

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF TEACHING.

①

### Chapter I A Point of View and a Strategy.

This book is an essay in the theory of teaching. Since the phrase, "the theory of teaching," is not so commonly used as "the theory of education," it is perhaps worth saying something about the attitude it implies. It is intended to suggest a body of theory closely relevant to the work of the teacher in the classroom. This principle of relevance to practice is ~~intended~~<sup>used</sup> to draw to a focus the contributions of various disciplines, which are often not properly integrated or closely applied. An attempt at rigorous thinking must be made, but that attempt is made here within the ascetic principle: no rigour without relevance.

A theory of teaching should provide the most effective framework for discussion by teachers about their practice. It should stimulate teachers to theorize, and careful theorizing is ~~the~~ practical because it is the best way to control one's practice. Intelligent practice depends upon the thoughtful selection ~~among~~ of a course of action and an evaluative post-mortem on the results of that ~~choice~~ action.

One of the problems of teaching is that choices of procedure involve values. A teacher cannot think simply in terms of effectiveness, as can the builder of a bridge: Bridges serve a clearly defined purpose: human beings do not. Since teachers deal with human beings, they are constantly facing problems which can be solved only by assertions as to what is good and valuable. Such assertions are not demonstrably right or wrong but raise <sup>the</sup> complex ~~pot~~ issues of value judgements. Much of what has been written

②  
Chap I

in educational theory has been concerned to wrestle with these value judgements and to propose values for education. This can be called the problem of educationalist policy.

The theory of teaching developed here aspires to be value-free. It is not value-free, because I am not capable of making it so, but it is an effort in that direction. In other words, it is an essay in the technology of education which is intended to be as far from "philosophy of education" in the old sense as it can be. Since the very technology of education implies values, values must enter the picture, but the attempt here will be to expose <sup>the mechanics of</sup> values and to clarify their operation rather than to advocate or justify particular value systems. ~~Such a task is possible to attempt to add preconceptions, it is not possible to succeed entirely. so difficult as to be unattainable.~~ But although it is possible to attempt to add preconceptions, it is not possible to succeed entirely. In particular, it must be noted that the theory in this book will inescapably be cast in the mould of western democratic values. Within inevitable limitations however, attention will be focussed not on what ought to be done but on the dynamic processes which determine how strategies work out in the classroom.

A theory of teaching ought to <sup>be</sup> developed from ~~the~~ observation of the practical situation. As Gilbert Ryle says, "Good practice precedes the theory of it."<sup>1</sup> One might say that the theory of teaching should stand in relation to teaching as aesthetics stands in relation to art. It should support & critique. But artists often create effectively without theorising: teaching is a large, everyday profession

③ involving responsibility for people, and aptitude without theory will not see us through. Still, the analogy <sup>with</sup> of aesthetics is worth drawing if only to oppose the common tendency to see all educational theory according to the pattern of ethics or politics. This may hold in the theory of educational policy. It does not hold for the theory of teaching.

I have said that a theory of teaching ought to be based on observation. This suggests a scientific approach, but there are reservations to be made. First, the intrusion of values into teaching means that any technology cannot be based simply on scientific principles. Judgements of effectiveness and judgements of worthwhileness are in the end inextricably intertwined and observation will afford us ~~not~~ no grip on the latter. Second, because there has been comparatively little ~~experiment~~ controlled experiment in teaching and because much of the experiment ~~has been~~ undertaken has been problem-oriented (and usually value-ridden) rather than theory-oriented, we cannot be very sophisticated theorists. The field is a very difficult one. The variables in the classroom situation are so many and so complex. As a result, much of the theory presented here is based on observation of ordinary classroom practice, uncontrolled by the observer. It comes from looking at what is there, thinking about it and reading around it. One of the astonishing aspects of the situation is how little we know about what goes on in the process of teaching.

If observation be the starting point, then we must know what to look at. There is no point in going bird-watching

④ unless you know which of all the things <sup>you see</sup> around you are birds and which are not. We are concerned with a process of teaching in the setting of education, and accordingly we ought to have some definition which helps us to distinguish between education and not-education. Unfortunately, general definitions of education tend to be snares to catch the unwary. They are too often statements about what their authors believe ought to be, rather than attempts to denote clear categories among what is. They are manifestos instead of tools of discourse.

J. S. Mill's famous definition of education is a good point of departure because it shows some of the difficulties we face: "Not only does education include whatever we do for ourselves and whatever is done for us by others for the express purpose of bringing us nearer to the perfection of our nature; it does more: in its largest acceptation it comprehends even the indirect effects produced on character, and on the human faculties, by things of which the direct purposes are quite different; by laws, by forms of government, by the industrial arts, by modes of social life, nay, even by physical facts not dependent on human will; by climate, soil, and local position."<sup>2</sup>

From our point of view, this definition presents two difficulties. First, it contains an expression of purpose which is so worded that it cannot be interpreted, and which, if it

⑤ could be interpreted, would involve a value judgement difficult to accept in a definition. We cannot accept as a criterion of whether a situation is educational the test: "does it bring us 'nearer to the perfection of our nature'?" Second, the definition, if we remove this statement of value, is altogether too broad. It does not help to concentrate our attention on any homogeneous category of situations to be observed. To all intents and purposes Mill implies that all human experience may be regarded as educational; it is simply a question of viewpoint.

We can best narrow Mill's definition and make it usable for our purposes by excluding what Mill calls "the...effects produced on character, and on the human faculties, by things of which the direct purposes are quite different." That is to say we can claim that educational activity is characterized by a particular type of purpose or intention. Taking the case of "self-education" as an exception in which educand is also educator, we can assert that an educational <sup>situation</sup> implies the existence of an educator who has the power to control the situation and accepts the responsibility for doing so in a manner consistent with some category of intention. In this way we have characterized educational situations as power or authority situations ~~implying~~ involving specific criteria which are characteristic for education.

I believe this is the essential point made by R.S. Peters when he speaks of "education" as a word with a wakened built into it.<sup>3</sup> The educator is bound to accept a particular type

③

⑥ of criterion applied to his activity. If he does not accept this criterion, he claims not to be an educator. It seems to me that the essential criterion of education has ~~two~~ two strands, two principles by which the educator seeks to justify himself. He believes that what he does is for the benefit of his pupils and he also believes it to be for the welfare of society. He may believe that these two principles conflict, in which case he attempts to justify his compromise.

To sum up, all the educational situations we study will contain an educator with some kind of authority controlling the behaviour of others but accepting responsibility by undertaking that his actions shall further the welfare of the individual and of society. We may add that the educator must <sup>attempt to</sup> promote relatively permanent changes in behaviour, that is, he is concerned with learning. It is this which distinguishes him <sup>for example</sup> from a nurse in an infectious diseases hospital who also controls the behaviour of patients in their own interests and in those of society.

R.S. Peters' assertion that there is a paradox in claiming that someone has been educated but is no better for it will surely not stand up to scrutiny. To say this is merely to differ in a substantive value judgement from the person responsible for educating the pupil. It would ~~not~~ be <sup>paradoxical</sup> ~~logical~~, however, to assert that a person had been educated by someone indifferent to his welfare and to that of society. It is the criterion that counts. ~~So long as the educator~~ What is required of an educator is that he recognize that ~~that~~ a critic who attacks him as having betrayed the interests of his pupils or of his society is attacking ground

⑦ which must be defended if he is to maintain his claim to be  
Chapter I an educator.

In a somewhat cumbersome way I have tried to distinguish the main generic characteristics of educational situations. ~~They are all concerned with learning and all subject to certain criteria which must be kept in the mind of any observer. In our own society, moreover, education is institutionalized. Thus it is possible to discern a central tradition.~~ The observer can restrict his attention to situations where an educator controls the learning experiences of pupils in ~~their~~ what he continues to be their own interest and that of society. Now, since this book is concerned to help teachers only in western societies, ~~and~~ where education is an institutionalized process, it is possible to narrow our sights still further. The major educational tradition in the west is expressed in schools, colleges and universities. In these institutions, the teacher is a professional and he generally teaches, not a single individual, but a ~~a~~ same group of people. Moreover, because he works in an institution and a hierarchy some policy decisions are made for him and he feels the weight of certain pressures. Since this is a book for teachers, not for parents, it is on these situations in which the professional teacher ~~he~~ performs his task that we must focus our attention.

In short we shall be concerned with what goes on in classrooms, lecture rooms, laboratories, workshops, seminars, gymnasia and other similar settings. The best strategy is to take a simple pattern case in the light of which variants

⑧

Chapter I

can later be discussed. Thus our model situation will be that of a ~~st~~ conventional classroom without specialized equipment such as is found in a laboratory, workshop or art room. We may assume it to be one of several successive classes in a one-stream school.

In the classroom we find a group of people. The first thing to strike us follows from our definition of education. The group falls into two disparate elements, the teacher, who accepts responsibility as an educator, and the pupils who come under his authority. Usually, there is a marked age difference between the two, but the essential difference is in the power, knowledge and responsibility of the teacher — in a word, in his authority.

Since this book is addressed to teachers, a discussion of the role of the teacher will be deferred. Its place is late in the analysis when it can be seen in its setting.

First, we shall consider the pupils as individuals differentiated according to variables. The most important variables are age or stage of development, intelligence, personality, aptitude, achievement, motivation and level of aspiration.

Second, we shall consider the group of pupils as an interacting social unit organized in values, norms, standards and dispensing status and roles.

Third, we must attempt an analysis of curriculum, the content which is learned in the educational process.

Fourth, we shall consider the social setting in which



the classroom is placed, the background of pupils and of teacher.

Chapter I  
⑨

Then we shall consider what I shall call the empty role of the teacher. What is expected of him.

The general lines of the analysis will be complete and the theory will be deployed on particular problems: discipline, curriculum, standards, examinations, methods.

Values will be examined by considering different proposals for how a teacher should fill his role.

Specialized settings explored.

Cases interpreted.

There is a growing interest in this country and in the United States in the study of the teaching process. In part this is a shift of emphasis in educational psychology which is associated with programmed instruction and computerized instruction, the development from an emphasis on the study of learning to one on the study of teaching. This new psychological tradition is at its best analytic and experimental, and through it a body of theory of instruction is being built up.

Alongside this experimental tradition, there is another observational tradition less highly developed in this country, but highly significant for the study of "methods" and curriculum. Workers in this tradition are committed to teacher education rather than to educational psychology, and they are concerned to penetrate beyond the idea of prescriptive methods to a fuller understanding of the classroom process which will allow teachers to develop strategies from theory. The approach is observational and analytic. It is sympathetic to analytic approaches in educational philosophy, to the study of groups and to the developing interest in the social psychology and sociology of education.

Walker

Hewitt Leppitt White

Flander

Onudin

B.O. Smith

Models.

Here: Abercrombie

Reavis.

many.

Difficulty of integrating curriculum. A model.