

Critique of Various Philosophies and Theories of Education

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Theory/Philosophy of Education
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Philosophy Name: Idealism

Overall Summary Statement: Plato proposed many of the concepts which make up this philosophical position. Idealism suggests that invisible things such as ideas, thoughts, and minds deserve more attention than that which can be sensed: material objects or forces. These invisible things are perfect and eternal, not changing from society to society or from generation to generation.

Metaphysics Summary Statement: Reality, to the idealist, lies in the realm of ideas. It is not sensed with ears, eyes, or fingers, but is grasped in the mind.

Epistemology Summary Statement: Idealism is internally and logically consistent, harmonious with the nature of the universe. Truth is not determined epistemologically. Instead, idealists rely on intuition, revelation, and rationalism to gain and extend knowledge.

Axiology Summary Statement: Idealists recognize that virtue is determined and modeled by God (who has also been named the Form of Forms, the Absolute Self, and the Absolute Mind). Behaving ethically, then, involves conformity to the invisible God, fixing one's eyes on the Form of Forms, living in harmony with the Absolute Self and this being's Universal Moral Law. Things, including art, are beautiful when they depict the world as the Absolute Self sees them.

Overall Purpose of Education: Education, according to idealists, consists of bringing others into conformity to the perfect Absolute Self and the Universal Moral Law.

Nature of the Student: Students are to develop their intellect over all other things, since reality is centered in idea and mind. Mental development takes precedence, for example, over social development.

Role of the Teacher: Teachers serve as role models for students. They stand closer to the Absolute Self than do the students, knowing reality more clearly, obeying the ethical ideal.

Curriculum Emphasis: Humanities take precedence over sciences. History and the study of literature, more specifically, are at the center of the idealists' curriculum, since these direct students to better understand the ideal humanity and ideal society. Pure mathematics is also of value, since it is not based on sense experience, but on *a priori* principles.

Teaching Methodology: Because words and their meanings are so important to the idealists' transfer of ideas, they take a central role in instruction. Idealists' methodology takes advantage of books and the libraries in which they are organized.

Major Functions of Education: The educational experience should bring students into the world of ideas, so that they can better think and know about absolute reality. In a sense, students should be isolated from the transitory experiences of life outside of academia.

Role of Parent: It is likely that instructors are closer to the Absolute Self than parents; parents, therefore, should release their children to the care and authority of the instructors. They should encourage their children to submit to their instructors.

Who should be in control of education: Those who are closer to understanding Ultimate Reality — Plato's Form of Forms — should direct the educational process. Students and administrators should submit to those philosophers who are closer to the Absolute Self.

Major point(s) of associated reading(s): Idealism might come across as cold and impersonal to some, but Plato's intentions were to provide some stability for the stance that everything was in a state of flux, everchanging, unpredictable. Instead of being a cool scientific approach to reality, idealism came about to serve as a passionately religious doctrine — “a theory that promised man salvation from the things he had feared most from the earliest day, from death and time” (Barrett, 1962, pp. 83-84).

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Philosophy Name: Realism

Overall Summary Statement: Realists hold that the objects of one's senses exist independently of their being known by one's mind. Both form and matter, according to one of the first proponents of realism, Aristotle, make up the basic constituents of every object. Instead of relying solely on intuition, revelation, and rationalism, realists believe that a better understanding of universal ideas can be obtained through the study and categorization of particular things.

Metaphysics Summary Statement: Reality is determined by the same rules which govern physical artifacts and phenomena.

Epistemology Summary Statement: Truth can be determined by studying physical phenomena which conform to Natural Law — it is observable fact.

Axiology Summary Statement: Values are determined by Natural Law. The natural universe plods along consistently according to certain rules, and so stable morality can be identified through the study of nature. Things are beautiful when they accurately reflect how things in nature are or how they can be.

Overall Purpose of Education: Realists intend for the educational process to bring students to a better understanding of reality and its order through correct methods of studying and interpreting sensed phenomena.

Nature of the Student: Students are capable of sensing and understanding reality and the natural laws which govern it. Some believe, however, that students are so governed by Natural Law that they are unable to accurately perceive it — they can't see the forest for the trees, as the cliché goes.

Role of the Teacher: Teachers have learned techniques to study and interpret nature, which enables them to better understand reality. These techniques, and the facts which these techniques have enabled teachers to know, should be taught to the students. The facts

of the natural world which have been verified by research are to be passed along with as little personal bias as possible.

Curriculum Emphasis: Science and mathematics find a central place in the realists' curriculum. Through the scientific method and quantitative studies, students are able to better understand reality.

Teaching Methodology: Props, such as pictures and able-to-be-sensed objects, are appropriate for use in classroom instruction. Field trips, computers, and calculators all find their ways into realists' methodology.

Major Functions of Education: Education should pass on proven facts and the structural frameworks which provide meaning for those facts (Knight, 1989, p. 56).

Role of Parent: As with the idealists' intended role for parents, realists expect parents to surrender their children to instructors, since instructors better understand reality and the methods necessary to better understand reality.

Who should be in control of education: Those who understand the laws which govern observable phenomena — instructors — should control education.

Major point(s) of associated reading(s): While the Platonic universals are indeed real, the things which one sees and touches are accurate copies of the eternal archetypes which have brought them into being (Brown, 1968, p. 18).

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Philosophy Name: Neo-Scholasticism

Overall Summary Statement: Neo-scholastics set out to synthesize Aristotelian and Christian thought. In this way, they seem to rationalize theology, using the rational process to prove existing truth. These scholastics organize the data of revelation systematically by the use of Aristotelian deductive logic (Knight, 1989, p. 57). Thomas Aquinas worked within this philosophic framework, proposing a type of “God of the gaps” theory: “a person should acquire as much knowledge as possible through the use of human reason and then rely on faith in that realm beyond the scope of human understanding” (p. 57).

Metaphysics Summary Statement: Reason, and the very reasonable God, make up reality. What is natural is to be understood through the scientific process. What is not natural is to be understood through intuition, revelation, and faith. In a sense, then, neo-scholasticism has elements of both idealism and realism.

Epistemology Summary Statement: The mind is naturally oriented toward the rationality of the universe, and can take hold of certain truths by itself — the Fall did not fundamentally affect people’s ability to reason and discern truth. Truth is known primarily through self-evidences and revelation. Truth, however, can also be determined through synthesizing these primary truths with observed, apparently-true phenomena.

Axiology Summary Statement: The moral life is in harmony with reason. Good people place their wills and emotions under the authority of their intellects. Things are beautiful when they please the intellect, and is self-evident to artists.

Overall Purpose of Education: Those who develop their ability to reason and who accept the evident truths will become better people because it is reasonable to act virtuously. Schools which hold the neo-scholastic philosophy aim to develop in their students these abilities.

Nature of the Student: The student naturally has a potential to acquire truth and knowledge, and possesses the ability to reason. Some scholastics also believe that students should relate to God.

Role of the Teacher: The teacher decides what the students are to learn, with the intent that they develop their ability to reason accurately. Teachers need not be overly concerned with what their students *want* to learn. They are mental disciplinarians and, some hold, spiritual leaders as well.

Curriculum Emphasis: Mathematics and foreign languages such as Latin and Greek are of great importance in the neo-scholastic curriculum. Through these uncontaminated subjects, students come to understand the world and develop mental capacities which enable them to better understand the world.

Teaching Methodology: Just as physical exercise is good for strengthening the body, so mental exercise is good for strengthening the intellect. Classroom methods, therefore, include memorization (a key to learning a language) and training in logic (a key to mastering mathematics).

Major Functions of Education: Education should bring students to submit their wills to reason.

Role of Parent: The parent doesn't seem to play much of a role in the neo-scholastic philosophical model. Parents might even interfere in their children's education, since there are likely strong emotional bonds between child and parent; emotions are not to direct the will — the intellect is to direct the will.

Who should be in control of education: The teacher, who understands reason and has submitted his or her will to reason, directs the educational process.

Major point(s) of associated reading(s): Schaeffer (1968) points out that the 13th century scholar Thomas Aquinas played a key role in directing thought away from heavenly things (including what he labels "grace") and toward the unifying of nature and grace (p. 60). By the time of the Renaissance, nature had "all but overwhelmed grace" (p. 61). Unable to find the reasonable union of nature and grace, modern humanity has settled on a nature which is without meaning and a faith which is non-rational and contentless. At Aquinas' time, however, truth was *a priori* and discoverable.

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Philosophy Name: Pragmatism

Overall Summary Statement: Pragmatism, according to key contributor William James, is “the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, ‘categories,’ supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts” (in Knight, 1989, p. 68).

Metaphysics Summary Statement: It is doubtful that ultimate reality exists; and even if it were to exist, it is beyond the grasp of humanity’s empirical experience. Pragmatists’ concept of reality changes as humanity’s experiences change. In other words, no *a priori* truth exists in this dynamic and fluctuating world.

Epistemology Summary Statement: Truth is rooted in experience — it comes about through people’s interactions with their environment. Because experience changes from day to day, truth is relative. If a hypothesis is found to work today, it may be accepted as true today.

Axiology Summary Statement: As cultures change, so do values change — no moral system is universally binding. That which works for the good of society is that which is ethically good. Things are beautiful when they are perceived as being beautiful and make an emotional contact with the observer.

Overall Purpose of Education: Education is part of life, not preparation for life. The educational process should expose students to a variety of stimuli, since through engagement with their environment students become mature.

Nature of the Student: The student is the center of the educational focus, who is by nature good, according to the pragmatist philosophy. What the teacher has found important and true is not necessarily important or true for the student, since reality is in a state of flux.

Role of the Teacher: Teachers are learners along with their students, although they do have more experience and so are seen as guides of a sort. They set about to serve their students, trying to meet their expressed needs.

Curriculum Emphasis: Curriculum should be dictated by students' expressed needs, although traditional subjects (e.g., art, history, math, and reading) should be woven into it. The students' questions and experiences drive the curriculum, and so curriculum developers should be aware of the students' subculture. In the pragmatists' curriculum, process takes precedence over content.

Teaching Methodology: Students should be given a great deal of freedom to seek out those experiential situations that will be the most meaningful to them. Learning should not be all that different from the typical experiences one encounters away from the educational facility. Field trips, then, make for great learning experiences.

Major Functions of Education: Students should be taught to manage change in a healthy manner. They should be taught how to go about learning on their own.

Role of Parent: Parents have the potential of playing an important role in their children's education. Who knows better than they do what their children's expressed needs are? Parent-teacher organizations find their way into pragmatists' model of education.

Who should be in control of education: Student advocates dictate the educational process — this could include administrators, teachers, parents, or the students themselves.

Major point(s) of associated reading(s): Dewey was a member of the Humanist Society, which drew up the *Humanist Manifesto I* in 1933 (Schaeffer, 1990, p.24).

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Philosophy Name: Existentialism

Overall Summary Statement: Existentialism came about as a reaction to an apparent overemphasis on impersonal philosophy and religious expression. Individuals' emotions came to be regarded as as important as their intellects. Traditional logic came into question, becoming replaced by the, some say absurd, Hegelian dialectic. Individuals must utilize their freedom in an apparently purposeless world to make vital choices.

Metaphysics Summary Statement: Human experience is not describable in scientific or rational terms. Instead, individuals and their choices are at the center of existentialists' view of reality. There is no human nature — people become what they choose to become. Existence precedes essence; it is through their daily choices and struggle that people begin to develop what for them is reality.

Epistemology Summary Statement: Individuals decide for themselves what truth is. There is no external, *a priori* truth. It is through the conscious making of choices that truth is determined.

Axiology Summary Statement: “What,” asks the existentialist Sartre, “here and now, would be the least *phoney* thing for me to choose?” (in Knight, 1989, p. 82). In death there is no struggle, so in life one is encouraged to struggle with their personal understandings of which decisions are right and which ones are wrong. Things are beautiful if the individual finds them beautiful.

Overall Purpose of Education: Students should be trained to become creative individuals. They should not be instructed about the “right” answer, but be encouraged to consider options so that they might construct their personal answers.

Nature of the Student: Students should be considered not as mere receivers of instruction, but as individuals with whom instructors should identify and interact at a personal level.

Role of the Teacher: The existentialist instructor is seen as a facilitator who assists students in understanding themselves and their places in the world.

Curriculum Emphasis: Students should be allowed to dictate curriculum, to a degree, although existentialists tend to hold that the basics (reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies) should be presented in relation to the students' affective development. Although any subject that has meaning for the individual can be justified for the existentialists' curriculum, the humanities hold a special place since they assist students in addressing ideas which help them understand themselves.

Teaching Methodology: No methodology has been dictated for existentialist education, except that it should be varied and meet the needs of students. Regular and predictable instructional methods go against the creativity that existentialists intend to instill in their students.

Major Functions of Education: Education should develop the student as an individual; the individual should be encouraged and freed to make choices, since it is through creative choices that one manifests one's freedom.

Role of Parent: Nobody, including parents, has a right to make choices for the students. The students should be free to make their own decisions, developing their understanding of reality.

Who should be in control of education: The educational process should be geared toward meeting the needs of the students. Students and their advocates should therefore dictate the educational guidelines.

Major point(s) of associated reading(s): It is through a non-rational "leap of faith" that one comes to believe in God and profound things such as purpose, significance, the validity of love (Schaeffer, 1968, p. 22). Some went on to suggest that the leap itself was unnecessary — all that was required to validate oneself was to achieve a vague feeling of dread or angst of something beyond one's comprehension (p. 24).

Hemingway extends existentialist thought when he writes the absurd: "Our nada, who are in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is nada. Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas and nada us not into nada but deliver us from nada; pues nada" (in Barrett, 1962, pp. 283-284). Existentialism, led to its logical end, is meaningless.

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Philosophy Name: Progressivism

Overall Summary Statement: Progressivism was influenced greatly by pragmatists such as Dewey and Rousseau and psychoanalytics such as Freud. Denounced under this educational theory are the authoritarian teacher, heavy reliance on textbooks or bookish methods of instruction, passive learning by memorization of information and factual data, the four-walls approach to education that sought to isolate education from social reality, and the use of fear or physical punishment as a form of discipline (Knight, 1989, p. 94).

Metaphysics Summary Statement: Ultimate reality, if it exists, it is beyond the grasp of humanity's empirical experience. It is accepted that no *a priori* truth exists in this dynamic and fluctuating world.

Epistemology Summary Statement: Truth is relative. If it works, it is true. Knowledge which enables students to effectively manage experience is true.

Axiology Summary Statement: Value and beauty are also relative.

Overall Purpose of Education: Progressive education should equip children to discover and learn about the changing world around them. In the end, students should be enabled to learn by themselves.

Nature of the Student: The students are at the center of progressive education. As such, they are naturally expected to be actively involved in the educational process.

Role of the Teacher: Progressive teachers should be intent on harnessing students' interest in learning and discovering; in order to accomplish this, they act as advisers, guides, and fellow travelers. They should avoid impeding students' interests and drives. Instead of acting in an adversarial position, they should act cooperatively with their students.

Curriculum Emphasis: The curriculum is driven to meet students' needs, interests, and initiatives. Curriculum developers should devise curriculum in such a way that it is not so different from the world outside of the classroom.

Teaching Methodology: It should not be so separate from students' experiences outside of the educational facility. An instructor should consider engaging students in projects which confront them with situations that necessitate solving a variety of problems. Such projects might take days or months to complete. Competitiveness should be discouraged; cooperation should be encouraged, since that quality tends to contribute to a healthy society.

Major Functions of Education: Education makes people good citizens who are able to function in a democratic society.

Role of Parent: Parents should be allowed to involve themselves in their children's education, so long as they don't hinder them from having their expressed needs and interests addressed. As with the philosophy of pragmatism, parents likely understand their children better than instructors, and are able to convey to the instructors what should be taught.

Who should be in control of education: Children and their advocates should control the educational process.

Major point(s) of associated reading(s):

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Philosophy Name: Educational Humanism

Overall Summary Statement: Instead of being preoccupied with order and punishment, education should focus on helping students become “self-actualized” or “humanized” by focusing on health and growth. Educational Humanism has been influenced by both progressivist theory and existentialist philosophy. In addition, it has elements which are found in the writings of psychologists such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow.

Metaphysics Summary Statement: *A priori* reality is undiscernable, and likely inexistent. Instead, reality is what each individual makes it out to be.

Epistemology Summary Statement: Truth, like reality, changes from society to society, from individual to individual.

Axiology Summary Statement: Morality and beauty are defined by the individual, as in progressivist and existentialist systems.

Overall Purpose of Education: Humanist education aims to bring students to a state of freed self-actualization through a cooperative and democratic approach.

Nature of the Student: As with the progressivist position, the child is at the center of the educational process; the student is an active learner who should be encouraged to become self-actualized. As with the existentialist position, the child is treated as a unique individual who should be encouraged to search for personal meaning in his or her existence. The students are by nature good, and are expected to respond to their education with a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Role of the Teacher: As with the progressivist position, the teacher takes on a non-authoritative role. The instructor is seen not as adversary, but as guide, adviser, and fellow learner. Teachers should enable their students to make choices and pursue what interests them.

Curriculum Emphasis: The humanist curriculum is not rigid. Instead, it should be free to change with the students' changing needs and desires. Diverse materials and activity areas for teaching basics such as mathematics, art, and reading should be available for teachers' and students' use.

Teaching Methodology: The focus should not be on teaching, but on learning. There should be little emphasis on intense competition, harsh discipline, and the fear of failure. Instead, it should be recognized that students by nature want to learn. Methods which encourage the use of imagination and experimentation in fantasy fit into the humanist educational methodology. There should be no rigid schedule in terms of time or materials to be covered.

Major Functions of Education: Education should “seek to develop ‘free children’ who will be independent and courageous people who will be able to deal with the changing complexities of the modern world” (Knight, 1989, p. 102).

Role of Parent: Parents work together with school administrators and instructors to develop education policy which de-emphasizes their children's need to conform to others' expectations. Together with the school faculty and staff, parents see to it that curriculum loses its rigidity and authority.

Who should be in control of education: The educational process should be democratic, with students, parents, instructors, and administrators working cooperatively to develop goals and methods.

Major point(s) of associated reading(s): Schaeffer (1968) defines humanism as that part of humanistic thinking “that stresses the hope of an optimistic future for mankind” and “that begins with man alone, in order to try to find a unified meaning to life” (p. 178). The existence of God is not even addressed, since the answer is unknowable.

Becker (1932) lists four things which characterize humanist philosophy: Individuals are not natively depraved; the end of life is life itself; people are capable, guided solely by the light of reason and experience, of perfecting the good life on earth; and the first and essential condition of the good life on earth is the freeing of individuals' minds from the bonds of ignorance and superstition, and of their bodies from the arbitrary oppression of the constituted social authorities (p. 102).

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Philosophy Name: Perennialism

Overall Summary Statement: Perennialism stresses the importance of the mind, reason, and the great works of the intellectual past (Knight, 1989, p. 103). Instead of focusing on the students and their immediate expressed needs, this theory aims to provide students with tools that will free them to govern themselves when they are older. Concepts which had become influential in the West were taught through the humanities, including language and literature.

Metaphysics Summary Statement: Reason is the key to making sense of observed phenomena. Through application of the scientific method, one might come to better understand reality.

Epistemology Summary Statement: The Fall of humanity did not fundamentally affect people's ability to reason and discern truth. Perennialist spokesman Robert Hutchins claimed, "Knowledge is truth. The truth is everywhere the same" (in Knight, 1989, p. 107). *A priori* truth does exist, though, and students should be taught to conform to it.

Axiology Summary Statement: Although it has been influenced greatly by the neo-scholastic tradition, perennialism's axiology is closer to that of the pragmatists. That which has been shown to be most influential in building up the West is to be studied and appropriated. The study of classic literature, for example, is a central part of perennialism.

Overall Purpose of Education: Education should liberate people, setting them apart from other animals through the disciplined development of their ability to reason.

Nature of the Student: The student must conform to what is studied; the student is not the center of the educational endeavor, as in other theories. The school should not focus on what the students appear interested in studying, but on what will bring them to grasp the essential and eternal truths that relate to the role of individuals in human society.

Role of the Teacher: The teacher decides what the students are to learn, with the intent that they develop their ability to reason accurately. Teachers need not be overly concerned with what their students *want* to learn. They are mental disciplinarians and, some hold, spiritual leaders as well.

Curriculum Emphasis: The curriculum should include the study of languages, history, mathematics, natural science, philosophy, and the fine arts. Texts should include classics — books which deal with problems and ideas which, time has shown, “are not subject to the law of perpetual and interminable progress” (Knight, 1989, p. 108).

Teaching Methodology: Activities which discipline the mind are most important. Exercises in grammar, logic, and rhetoric are important, as are reading, writing, drills, and rote memory and computation exercises. Materials include original texts of great authors, rather than textbooks which merely describe various writers’ works in a “predigested” manner.

Major Functions of Education: Education aims to free people through the development of their intellect and submission of the will to reason.

Role of Parent: Parents have little to say about the curriculum, since time shows which texts and ideas are classical and worthy of investigation. It seems important that they provide their children with affective support, since perennialism doesn’t seem to concern itself with the students’ feelings as much as their ability to reason.

Who should be in control of education: The educated — teachers and administrators — should guide the students’ education.

Major point(s) of associated reading(s):

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Philosophy Name: Essentialism

Overall Summary Statement: Essentialism tends to be a less aristocratic (some would say less intellectual) response to the progressive educational movement's de-emphasis on grappling with the basics of learning and established facts. Instead of deriving its philosophic principles from Aquinas and other neo-scholastics, the underlying philosophies of essentialism are idealism and realism. The school's basic function is to transmit tested facts and truth rather than implementing innovational programs and educational frills.

Metaphysics Summary Statement: It is commonly accepted by essentialists that an external reality exists. This reality can be grasped in the mind and is determined, to an extent, by the same rules which govern physical artifacts and phenomena.

Epistemology Summary Statement: Truth exists and can be known and taught. Essentialists intend to construct an internally and logically consistent educational theory, one which is harmonious with the nature of the universe. Through intuition, revelation, and reason, and by studying physical phenomena which conform to Natural Law, they believe that one is able to determine truth.

Axiology Summary Statement: Essentialists recognize that virtue is determined and modeled by God. Behaving ethically, then, involves conformity to God, living in harmony with the Absolute Self and this being's Universal Moral Law. Values are determined by Natural Law. The natural universe plods along consistently according to certain rules, and so stable morality can be identified through the study of nature. Things are beautiful when they accurately reflect how things in nature are or how they can be.

Overall Purpose of Education: Education should teach students basic knowledge, which prepares them to act as responsible members of a civilized society. Educational facilities should not concern themselves so much with students' emotional well-being — at least not to the degree that progressivists do.

Nature of the Student: The immediate perceived needs of the students are not as important as the more distant goals that educators have set for them. With the instructor's assistance, students can be helped to "get down to the hard work of performing a difficult assignment."

Role of the Teacher: Teachers are the authority in the classroom, not a fellow learner with their students. They know what their students need to learn and know best how to present the material. Teachers are to be respected and, if necessary, are expected to discipline students who do not give them the respect due them.

Curriculum Emphasis: A 1983 report from the National Commission on Excellence in Education suggested that students study four years of English, three years of math, three years of science, three years of social studies, and one half year of computer science before their graduation. Essentialists include foreign language and history. Some essentialists add that religion classes should be a required subject for students. Texts, while including classics (as defined by perennialists), can consist of a variety of materials, including contemporary ones. Nonessential classes such as tap dancing and basket weaving have no place in the essentialists' curriculum.

Teaching Methodology: Methods include memorization and drills. Although students might not find these methods interesting, they are expected to discipline themselves to focus their attention to learn material presented to them.

Major Functions of Education: Through the educational process, students become prepared for study at a university or for healthy and responsible involvement in society.

Role of Parent: Parents are typically involved in their children's education under the essentialist theory. Many of them have become concerned that schools have become so wrapped up in "frills" that it is important to return to stricter discipline and a return to the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Who should be in control of education: Teachers are expected to direct the educational process. While their students might find the material difficult and, at the time, useless, teachers are assumed to know best what their students should be learning at a particular time.

Major point(s) of associated reading(s):

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Philosophy Name: Reconstructionism

Overall Summary Statement: Through education worldwide transformation might take place, bringing a superior social order with it.

Metaphysics Summary Statement: Reconstructionists seem to focus on the temporal more than on the eternal. Being an offspring of pragmatism, under this theory reality changes from time to time. Reconstructionists' concept of reality changes as humanity's experiences change. In other words, no *a priori* truth exists in this dynamic and fluctuating world.

Epistemology Summary Statement: Something is true if it works, and so truth is rooted in experience — it comes about through people's interactions with their environment. Because experience changes from day to day, truth is relative. If a hypothesis is found to work today, it may be accepted as true today.

Axiology Summary Statement: As cultures change, so do values change — no moral system is universally binding. That which works for the good of the new social order is that which is ethically good. The current value system is outdated — a product of an old and irrelevant time. It must be replaced. Things are beautiful when they are perceived as being beautiful and make an emotional contact with the observer.

Overall Purpose of Education: Education should bring people to embrace a more collectivistic economic system and democratic political system. People should be educated to act more responsibly and cooperatively with their resources and technology.

Nature of the Student: Students are good by nature; they are capable of making intelligent choices for the good of others. All they need is freedom and a honed ability to reason.

Role of the Teacher: Teachers have the power to make better human beings. In order to accomplish this, they should grasp as much power as they can and then “make the most of their conquest” (Knight, 1989, p. 118). Their approach to dialog must be

somewhat Socratic, although they must realize that their “answer” is not necessarily the right one for each of their students.

Curriculum Emphasis: A reconstructionist curriculum would consist of courses in anthropology, economics, sociology, political science, and psychology. Through courses of these types, students might come to identify controversial, conflictual, and inconsistent problems in society.

Teaching Methodology: Classroom discussion should be conducted in a democratic manner. While guiding the discussion, presenting information supporting their perspectives, teachers must not insist that their solutions are the only acceptable ones. They are free to make their position clear, however.

Major Functions of Education: Students should become conscious of the world’s problems and engage themselves in working toward a solution for them.

Role of Parent: Parents likely hold a worldview which is more conservative than that of reconstructionists. They should therefore have little influence over the curriculum or the manner of teaching.

Who should be in control of education: Students, and to a degree their instructors, should direct the educational process.

Major point(s) of associated reading(s):

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Philosophy Name: Behaviorism

Overall Summary Statement: People can be trained to behave in certain ways through the process of positive and negative reinforcement. Rewarding and punishing within the contexts of the educational system is an efficient means of shaping a society into a type of utopia.

Metaphysics Summary Statement: Reality is made up of things which can be scientifically observed — matter and motion. People are bound to operate according to the laws of nature. The spiritual cannot be scientifically measured, and so is non-existent; it is merely a term primitive thinkers use to explain unexplained phenomena.

Epistemology Summary Statement: Truth is defined within the confines of the laws of nature. God is irrelevant or absent, and so truth can only be ascertained through the scientific study of natural phenomena.

Axiology Summary Statement: Nothing should be valued over any other thing. The stuff which comprises a plant or a mud puddle is identical to the stuff which comprises a person. Because people are not free, but bound to behave according to certain predictable patterns, there is no right and wrong. Nothing can be labeled as more beautiful than another thing.

Overall Purpose of Education: Behaviorist educators aim to design a utopian culture. Through behavioral engineering people can become educated to act in a certain way; a society made up of these individuals will be characterized by a higher quality of life and an enhanced chance of racial survival.

Nature of the Student: People, including students, are merely highly developed animals who can be conditioned to behave in certain ways through things such as stimulus and response, behavior modification, teaching machines, and the phenomenon of association. If the child's environment is controlled, the child can be engineered into any type of person the educator wants.

Role of the Teacher: The behaviorist teacher is to create an effective learning environment through rewards throughout each small step of the educational process.

Curriculum Emphasis: The sciences make up much of the behaviorists' curriculum, since the laws of nature are best understood through the subject matter of nature. Mathematics should also be included, since it is a precise, abstract, symbolic system for describing the laws of the universe.

Teaching Methodology: Behavior deemed good should be positively reinforced. Bad behavior should be punished — or better yet, ignored. Instead of giving a great deal of reward for the successful completion of a project, rewards should be apportioned out during the entire process. The use of teaching machines can be of some use to instructors.

Major Functions of Education: Behaviorist education functions to produce members of a society characterized by a relatively high quality of life and a high chance of racial survival.

Role of Parent: If the parents support what goes on in the educational facility through positive reinforcement of their children's school-learned behavior, they are welcome to be involved in the educational process. If, however, their positive and negative reinforcements conflict with the instructors' teaching, their influence on their children should be limited.

Who should be in control of education: The instructors are accountable for the students' educational progress.

Major point(s) of associated reading(s): Few linguists agree with the precepts of behaviorism when applied to language acquisition; Skinner's model of verbal behavior does not adequately account for people's capacity to acquire language, for the abstract nature of language, or for a theory of meaning. "A theory based on conditioning and reinforcement is hard-pressed to explain the fact that every sentence you speak or write — with a few trivial exceptions — is novel, never before uttered either by you or by anyone else" (Brown, 1993, p. 23).

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