AN INTRODUCTION TO INTELLECTUAL PLURALISM, TEACHING, and FREEDOM[1]

David B. Owen

I. The Problem of Teaching

Today those of us who help teachers or are teachers face a bewildering barrage of assertions about the best way to reform American education. These assertions come both from individuals not directly involved in education, such as state and national legislators or Presidential Commissioners, as well as from those directly engaged in teaching, who may promote reforms like mastery learning, assertive discipline, or either competency-based or computer-based instruction. How should one sort through all the claims on our attention and action? A broad question, obviously, and one that we will explore here from only one direction, namely, from the teacher's perspective. I want to suggest in what follows that an adequate answer to this question requires us to explore as deeply as possible the assumptions which underlie both existing and proposed practices. It requires us, in short, to engage in philosophy, and the philosophic orientation I will argue for is intellectual pluralism. Moreover, I will argue that the extent and quality of such engagement determines the very freedom of teachers and their students.

A. **Teaching without philosophy.** The relation of thought and action, of philosophy and teaching, is neither obvious nor simple. From one point of view, no relationship need exist between the two. It clearly is possible to teach without philosophizing. For instance, we all know the "born teacher": she has a classroom charisma that appears to eliminate problems of student discipline effortlessly, and her work with students, both individually and in groups, seems spontaneously right and without second thought. Or again, a teacher may base his work on trial-and-error: he will "try anything once," and if it succeeds, it must be good. A third kind, currently the most prevalent, is what might be called the trained[2] teacher. We can see two sub-varieties here. On the one hand is the individual who has been so impressed by a powerful teacher that she follows after her model as a caboose follows its engine. The goal of such teacher is to grow to be "just like so-and-so." On the other hand is the individual who teaches as he has been directed. Such direction may come from teacher-trainers, from "experts," from a curriculum guide, from supervisors (a principal, say, or a school board), or from a community (as in state legislation and regulation).

These three kinds of teachers indifferent to philosophy do not, of course, exist in a pure form. However, individuals with such dominant tendencies do exist and, insofar as they do, reveal a common problem. Teachers who rely on native ability, who trust to luck, or who depend on others for direction all fail to recognize that a crucial distinction exists between merely acting and acting with forethought, between teaching and teaching well. As these kinds of teacher suggest, one can teach without thinking—or more accurately, without thinking deeply—about the activity one is engaged in. But if one begins to consider the why of one's actions, the what, the how, the whence and whither of one's teaching, she or he is starting on an inquiry into what it means to teach well—and pushed far enough, any such in-

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[1] The original version of this essay was composed in the mid-1980s.

[2] I have chosen this adjective because its Old French origin means "to drag along," which conveys the idea of following after—my main point here—which still retaining a connotation of social approval.

quiry becomes philosophical in character. To reflect upon one's teaching, then, is not only potentially to improve it in the direction of teaching well but also necessarily to inquire into the philosophy of education. To teach well, one needs philosophy. But even if we accept this conclusion, where does that leave us? Given that teaching is at heart a practical activity—ultimately one must do this rather than that—, a relevant approach would be to look at radically different assumptions about what a teacher should do. The teacher can then consider from a broad spectrum of possibilities for action what he or she thinks is the best way to teach. Consider where we are today. The dominant view of the teacher could be characterized as disciplinary in a double sense. On the one hand, the teacher's formal object is to enhance educational efficiency through various behavioral techniques of classroom discipline. On the other hand, the material object of the teacher is to improve productivity by increasing students' possession of the basic skills and concepts of select academic disciplines. The purpose of education, thus, is vocational, and the teacher's object is to train the student to be a productive adult. One need only think, for instance, of the context, character and purpose of the Essential Elements in the Texas reform movement, where the basic skills and concepts of every subject at every grade level are specified, where behavioral objectives are assessed frequently by state-wide standard examination, and where assessments of individual teachers for promotion and reward are likely to be based upon student performance on such tests.[3]

B. **Plural conceptions of teaching.** Can teachers think about themselves in another way? Yes. The last few decades have seen a number of alternatives. For example, A. S. Neill's Summerhill, a school where students need not attend class and are limited primarily by the injunction not to injure others, offers a radically different view of education and the teacher.[4] What does a teacher do in such circumstances? Apparently, if a child comes with a question, she or he is merely a source of answers, someone the child has learned to trust. A substantially different approach appears in the open education movement, richly described by Charles E. Silberman.[5] Here the physical and intellectual compartmentalization of conventional education is broken down, and students' interests are the focus of educational activity. The teacher becomes a resource for the group, richly structuring the environment to stimulate interests and responding to activities thereby encouraged. Finally, Mortimer Adler argues for a rigorous, unified program of study for all students up through high school graduation.[6] Its goal is a liberal rather than vocational education. The teacher is conceived to be a lecturer, a coach and, most important, a leader of student-directed discussion and inquiry into perennial issues of knowledge and action.

Let me characterize four kinds of teacher suggested by the above. Currently the dominant conception—at times, seemingly the only one under public consideration—is of the teacher as *instructor*. The etymology of this word, "to pile up upon" conveys well what is involved here. The teacher as instructor gathers together discrete behaviors and elemental ideas and, one by one, hands them over to stu-

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[3] The state of Texas adopted this approach in the early 1980s, and it foreshadowed in some detail the model adopted at the national level in succeeding administrations, both Republican and Democratic, by the Department of Education's attempts to "reform" education in the United States. I was in Texas from 1983 to 1985, and today our national policy of "Race to the Top" virtually duplicates what I saw Texas do over thirty years ago.

[4] A. S. Neill, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing* (New York: Hart, 1960). I visited Summerhill in fall of 1998 and found the school functioning vibrantly under the guidance of Neill's daughter, Zoë Neill Readhead.

[5] In his *Crisis in the Classroom: The Remaking of American Education* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1970).

[6] See his *Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1982).

dents. As they amass skills and concepts, their power grows in direct proportion, the difference between students being the speed at which they can acquire the instructional elements. The instructor, therefore, is primarily concerned with the technique of engineering the desired behaviors, which then act as the measure of her success. Secondly, a teacher may act as *tutor*, a word whose original meaning was "to guard." The tutor guards his pupil from external influences, especially social ones, that would distort the latter's natural development. He does so by carefully selecting an environment rich in stimuli appropriate to the child's period of development, then allowing the student to act freely there and bear the consequences of his actions, thus learning through practice what his powers, pleasures, and limitations are, where his happiness lies. The tutor's success lies in the pupil's personal discovery of his or her proper place at each stage of life. Or again, the teacher may act as *mediator*, a word still meaning "to be in the middle." The mediator understands both the motives of students and the character of the various kinds of knowledge, especially art, history and science. He then mediates student and knowledge by arranging problematic situations that will both interest the student and lead her to inquire with others into areas that expand her knowledge. The mediator's success is seen in the student's increasing ability to reflect on possible courses of action that will enrich her life in the experiences sought and enjoyed, thereby revealing her unique nature, her strengths and weaknesses and the best path in life for her to follow for self-fulfillment. Finally, a teacher may act as a *master*. This teacher is a philosopher, an individual with wisdom about the nature of things, not just in a scientific but in an ultimate sense. Such a master engages students dialectically, questioning them about their assumptions until they come to recognize that they do not know what they thought they knew. The success of such a teacher is seen in the revolution of the student's thinking away from attention to transitory matters and toward that which is true everywhere and at all times, toward wisdom.[7]

The character and consequences of the teacher as instructor, being the dominant view currently, are readily apparent to all. We can see a sketch of the alternatives in Neill, Silberman, and Adler. They are, however, mere reflections of more original, comprehensive and striking portraits of the teacher, those drawn by Rousseau, Dewey, and Plato. These last are a main source, often forgotten, of our ideas about teaching; so I would like to turn briefly to them to give a clearer picture of the teacher as, respectively, tutor, mediator, and master. I must emphasize as we do so that all three of them were teachers: however theoretic their pedagogical reflections may at first appear, they are based on direct, personal experience of the act of teaching the young.

II. Plato's *Republic*

A. **The idea of justice.** Born about 427 BCE into a wealthy Athenian family, Plato was destined for a position of social influence and political power in the Athenian democracy until he was won over to the pursuit of philosophy by Socrates, that man of extraordinary mental quickness and moral toughness whom the Athenians executed in 399 BCE for asking controversial questions in public about the purpos-

[7] This cursory exploration of different kinds of teachers reflects directly my early interest in intellectual pluralism, which was cultivated through my exposure to the philosophy of Richard McKeon. This attempt to explore different ways of thinking about a particular topic, in this case, the teacher, sketches an way to open the topic up and present different lines of argument without engaging in controversial refutation of opposed positions. The object is to provide alternatives which can encourage inventive reflection and action to address current problematic circumstances.

es of life.[8] Taking inspiration from Socrates, Plato founded a school in Athens, the Academy, and wrote a number of dialogues on philosophy, virtually all involving issues of education. We will confine our attention to his most famous work, the *Republic*, which is his construction of an ideal state, a utopia (a Greek word meaning "that which is no place") based upon an ideal education.

The *Republic* is Socrates' account of an extended conversation between himself and a number of individuals, including two students, Glaucon and Adeimantus.[9] The book begins innocently enough at a dinner party when Socrates asks an elderly acquaintance how he is doing. Cephalus replies that one of the advantages of old age is that the body's passions no longer enslave the mind, thus he can now give full attention to repaying whatever debts he owes either men or gods. Socrates recognizes that such actions raise a question of what is truly owed and to whom, that is, what the just act is, and the discussion turns to an attempt to define justice. Several definitions are offered—that it is repaying what is owed, or that it is doing good to friends and harm to enemies, or that it is the advantage of the stronger—but Socrates' questions reveal all these answers to be inadequate. Nevertheless, Adeimantus and Glaucon ask Socrates not to give up the search for justice because they want to know who leads the happiest life, the just or unjust man. He agrees to re-examine the question with them and suggests that they do so by creating in speech an ideal society where justice, occurring on a large scale, can be more easily observed than in the single human and thus its meaning more readily grasped. This will allow them later to see justice in the individual. Such is the setting, then, for the discussion of education.

The ideal state, Socrates argues, needs both someone who knows what is good for the citizenry as a whole—a philosopher—and someone who has the power to lead them—a king. Since very few individuals have the potential to command both knowledge and power, to become a philosopher-king, the function of education in the state is twofold: first, to identify the three classes of citizens—those supremely gifted individuals who will lead the state, the guardians who will defend the state under their leaders' guidance, and the workers/craftsmen who will provide the food and material necessities of the state—and second, to fit each of these classes to pursuing its natural purpose.

B. **An ideal education.** This process begins before birth: the state carefully arranges marriages in order to produce children with the best natures. The first period of regular education extends from birth up to seventeen or eighteen years of age. Here focus is on the selection and training of the guardians, who will include both sexes. Their natural gifts of body must include sharp senses, speed, and strength; while their gifts of soul must include both "high spirit," that is, anger directed at enemies, as well as friendliness toward rulers and fellow citizens. This raises a difficult problem: their natures must be composed of apparent contraries, namely, fierce gentleness. To form this double character into a unified whole, Socrates recommends an education of gymnastics and "music."[10] Regarding music, Socrates advocates strict censorship of the stories, poetry, and songs used: they must honor the gods, always state the truth, avoid raising feelings of fear, and advocate obedience both to one's rulers and to the rule of

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[8] For Plato's record of Socrates' trial, see his *Apology*. For a view of the events connected with that trial, see Plato's *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*.

[9] Students of Plato's works have argued extensively about how many of the ideas express by the "Socrates" of the dialogues are Plato's own and how many are those of the historical Socrates. For our purposes here, I will treat the "Socrates" of the *Republic* as being the same as Plato. —A fine translation into English of the *Republic* is that by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

[10] Plato's meaning of "music" extends far beyond what we think of as music and includes poetry and story, including the tonal, harmonic, and rhythmic qualities that attend such speech.

self-control over bodily appetites. In their play, moreover, the children are to imitate only good men engaged in speech or action. Moderation, firmness, and orderliness are the key to those aspects of music having to do with harmony, rhythm, and lyrics. Since children are unable to reason, Socrates argues that such education will reach deepest into the soul and win it over to the beauty of what is good even before the individual is old enough to understand rationally why that good is the principle of life. With the addition of gymnastic, a vigorous program of physical exercise, this first period of education attains its proper form: the problem of the guardian's fierce-gentle nature is solved by music moderating the fierceness toward judgment and gymnastic stimulating the gentleness toward action. This is a classic example of Plato's famous dialectic at work.

At seventeen or eighteen, young boys and girls who pass the guardian testing spend three years in extensive physical and military training. At twenty, those who have the potential to become leaders enter upon a ten-year program of mathematical studies to test their intellectual powers. Just as the guardian's nature is composed of contrary qualities, so, too, is the true leader's: he or she must be both quick in powers of insight and reasoning but also steadfast in adherence to what is good for the citizenry as a whole. The ten-year mathematical training reveals those who are quick to learn, and these advance to a five-year course of dialectic wherein one systematically questions all assumptions, a task which exposes those who can remain steadfast in their adherence to the principle of the good of all. Even now training is not complete, for the select few must still devote fifteen years to serving the state actively in political and military affairs. Only at fifty is the man or woman of this extraordinary nature and intensive education prepared be, when called upon, a leader of the state in knowledge and in action, a true philosopher-king.

C. **Conclusion.** This elaborately constructed ideal state, Socrates emphasizes, has been built in order to see more clearly who the best individual is and how he would act, even if not living in a perfect state. Thus, the three social classes are represented by the desiring, willing, and reasoning parts of the human soul. Justice, moreover, the goal of the entire discussion, is found in each class/part of the state/individual performing its proper role: the workers/desires agreeing to be ruled, the guardians/will remaining firm in the conviction of defending the good of the whole, and the philosopher/reason knowing what *is* the good of all. In short, Plato argues that justice is the key to humans living well, to their happiness, and, most importantly for the discussion here, that education is the principle means to this end.

III. Rousseau's *Emile*

A. **Stages of growth**. The second educational philosopher we will look at is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, born in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1712. Not only associated with the Enlightenment movement of the eighteenth century but also considered a father of the nineteenth century's Romantic movement, Rousseau's writings reflect a complex interweaving of reason and emotion. The central theme of his works is that human society corrupts human nature, misdirecting and inhibiting individuals' inborn goodness; and his arguments for reform have such rhetorical vigor that they have made him possibly the most controversial figure of his century. At several points of his life he acted as a tutor to French children, a job he forthrightly admits he performed poorly; yet from his experiences he gained such insight into children

that has profoundly influenced modern educational thought. In 1762 he published *Emile, or On Education*, his most famous reflections on the subject and the work we will now briefly explore.[11]

"Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man." This bold declaration begins *Emile* and sets the stage for all that follows: society denatures man, distorting his natural abilities and circumstances with artificial limits and conventions. Rousseau proposes to uncover what human nature truly is by starting with that most innocently human of beings, a baby, and tracing its growth from birth to maturity while protected from corrupting social influences. Emile is the imaginary child on whom this "thought experiment" will be tried. Though an orphan, he is otherwise a common child, one of average mental, moral, and physical character, who will have Rousseau as his sole tutor until he is fully grown. At the heart of Rousseau's treatment of Emile is his notion that a child is not just an incomplete, half-formed adult; rather, a child has at each of several stages prior to becoming an adult a natural form that is complete in itself and worthy of admiration in its own right.[12] He identifies five such "ages" and devotes a Book to each.

B. **Infancy and childhood.** The first age is that of growth, extending from birth to roughly two. Rousseau holds that up to the age of walking and talking, the child's physical organs and mental faculties are so unformed that it cannot even be aware of its own existence, cannot be conscious of self. Nevertheless, this is a crucial period of education, for the child's future development depends upon one giving it proper nutrition, allowing it freedom of movement as it begins to explore its physical world, as well as preventing it from gaining the unnatural habit of control over its adult protectors by crying until its least whim is met. The goal of this age is the freedom of natural growth.

Commencing around two and extending to twelve or thirteen, Book II presents the second age, the age of sensation. Here Rousseau states the principle of freedom that guides his work:

> The truly free man wants only what he can do and does what he pleases. That is my fundamental maxim. It need only be applied to childhood for all the rules of education to flow from it.

This second age, then, involves creating a reflexive balance of personal power—"wants only what he can do" without others' aid—and physical pleasure—"does what he pleases," namely, what arises naturally from his relation with his material environment. The education of this age, therefore, is directed at two goals: first, taking care that only natural desires, ones that satisfy the physical demands of a natural environment (and not the conventional demands of a social environment), are permitted to arise; and second, stimulating the development of the body and of the five physical senses that guide the body. Rousseau argues that both these goals are best accomplished away from the distorting influence of human society, so he takes Emile far from Paris out into a rural setting where he encourages him to "play" under diverse circumstances. Here, as always, the tutor's role is to guide indirectly by selecting environments for his student that call forth behavior appropriate for his age rather than to instruct directly by telling him what he ought to do.

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[11] By far the best translation from the French of *Emile* is also that of Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

[12] Much of Jean Piaget's work on stages of cognitive development, currently of importance in educational psychology, has its origins here in his fellow-Genevan Rousseau's conception.

At age twelve or thirteen occurs a period of roughly three years when the child's powers exceed his needs and curiosity becomes paramount. Rousseau calls this the age of reason, arguing that reason is really a "sixth sense," namely, the harmonious operation and co-operation of the regular fives senses trained in Book II. Now, in Book III, he fosters his pupil's investigation of a variety of practical, yet scientific, studies—including what we might describe as astronomy, geography, physics, and chemistry—and encourages him to find a vocation, which turns out to be carpentry, one of the livings least dependent upon human prejudices. The close of this age marks the conclusion of Emile's natural training; possessing a firmly established set of natural habits, he is ready for exposure to human society.

C. **Adolescence.** The onset of puberty at fifteen[13] indicates the birth of the passions, those feelings that necessarily relate Emile to other humans. Book IV, consequently, presents the age of morality, an investigation of the best relationships among humans in general. The first of these passions to be born is friendship, which arises both from caring—the recognition that other humans suffer as one does—and from gratitude—the realization that others can care for oneself. This feeling, however, is dangerous; for in comparing himself with others, Emile may come to believe he is superior to them. The study of history and fable enter here as the proper moral antidotes to the diseases, respectively, of prejudice and pride. Such issues lead Emile to the necessity for a universal set of criteria by which to judge which among possible human relationships are the proper, moral ones. A long section ensues, called the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar," in which Rousseau gives demonstrations, first, of God's existence, second, of the coherence of the universe—he shows the parts of it have but one end, namely, "the preservation of the whole in its established order"—then finally, of the superiority of natural over institutional religion.[14] With this knowledge of his proper place in the natural order of the universe, Emile is at last ready to see in person the moral disorder of society. With the purpose of finding Sophie, the ideal marriage partner, he and his tutor visit Paris but naturally (*sic*) fail to find her there.

D. **Maturity.** Book V, the age of love, begins with an extended rehearsal of the education of Emile's female counterpart, Sophie. She, too, has received a natural education in a rural setting, one that Rousseau considers to be the same as Emile's insofar as both are human but different insofar as they differ in their sex. Sophie and Emile are to complement each other: their marriage will form a moral being greater than either of them taken individually, one in which "each obeys, and both are masters." The middle of Book V recounts their meeting, courtship, and engagement. Finally, the last third of the Book, "On Travel," tells of a two-year trip Emile and his tutor take in order to compare how other societies and governments work, the end product of which is the former's discovery that the proper place to form a family and raise his children is the French countryside. He returns home at twenty-five and marries Sophie. Her pregnancy signals the completion of the educational cycle. Emile can now become tutor to his own child: he has become the natural man who knows his proper place in society.

IV. Dewey

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[13] Rousseau holds that the timing of puberty is the result not only of physical—what we today would call genetic—make-up but also of stimuli from the social environment—we today might point, for example, to television and the internet. For a related argument by one of our contemporaries, see David Elkind, *The Hurried Child* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1981).

[14] These remarks by the Vicar were considered so socially dangerous that the French Parlement, at the King's direction, ordered Rousseau arrested (he barely escaped to Switzerland, then to England) and his book burned, which it was by the public executioner in Paris.

A. **The problem: Plato vs. Rousseau.** Let us turn to the last philosopher of education we will look at, John Dewey. Born in 1859 at Burlington, Vermont, Dewey has had more influence on twentieth-century education than any other American. With his wife, Alice, he founded the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago in the 1890s, a school devoted to experimental education. Starting with the publication of *The School and Society* in 1899 and extending to his death in 1952, Dewey symbolized for Americans "progressive education." Frequently frustrated by the misinterpretation of his ideas by many of his followers, Dewey eventually delivered a set of lectures in which he attempted to set the record straight by giving a summary of his educational philosophy. We will glance briefly at these lectures, published in 1938 as *Experience and Education*,[15] which show that Dewey is neither a traditionalist nor, at least as it is commonly conceived a progressive .

Dewey begins his analysis by indicating that educational thought has tended to swing between the extremes represented, on the one hand, by Rousseau and, on the other, by Plato. He sees this argument currently embodied in the opposition between progressives and traditionalists, the central point of contention being the relation between the accumulated knowledge society possesses and the direct personal experience of the individual. Dewey finds that the problem raised by the educational reforms begun at the turn of the twentieth century is, in short, the relation of past and present in the preparation for the future.

B. **The meaning of experience.** A solution to this problem lies, he argues, in a new understanding of the meaning of experience. Not all experiences, for instance, are educative: they may lead to insensitivity, to unthinking habit, to carelessness, or to disconnectedness with other experiences. What is needed, then, is a philosophy of education that will be able, first, to select experiences that are educative and, second, to organize such experiences, connecting them instrumentally one to another so that they lead somewhere. Dewey argues that there are two criteria for such educational experiences. The first is the "principle of experiential continuum," by which he means that internal continuity whereby one's experience is shaped by previous experiences and in turn shapes subsequent experiences. Since every experience contains this organic connection, of past growing into future, one must make a further distinction. Educational continuity must, in addition, be composed of those experiences that make possible fuller, richer experiences in the future. In short, the end of experience is more experience. Thus, the second criterion is the "principle of interaction," by which he means the dynamic relation between what happens internally when one undergoes an experience and what the external circumstances are that stimulate and are affected by the experience undergone. These externals are the objective conditions of civilization and environment within which one acts. Using the two principles, Dewey finds that the educational quality of an experience lies in the joining of its present value, its immediate interest for the subject, with its future value, the potential it contains for more complex, richer interaction with the human and natural environment. The goal of the educator, therefore, is so to arrange the present that it uses the past to create a future of greater possibilities for action. Herein lies the resolution of the opposition of past and present, of external formation and internal development.

Dewey's analysis of the relation between social control and freedom indicates a little more concretely what he has in mind. He makes an analogy between the social limits we all experience and the rules of a game: the rules are part of the game ("no rules, no game"), they are not objected to (we argue about the umpire's call, not about the need to judge who is "out"), and they are standardized (we agree that "three strikes and you're out"). In like fashion, Dewey argues, the laws and customs of society do

[15] New York: Macmillan, Collier Books, 1963.

not inhibit our freedom but actually, as in a game, make possible greater freedom by supporting *common* experience. Properly exercised, authority represents the good of all. Extending this conception to schooling, Dewey argues that the school should be a "miniature society," that is, one held together by common experiences and goals. From the perspective of the individual, such community of interest is not a restriction of freedom. For the individual, freedom is not just an external matter, the absence of physical restraint; freedom is also the presence of a self-mastery that reflects upon impulses and desires so that one does not react unthinkingly—and therefore without freedom—to stimuli from the environment or from one's own body. Such delay of reaction to impulse and desire allows one to observe the circumstances in which they arise, remember what consequences flow from actions contemplated, and make judgments as to the best response. Such restraint and reflection give purpose to life, and the chief educational problem is to habituate students in the postponement of action until observation, memory, and judgment can intervene.

C. **The curriculum: art, history, and science.** From this conception of human freedom in thought and action Dewey develops his curriculum, characterized as "the progressive organization of subject matter." Beginning with the individual's direct, personal experience, the curriculum leads him to richer experience by setting problems that both attract his interest and also provide the stimulus to learn previously unknown relationships between action and the consequences of action. The model for selecting and organizing the experiential knowledge so gained is the "scientific method." By acting, observing the consequences of action, hypothesizing about possible consequences of actions contemplated, then testing the hypotheses so constructed, the student is engaged, like the scientist, in the continual reconstruction of knowledge. Dewey emphasizes that this is not knowledge in some abstracted, bookish sense but knowledge that has direct, immediate interest to the individual. The chief studies of this program are, therefore, in Dewey's sense of the terms (which is much broader than our normal usage), "art" (to develop observation), "history" (to develop memory of causes and effects), and "science" (to develop the systematic organization of experiential knowledge so that it can act as the resource for judgment regarding fruitful future action). A student educated well in this fashion, Dewey concludes, will act so that the past informs the present in the creation of a future richer in possibilities of action.

V. Solution to the Problem: Reflective Teaching

A. **Intellectual pluralism.** For me, this cursory sketch of three extraordinary educators' reflections demonstrates both the existence as well as the importance of intellectual pluralism. Richard McKeon, whose work has guided this essay, frequently observed, following Cicero, that "the truth is one and everywhere the same, but the expressions of it are many."[16] The three individuals of intelligence, insight, and good will above have done their utmost to convey an intelligible understanding of what education is and how it should be conducted. Yet they disagree most profoundly. What does that suggest? McKeon's work explores this question across the full scope of western intellectual endeavor and describes how profound differences, some of which are being evidenced by these three individuals, have existed continuously from the Greeks to today and have also been present contemporaneously through-

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[16] One place McKeon treats this aphorism is in "A Philosopher Meditates on Discovery," in *Selected Writings of Richard McKeon,* Vol.1: Philosophy, Science, and Culture, ed. Zahava K.McKeon and William G. Swenson (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998) , pp. 46-50. One way to explore McKeon's work more fully is to see the website, "richardmckeon.org".

out history, though with usually one approach dominating discussion at any particular time. So, in short, regarding the field summarized above, education is clearly much more complicated—and much more important—than is commonly assumed. Note that each of these three individuals hold that education is the *most important* human activity. Intellectual pluralism, consequently, attempts to hold open the multiple perspectives that can be and have been taken on any question of significance, keep those perspectives from being reduced to merely controversial opposition, and exploring how each position, as well as the interplay among positions, can stimulate new possibilities for thought and action.

B. **Knowing alternatives.** Rather than to examine in some detail at this point the character of the intellectual pluralism this short essay attempts to encourage, I will briefly draw two brief conclusions. In the first place, as teachers we must recognize that the possibilities for action are *much* richer than current public discussion would lead one to believe. If we are truly to know what we are about when we teach and are not merely to act from instinct, habit, or direction, we must examine and deliberate about the widest possible conceptions of what a teacher's does. I have tried to sketch something of the scope of that investigation in my characterization of the teacher as instructor, tutor, mediator, and master. How does one go about choosing from among these conceptions? The inquiry that such a question stimulates, I would suggest, is as valuable, if not more so, than any particular conclusion reached. What is ultimately involved here is each teacher coming to know herself or himself to the fullest measure possible. To the extent we do so, we will be able to transform teaching into teaching well.

C. **Alternatives and freedom.** My second conclusion is closely related to the first. To know alternatives of action, to know who one now is and who one might be, is in a most important sense to be free. The issue of the relation of philosophy and teaching necessarily entails the issue of freedom. Insofar as a teacher is aware of choices and is empowered to select among them, he or she is free—and thereby makes it possible, in turn, that the student can become free, too. Conversely, insofar as the teacher is not free, the student must likewise in much the same way lose her or his independence. In short, the fact that teaching is an activity means that its relation to philosophy is one not only of theoretic interest but also one of freedom in individual action. In a democracy like ours, then, it is no small matter that we as teachers attend to philosophic issues, for therein lies both our own freedom, personal and professional, as well as the freedom for our students, our fellow-citizens.