environment are naturally related. Thus if we agree with the pragmatist about the reduction of reality to mind or matter, then it is reasonable to insist that human nature is a many-splendoured thing and that education cannot be restricted to training the 'muscles' of the mind or organizing the cells of the brain but must involve 'the whole child' in terms of his individual and social nature.

So, to formulate a proper definition of education we should begin with the nature of human nature. Thus, the pertinence of philosophy to education is, readily apparent even when we try to define education. Once given an ontological position it is possible to comment on the nature of human nature, and from these philosophic beginnings it becomes possible to develop a definition of education that successfully unites philosophic commitment with educational practice, to give the latter a basis in thought and the former an outlet in action.

Philosophy and education walk hand in hand. In this relationship philosophy and education are mutually reconstructive : they give to and take from each other in the ebb and flow of thought and action; they are means to one another, and ends too, they are

process and product. It is out of this fusion of reflective thought and practical action that philosophy of education can be defined.

Philosophy as Process : Normally when we think of philosophy we think of a finished product. The product is surely the issue of some process. This process, the intellectual means by which the product of philosophy is realized is, of course, philosophizing. To revive the pedagogical proposed we can identify four distinct but related aspects of the process :

The analytic aspect of philosophizing involves such activities as identifying and examining the assumption and criteria that guide behaviour. The evaluative aspect is the process of assessing or judging actions and of defending the criteria by which judgements are made. The speculative aspect of philosophizing consists of the generation of new hypothesis, the genesis of new alternatives for conduct, on the basis of prior analysis, evaluations, and integration. And finally, the integrative aspect is constructive in the sense of putting together or relating relation previously disparate criteria or knowledge or action so as to constitute a new refurbished whole.

In a larger sense, philosophizing is the process of analysis. It means the attempt to grasp the meaning of a word, an idea, a concept , an experience; it is the process of posing meaningful questions and seeking intelligent responses to those questions, questions that deal primarily with the nature of reality, the criteria of knowledge, and problems of value.

Philosophy and product : Viewing philosophizing as the activity of analysis, the product is understanding: the classification of words, ideas, concepts and experience so that instead of confusing and mystifying us as tools for even further inquiries. When philosophy is viewed in this way, the products come to be labeled according to the kinds

of answer given by different 'schools of philosophy' such as idealism, realism, pragmatism, positivism, existentialism, etc., each striving to retain internal consistency, yet each remaining inconsistent with the other.

Education as process : When education is a process, it refers to the act of teaching or the task of learning that receives common consent from all, though there is much dissent as to the specific nature of the process of education. Nevertheless, it is agreed that education can be seen as large or small. Seen large, education is the sum of the socio-cultural impress on the individual. Seen small, it is what is done to him in the total school situation. Smaller still, it attaches to liberal, special, technical, and professional education.

The fullest meaning of education can only be synonymous with enculturation or the process of learning about the culture in which the child is born, lives and dies. A narrower meaning is the organized attempt of any society to socialize the individual. The school is the instrument of this narrower meaning of education and, notwithstanding the rich variety of educational theories and philosophies, the process of education on this level at least involves the transmission of facts and values that the society now holds dear, as well as the creation of new ones. Education is at least the handing down of 'established fact and sanctioned value' but it also involves the development of intellectual and physical abilities, the examination and acceptance of old, or the experimentation with the adaptation of new values and attitudes.

Thus education is the process of enculturation or the process of introducing the educant to the culture in which he exists and to the socially developed and endorsed method of living and working in that society. Education is a process of socialization introducing the child to society, attempting to persuade him to accept and defend,

perpetuate and extend, the culture that has taken the pains to nurture and nourish him. And throughout all of this, education is the process of preparing the child for present and future living in his culture by providing him with the tools and techniques necessary to this end.

The definition of educational process in school and cultural terms does not exclude the individual. At bottom and at top we find the individual not the institutions, the artifacts, the governments, or the beliefs. For without the individual neither human culture nor society would exist; that is why education does focus directly on the individual and only indirectly on the society and culture.

Education, however broadly or narrowly conceived, necessarily involves three stages of consideration : the biological, which yields the human animal and in some part determines the possible limits of the educative process; the psychological, which builds on the biological and differentiates out the individual : and the sociological, which takes in the biological 'given' and reflects back an image of self to the psychological.

Consequently the product of education is not merely a collection of individuals who are literate in one degree or another. But in a larger sense the product of education must be expensed in social and cultural terms as well. The social and cultural products are the fruits by which educational processes are judged. With this view the product of education is the creation or preparation of individuals by which and through which society renews changes, improves, and extends itself.

If philosophy and education are both process and product, and if philosophy of education in some way articulates philosophic thought with educational action, it takes no great logician to conclude that philosophy of education, too is meaningfully defined in terms of process and product.

Philosophy of education as process : Taken as process, philosophy of education is the activity of classifying the terms, thoughts, and principles that guide education. It is a process that proposes ends or goals for education, and suggests means to those ends. The four functions of the process of philosophizing about education is described below within these categories.

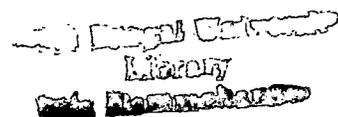
The analytic function involves locating and examining the assumption, beliefs, commitments, and criteria that guide educational policies and practices. The educational practice of 'grading on a curve' is based on some set of assumptions about the definition and distribution of ability in the population at large and the classroom sample in particular.

The evaluative function moves beyond analysis, for it also assesses and judges such policies and practices in terms of their underlying, supporting criteria. This evaluation is most frequently made through the use of the philosophic category of axiology and concepts of value. For example, the 'emergent curriculum' is a policy that leads to the educational practice of teacher-pupil planning. Underlying this policy and the practice it suggests an assumption that learning results from pupil interest and activity. But there are other approaches to learning, many of which assert that while learning is a result of pupil effort it need not be anteceded by pupil interest.

Given a theory of man that holds that the child, by his very nature, is curious, we might well favour the 'interest-effort-learning' position and, in so doing, reject the strict teacher-directed implementation of the curriculum. On the other hand, given a theory of human nature holding that children are naturally reluctant, we might favour the 'forced-effort-then-learning' position that teacher-pupil planning is inefficient and ineffective

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since what is required is a strong, knowledgeable teacher direction of the learning activities of weak, unformed students.

The speculative function of philosophy of education is normally based on the analysis, evaluation and previous synthesis of existing elements; it also means building on these, or recombining these and other things, in order to create new hypotheses and identify new alternatives for use in education. Speculation of this nature is not wild and uncontrolled, conducted in the absence of existing fact or value; instead, speculation well done is rigorous and achieved within some meticulously built frame of reference.

Philosophy of education as product: The integrative function builds on the analysis made and the judgements reached so as to unite and combine these preferred educational policies and practices into a logical, consistent, coherent whole what is often called a philosophy of education. We bring together our beliefs about human nature, about society, about learning, about subject matter, about a myriad of philosophic and educational judgements and create 'the big picture'. It is eminently possible, and perhaps highly desirable, for each educator to build his own consistent, coherent, functional philosophy of education to guide his educational activities.

The integrative function of philosophy of education, then is the unifying and harmonizing of educational beliefs that have been arrived at through the analysis and evaluation of many possibilities. The word 'unifying' correctly denotes an additive process; but the integrative function, as the word 'harmoizing' connotes, suggests something more than mere addition – it suggests the polishing, reworking and fitting together of the various elements of one's philosophy of education so as to integrate them into a consistent, mutually supporting set of propositions.

Philosophy of education, then is that discipline, or that mode of thought, what provides educators with a perspective. Indeed, it is itself a perspective, for a philosophy of education is a way of looking, at, thinking about, and acting in educational contents. And, the best way to develop this kind of perspective is to grapple with the problems of education – a struggle immeasurably enhanced in one's favour when he uses the intellectual weaponry of philosophy to help him overcome the grip of ignorance, which is the father of most educational problems. A philosophy of education attempts to provide a new perspective from which the teacher can see new dimension of the problem. Philosophy enables a man to use his depth perception to maximum advantage. Now that is some thing that is practical.

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1. The term generally refers to the major strain of Roman Catholic thought about philosophy and education. This trend in Catholic philosophy was started by Thomas Aquinas.
 2. Israel Scheffler has offered a penetrating analysis of educational metaphors, such as the flower analogy and the sculpture analogy, in *The Language of Education*.