The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Education

Edited by

Nigel Blake, Paul Smeyers, Richard Smith, and Paul Standish

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Foreword

In a sense philosophy of education is as old as philosophy. Enquiries into the nature of knowledge, or of the good life, or of the just society, all involve, either explicitly or implicitly, questions about learning – about the practices people should be initiated into and the values they should come to espouse. Perhaps because of this pervasive presence, the history of the subject is a complex one. While in some countries systematic philosophical enquiry into educational questions has been well established over a long period (one thinks of the USA, Scandinavia, and Germany as prominent examples), in the United Kingdom sustained, self-critical academic study in this area is only some 40 years old. Starting at the height of the British Analytical Philosophy movement and deeply influenced by the work of a number of leading thinkers of the time, a small group of philosophers began to focus on educational questions, quickly produced a series of now classic writings, and initiated a new era of disciplined philosophical reflection on educational aims and processes. While drawing at times on thinkers across the history of philosophy it was nevertheless primarily a concerted attempt to elucidate and critically examine the conceptual relations, logical structures, and justificatory patterns within current educational ideals. Its distinctive impact on educational theory and practice was above all in the new rigor it brought to the discussion of important issues rather than any distinctively new educational beliefs or practical policies that it espoused. The significance of this new philosophical approach to education was however far-reaching and not only in the United Kingdom, since parallel developments were emerging around the world, not least in North America. Philosophy of education had in a new sense "arrived."

In keeping with the spirit of the times, however, certain substantive philosophical doctrines embedded in this new approach remained unexamined, presupposed not only in the prevailing traditions of educational thought that this pioneering work sought to elucidate but also in the philosophical methods it powerfully employed. It was to be some 15 or 20 years before critical attention was firmly focused on these topics and the emergent discipline moved into new, exciting, and more wide-ranging areas. Provoked by new demands on public education, due to widespread economic and social changes in Britain and elsewhere, and by major developments

in academic philosophy arising not only in Britain but in the USA and Continental Europe, philosophy of education progressively emerged as a much enriched and exploratory activity. Education came to be much more broadly conceived as ranging across all concerns to do with the personal development of human beings both individually and within all types of personal, social, and institutional relationships. The major philosophical doctrines of the Enlightenment, particularly those concerning human nature, reason, values, and social relationships, which figured so forcefully in the pioneering work in philosophy of education, came to be seen much more clearly within the evolving context of contemporary Western philosophy in general. In these circumstances the discipline itself matured into the dynamic domain it now is, contributing ever more significantly to our understanding of the most fundamental problems of educational theory and practice.

This *Blackwell Guide to Philosophy of Education* brings together a team of the most distinguished contemporary contributors to the subject. Internationally known as specialists working on the issues they here tackle, they are indeed fitting guides to current thinking on the crucial questions now central to the discipline. This volume thus celebrates what philosophy of education has become and what it has achieved. But it does so in a fashion that starkly reveals the deep importance of serious philosophical work if we are ever really to understand what education is all about and how best it can be undertaken in practice. This is undoubtedly a landmark volume, one much needed to inform current debates and one that should be much used by all those genuinely seeking to find solutions to the many pressing educational dilemmas that confront contemporary societies.

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Introduction

Nigel Blake, Paul Smeyers, Richard Smith, and Paul Standish

This collection is born of the belief that important and creative work is currently being done in philosophy of education. It seemed therefore worthwhile to bring together some of the themes and topics currently being addressed, and some of the writers addressing them. In this Introduction we set out to show how what appears in this book marks both changes from and continuities with the past. There are three parts: one focusing on the English-speaking heritage, one on the Continental European,[1] and one on the institutional constraints and possibilities of philosophy of education. We have set things out in this way because it is the conjunction of these three dimensions, we believe, that has in large part brought about the present fruitful condition of our subject.

I

There have always been philosophers interested in education, but for some education has occupied a central position in their social and political philosophy. Among the clear examples are Plato, Aquinas, Locke, and Rousseau, while Dewey went so far as to claim that education is philosophy "in its most general phase." Kant and Hegel also paid attention to the universities, and Nietzsche's writings are particularly rich with educational insights. Nor must it be forgotten that around the world there have been writers on education whose significance in their own time and within their own culture was immense, but whom modern philosophy of education has largely consigned to oblivion: we might instance Maimonides, Confucius, and Lao-Tzu. Philosophy of education is sometimes, and justly, accused of proceeding as if it had little or no past. Yet philosophy of education as a distinct subdiscipline, with its own literature, traditions, and problematics, did not develop until the nineteenth century. And to say even this is to refer to it as a discipline only in a much looser sense than we normally do today. It established its presence – as evidenced by publications, conferences, and academic appointments – slowly in the first half of the

twentieth century (see Kaminsky, 1993, for a detailed account). Two particularly significant milestones were the founding of the American Philosophy of Education Society in 1941 and the launching of *Educational Theory* 10 years later. In the mid to late 1960s what had been a toehold in the academy, in the English-speaking countries at any rate, became a firm footing. New journals were founded, including the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, and *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. A distinctive body of work began to appear, notably Israel Scheffler's *The Language of Education* (1960) in the USA and Richard Peters' *Ethics and Education* (1966) in the UK, followed by work by Paul Hirst and Robert Dearden and their colleagues at the Institute of Education in London. These writers and their pupils spread the influence of philosophy of education into the colleges and university departments of education throughout the English-speaking world.

The style of philosophy of education that became thus influential was, as is well-known, predominantly analytical. Following developments in "ordinary-language philosophy" in the English-speaking countries after World War II, analytical philosophy of education sought to bring a new rigor to its subject. Where students had been exposed to a rather woolly version of educational theory in which the various theoretical disciplines could barely be distinguished, and perhaps had acquired a nodding acquaintance with some ideas of the Great Educators (Plato, Rousseau, and so on), the new philosophy of education aimed for something more systematic. It saw its task as dispelling the confusions and mystification engendered by careless thinking: a conception that would have been familiar to philosophers as diverse in other respects as John Locke and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Being heavily rationalist and cognitive in its emphasis it tended to demarcate education sharply from enterprises such as socialization and therapy, and was generally critical of the "progressivism" of the time for blurring the crucial boundaries and losing sight of the content and purposes of education. Philosophers of education trained in this somewhat austere and uncompromising style learned to identify and expose fallacies in reasoning, to do battle against fundamental errors such as ethical relativism and the epistemological reductivism inspired by work in the sociology of knowledge. Among the highlights of analytical philosophy of education were two major collections: the significantly titled *Education and the Development of Reason*, edited by Dearden, Hirst, and Peters (1972), and Richard Peters' *Philosophy of Education* in the Oxford Readings in Philosophy series (1973).

Those inspiring this phase of philosophy of education's development saw themselves as aiming for a coherent and systematic rationalization of educational beliefs and practices. And this was to be achieved by importing the rigor and the supposed ideological neutrality of linguistic and analytic methods in philosophy proper. So ironically, just when the new student movements were launching critiques of the ideology of the era of "the end of ideology," and drawing on radical Continental philosophy to do so, the philosophy of education was applying to itself the methodological stringencies required of any discipline of the "postideological" dispensation, by appeal to recent developments in Anglo-Saxon analytical philosophy.

R. F. Dearden, who was himself a prominent figure in the (British) revolution, offers this characterization of the period of reform:

> Throughout the 1950's, and in direct response to developments in general philosophy, a new conception of philosophy of education was slowly forming and finding sporadic expression. But all of this was very far from a state of affairs in which it would become natural to think of educational studies as divided into various disciplines, of which philosophy of education would be one. Yet by 1977, Mary Warnock could uncontroversially open her book *Schools of Thought* by saying that "it cannot any longer be seriously doubted that there is such a thing as the philosophy of education". (Dearden, 1982, p. 57)

Dearden indicates the process of transition of philosophy of education from a loose and ill-defined area of discourse into a legitimate academic discipline: a transition accomplished by bringing the specialism into line with linguistic and analytic developments. Thus philosophy of education came to be seen not as ideologically fundamental to education but rather as epistemologically *foundational*: as the judge of matters of value and meaning, and the arbiter of appropriate theory for explaining human behavior in the educational sphere.

Much has changed in the quarter of a century since then. But if we have put together this volume partly in order to record those changes, it is not in order to celebrate the demise of the analytical movement. Analytical philosophy of education brought a refreshing impatience with jargon, cant, received opinion, and sloganizing of all kinds. Its insistence on the autonomy of education as a field of human endeavor is a legacy much needed in recent years. Its relentless pursuit of clarity and truth and its eye for the misleading metaphor still command respect, even if the metaphor of clarity might itself be, in the jargon of those days, "unpacked," and even if truth has now come to seem a little less innocent. These are qualities we need no less 25 years on, particularly where the increasing commercialization of education and the growing *dirigisme* of governments add their voices to the confusion.

Certainly there are criticisms that can be made, however, of analytical philosophy more generally. Analytical philosophy of education relied too much on the notion that the distinctions made in ordinary language, once recovered and clarified, have the power to sweep away the obscurities introduced by tendentious ways of thinking and writing. Its aspiration to map the logical geography of educational concepts was naïve in its supposition that there is such a geography, unitary and two-dimensional, to be definitively mapped. The analysis of such concepts, seen as a matter of clarifying the rules or conditions under which such concepts are used or applied, borrowed from the later Wittgenstein the notion of language as a rule-governed activity; but it was blind to the fact that the notion cannot disclose the necessary and sufficient conditions, or indeed foundations, which philosophers of education were looking for.

In the realm of ethics analytical philosophy of education was particularly ill-served by the tradition on which it attempted to draw. From Hume's devastation of religious faith, through to Ayer's derogation of moral and aesthetic talk as just persuasion (or a power game, as we would put it less politely today), pure analysis was always unfriendly to norms and values. The hard-headed, again supposedly anti-relativistic, positivism of this tradition brought with it, as its shadow, a pervasive scepticism about norms, notoriously marginalized as "nonsense" by the application

of any form of the verifiability principle. Yet educators need to see normative talk as reasonable if they are to avoid either limp agnosticism about values on the one hand or dogma on the other. It is true, moreover, that the analytic approach took from empiricism various ideas on whose solidity subsequent work has cast doubt. Such ideas often had the effect of limiting the scope which philosophy of education took for itself. In the case of the "is–ought gap" or "naturalistic fallacy," for example, the effect was to reduce the rich field of ethics to a matter of making "value judgements." Recent re-examination of empiricist epistemology has shown up its own inherent subjectivist and relativist tendencies: tendencies making it unfit for the antirelativist role which some still seek to enlist it for.

As it emerged as a discipline of education, philosophy of education found itself as much in competition as in partnership with the other disciplines, especially sociology. In particular, issues concerning objectivity and relativism were bones of contention between the disciplines, and easily moved to the center of philosophical concern. It sometimes treated philosophizing as *merely* a matter of exercising techniques, as if they could be brought to bear irrespective of the material or topic under analysis, and without any great knowledge of matters of substance. It was therefore largely insouciant about the history of philosophy, and about work being done in cognate areas of philosophy (such as political philosophy or aesthetics). Lastly, it almost wholly ignored work being done outside the English-speaking countries.

The Wittgensteinian equation of objectivity with intersubjectivity provided pointers to worthwhile new directions. With this intersubjective turn came a new philosophical interest in the social and in social practices, so necessary for any serious consideration of education. And this in turn disclosed anew the hitherto overlooked rationality of those practices associated with the normative sphere – of moral deliberation and political debate, of the arts, or of the religious way of life, or even of the worlds of work or sport. Indeed, it brought with it a real doubt that any rational practice can be conceived without internal norms, over and above the norms of epistemic coherence. But not even a post-Wittgensteinian form of linguistic analysis would suffice to secure the depth of insight into the rationality of the ethical, the aesthetic, or other normative spheres which philosophers of education needed. The analyses of the language of morals by R. M. Hare, for instance, went not much beyond identifying the purely formal requirement of universalizability as a criterion of moral claims, and seemed actually incapable of justifying any substantive moral commitments. (And of course, this approach left aesthetics without even this formal support.) So even in its renovated form analysis remained inadequate. For analytic philosophers of education, particularly needing some way to conceptualize freedom, equality, respect for persons, democracy, and justice, the deontological tradition in ethics required closer attention, and necessarily this involved recourse to Kant and Kantian universalism (see in particular Peters, 1966).

In what has become a classic paper, Abraham Edel (1972) argued that analytic philosophy of education was at a crossroads: it had not fulfilled its promise. Further criticisms came increasingly, and especially, from younger scholars concerned with the problems of teaching in periods of intense social transformation, and who could not see guidance coming from an analytic philosophy of education which they saw as just irrelevant. A balanced overview here must involve a critical appreciation both

of the strengths of the Kantian influence on philosophy of education at this juncture in its development and of its limitations.

By the mid-1970s in the UK the seminal work of Richard Peters and Paul Hirst established as paradigmatic a constellation of interests and arguments which in retrospect appear, if anything, yet more tightly interknit even than they seemed at the time. An education for the citizens of a liberal democracy was necessarily a politically unbiased education, rather than indoctrination. Thus the curriculum would be grounded in the recognition that certain activities were intrinsically worthwhile, rather than instrumentally opportune – politically, economically, or in terms of social control. And of these worthwhile activities, a special educational importance attached to those informed by intelligent understanding of forms of knowledge, because a diverse group of discrete forms of knowledge in turn underlay, conjointly, the rationality constitutive of personal autonomy; and such was the legitimate personal autonomy that precluded indoctrination in a liberal democratic state, while properly guiding the thoughts and actions of mutually respectful and responsible democratic citizens. Thus autonomy was both a primary educational aim (some went so far as to say the uniquely overriding educational aim), and respect for the autonomy of pupil or student was a major requirement in teaching.

The depth of the Kantian influence here can be appreciated by noting the pervasiveness of various conceptions and instantiations of autonomy, over and above those explicitly mentioned. To identify any activity as *intrinsically* worthwhile is to secure an *autonomy of values* from social, political, or cultural demands. To differentiate forms of knowledge is to demonstrate their *mutual autonomy* – the independence of truth and rationality in, say, the sciences from truth and rationality in politics or philosophy. In both these respects, while the actual arguments of Peters and of Hirst, in particular, seem proximately inspired by Wittgenstein's notions of language games and forms of life, the earlier authority for these ideas is clearly found in the trinity of the Kantian Critiques, of Pure Reason, Practical Reason, and of Judgement: critiques which secure the mutual autonomy of scientific, ethical, and aesthetic rationalities, and particularly the autonomy of ethics.

We have here a further indication of why philosophy and sociology at that time sat so badly together, and also a clue to later developments. Where the philosophers so strongly emphasized differentiation, mutual independence, the illegitimacy of non-rational forms of influence between people, disciplines, institutions, and forms of life, sociology tended to do exactly the opposite, preferring to locate education within totalizing syntheses – that, for instance, of Talcott Parsons if not that of Marx. (Many philosophers, in contrast, are more at home with the post-Kantian Weber.) Typically, the sociological emphasis was precisely on the heteronomy of both the individual and his or her ideologically determined thinking. But ironically, it is precisely since social and cultural theory have themselves begun to embrace the skepticism toward totalizing theory that Lyotard (1984) announced, and that philosophy of education always evinced, that philosophy itself has begun to display, to bend a phrase from Lyotard, "incredulity towards autonomy." And with this increasing incredulity has come a drift away from analyticity.

As the agenda of education changed through the 1970s and 1980s (we heard less, for instance, of tradition as conservative educational policies took increasingly

instrumentalist and vocational forms), and as internal problems with the deontological perspective became clearer, other influences began to make themselves felt. Aristotelian emphases in ethics re-emerged, drawing partly on the new Oxford naturalism of Foot, Anscombe, and the Warnocks, but more strongly on the post-Marxist social philosophy of Alasdair MacIntyre and, later, the work of Charles Taylor and of other critics of liberalism, such as Michael Sandel. Martha Nussbaum's literary reception of Aristotle was also an important influence. But these later developments, some of which were characterized as communitarian, were themselves, of course, sometimes reactions to that modern monument of the deontological tradition which is the theory of justice of John Rawls – work whose influence in English-speaking philosophy of education cannot be exaggerated, and which underpins a small academic industry in political theory of education in the USA. In the USA too Scheffler's legacy, rooted in the philosophy of science, bore rich fruit.

There were at the time distinctive problems and issues that began to turn attention away from an analytical and Kantian approach. First, problems with liberalism itself grew sharper as, in many parts of the English-speaking world, particularly the UK, USA, and New Zealand, government by the New Right threw into relief the ambiguity of liberalism between political and economic forms, an ambiguity not widely regarded as compatible. While economic liberalism brought with it its own set of internal problems in relation to educational provision, choice, segregation, and privilege (see Part II), it often also brought with it social (and educational) authoritarianism, vividly so in the UK and USA. This in turn heightened and exacerbated the already brewing dissent of those social groups who felt themselves, and typically were indeed, marginalized by the social mainstream. Multiculturalism in education was the first index of such problems (ill-distinguished from issues of race), while identity issues revolving around gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and religion were soon manifest as well. If these problems were most dramatic in the USA (where fundamentalism emerged as an important issue) they were nonetheless salient across the whole developed, and indeed the developing, world. (South Africa's special problems need particular acknowledgement in this context.)

Thus issues about identity and community became important at the same time that liberalism was increasingly questioned in its own right. The supposed formal neutrality of liberalism was first doubted, then increasingly, under communitarian scrutiny, impugned as inadequate to explain the imperative character of the moral, or to legitimize substantive moral beliefs. Since the authority of liberal neutrality depended significantly on its suprasocial appeal to the universal Good Will of a transcendental and purely formal post-Kantian ego, and since the doctrine of the ego had so little to say to the new concerns with identity and community, a neo-Kantian perspective finally seemed an irrelevance to many in the field. Ethical universalism has come to seem no longer compelling but problematic.

When we turn to the Continental European scene below, we note that a perceived crisis of modernity manifested itself there as a crisis of legitimacy for educational theory and fostered a re-examination of the theory–practice question. The perceived crisis of liberalism in the English-speaking educational world constitutes a crisis of modern legitimation in its own right. Since none, after the political impact of the New Right, can disregard the nonphilosophical aspects and roots of this crisis, it is

not so surprising that the social concepts of modernity and modernism have also achieved salience in the English-speaking tradition of educational studies. And if the pre-eminent theorist of postmodernity, Jean-François Lyotard, characterizes the postmodern by the demise of Grand Narrative and the rise of small narratives or *petits récits* (Lyotard, 1984), it is no surprise that theories of postmodernism have spoken loudly to many educationists now concerned with issues of identity and pluralism, including many philosophers. So it is that in the English-speaking world as well as in Continental Europe debates about modernity, legitimacy, and practice have sprung into new life in philosophy of education, along with renewed scepticism about universalism, both in ethics and epistemology.

Thus many philosophers of education today face anew two fundamental questions for their own orientation: if, with the demise of universalism, theory can no longer claim universal validity, then how are we to characterize *practice*, both in education and philosophy of education; and where might theory come from, if there is still any need for theory at all? Aristotle and the hermeneutic tradition have proved helpful resources to those who wish to argue for the autonomy of educational practice: a response which solves the theory–practice problem by dissolving it. Increasingly it has been claimed that education is itself a practice with its own internal rationality, mediated by tradition, which does not need to be informed by external theory from the "disciplines of education," including philosophical value theory, and that practical action in education should not be conceived on a technicist model of the application of high-level generalizations to particular cases. It is in this context in particular that there has been a revival of interest in Deweyan pragmatism as a form of resistance to the idea of philosophy as foundational for educational theory and practice.

If a new scepticism about universality weakened any familiar felt need for theoretical foundations for practice, this was just as well, given that philosophy generally was, it seemed, abandoning any pretence to offer foundations. To search for foundations is to try to discriminate truth claims by relating them, typically by analysis, to more fundamental claims whose truth can be certainly known, and thus universally acknowledged. There are those who fear – and those, particularly of a sociological cast of mind, who hope – that to abandon a search for foundations is to abandon any idea of truths that can transcend particular circumstances, contexts, languages, discourses, or theories. But these are further questions. To give up the project of discriminating truth by reference to foundations is not to give up any faith in truth at all. It does not translate directly into a new relativism, though some will no doubt wish to lead it in that direction. It does, on the other hand, encourage deep reconsideration of the ways in which language relates to practices and realities, from social institutions to personal experiences, from literature to philosophy and on to the sciences, from self and discourse to teaching and learning.

Accordingly, it was not just in pragmatism, newly vivified by Quine, Sellars, and especially Richard Rorty, that the search for foundations was repudiated as a profound philosophical mistake. Postanalytic developments in philosophy of science in the English-speaking world pointed the same way, and slowly it became better appreciated that the same lessons had always been there in the later work of Wittgenstein (and of post-Wittgensteinians such as Ryle and Strawson) for those

who looked deeply enough to see them. And it is no coincidence that, by the 1990s, English-speaking philosophers were more ready than they had been for a long time to read and take seriously continental philosophers: Critical Theorists, post-structuralists, deconstructionists, hermeneuticists, and phenomenologists (speaking very roughly) such as Heidegger, Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida, Habermas, Gadamer, and Levinas. For all these theorists, in some way or other, also reject the search for foundations as mistaken. And once the battle over foundations is given up, a deeper conversation as to what philosophy really can do and how it should properly be written takes on a new international resonance. So it is also no coincidence that the institutional field of philosophy of education has enjoyed extensive internationalization in the last decade, much helped and encouraged, as in any other academic sphere, by the new opportunities for communication and research afforded by the Internet – an internationalization reflected significantly by the range of contributors to this book.

If educational practice, then, does not need theory in quite the way it was once thought to, why does theory flourish and its forms proliferate? Theory thrives in part because educational practice itself has come under extreme pressure from a new managerialism, whose aim, in Lyotard's famous analysis, is to maximize the "performativity" of the economic system. This new educational pragmatism, impelled by globalization, seems to be draining practice of normative interest and validity. The traditions that have long mediated teaching and learning are currently under radical assault from managerialist reformers, operating within a taken-for-granted worldview of economic crisis. Globalization, it is claimed, exacts competitive supremacy in vocational achievement from populations, reductively conceived as workforces. The cost of failure is steep economic decline, and the rights and interests of individuals as citizens, and as autonomous subjects of action and experience, necessarily dwindle, if not vanish, in interest and importance. (The personal delight of Lifelong Learning is often proposed as the solvent for such embarrassing dichotomies.)

The theories informing this new managerialism are of course fiercely unphilosophical. They theorize themselves either as common sense or as positivism, innocent as they are of the profound problems that beset positivism and that have long invalidated it in its original home in philosophy. The new theoretical emphases are on statistics and the countable, on observation and testing, on the useful and on "what works." Its new watchwords are skills, competences and techniques, flexibility, independence, targets and performance indicators, qualifications and credentials, learning outcomes. Profound objections, from both theoretical and practical perspectives, to these shibboleths are angrily dismissed as idle or self-indulgent diversions from brute educational necessities, and often regarded as complicit with the failures, some real and some confected, of a 1960s educational progressivism. The standard under which this movement marches is itself that of "raising standards."

Those in philosophy who deplore and resist, in part or in whole, this suborning of the educational tradition need a new recourse to theory. The autonomy of education as a practice itself needs protection: a protection whose aims and understandings in turn need theorizing. Theory is required, in this instance, not as legitimation for principles and actions but as a form of deeper reflection on the nature and implications of the very educational enterprise. Conceived like this, the role of theory

begins to look like interpretation rather than explanation (and we remember at this point that Wittgenstein described the role of philosophy itself in very much the same way). The new managerialism is characterized as much as anything by its vocabulary, style, and use of documentation, in its discourse and its archives. So a philosophical interest in discourse and dialogue and ways of theorizing them begin to seem as important in resistance to managerialism as it is for theorists of practice. The Continental tradition seems particularly fruitful in these respects. A close reading of texts, canons, and discourses can be profoundly revealing, holding perhaps the power to commend anew the educational tradition before managerialism. The post-structuralist movement has also taught us ways to "read" the human subject: it discloses a new appreciation of the splintered and beleaguered subjects of experience and action themselves. Deconstructionism in particular has heightened awareness of the interpretive depths and subtleties of education as a play of texts, discourses, and readers. If the subject is ineluctably caught in the play of knowledge and power, it is still well worth asking, "what knowledge and which powers?"

II

In Continental Europe, philosophy of education developed out of the educational thought of Kant and Herbart.[2] Here the approach to philosophy of education was always academically more securely rooted in the philosophical canon. Because they did not face the same needs of professionalization, Continental writers have displayed a general lack of interest, to date, in English-speaking linguistic and analytic philosophy – though with some notable exceptions – and a greater interest in social and anthropological theory and social philosophy. In contrast to the postwar English-speaking world, where philosophy of education concerned itself primarily, though not exclusively, with analysis and accounts of schooling, the Continental counterpart was mainly concerned with problems in the wider field of child-rearing. Its central theme was the transition between childhood and maturity, and the induction of the child into cultural tradition, while it conceived this enculturated maturation as a form of emancipation (*Bildung*). This program, along with its critiques, both unequivocally entrenched in the Enlightenment tradition, has dominated the development of the discipline in Continental Europe. From this philosophical position, education can appear to be the "means" to becoming properly human, that is to say *rational.* In escaping the tutelage of one's inclinations and passions, by putting oneself under the guidance of reason, one realizes – makes real – one's true nature. But the conception of education as a "means" to this "realization" was not interpreted in a narrowly instrumental means–end fashion, as is sometimes alleged. Nor was it intended as any form of individualism, for the condition of rationality was potentially universal for humanity and, being prospectively the same for everyone, precluded false consciousness and alienation.

The *Bildung* paradigm is now being seriously challenged. Radical social demands, reflecting a heightened sense of cultural pluralism, have caused crises in education, in Europe no less than in the English-speaking world, and these have naturally

induced a parallel crisis, concerning what schooling still has to offer, in Continental philosophy of education. Some, however, would go further and locate these problems as aspects of a wider crisis of rationality itself. The questions at the heart of it are whether reason, and reason alone, can ever be a valid guide to action, and even whether rational thinking is ever the objective and universal guide it claims to be – questions that have pressed themselves from Nietzsche onwards. (For the British heirs of empiricism, of course, much of this anxiety goes back as far as Hume.) Phenomenology, existentialism, neo-Marxism, the Frankfurt School, and other traditions have all attempted a rational critique of the overambitious Enlightenment project of rationality, in the spirit of "the critique of reason by reason" which is itself part of the tradition of the Enlightenment. In particular, criticisms have been made of a technicist or means–end rationality which some claim to find implicit in Kant's philosophy, and of problems involved in a Kantian notion of "becoming human."

Another widespread perception, shared in the English-speaking world and Continental Europe, and of course far beyond, is that we have reached a turning point or even the terminus of "modernity." Whether our new condition is conceived as advanced modern, late modern, or postmodern, any such predicament necessitates the re-evaluation of the educational program outlined above, the reconsideration of what might be preserved and what might be discarded. Not surprisingly, the traditional approach or framework of education has been criticized by twentieth-century philosophers of education themselves, drawing on the critical insights of movements such as those mentioned above.

As we hinted earlier, changing notions of philosophy of education accompany shifting concepts of education no less than new developments in philosophy. In Northern Europe, the principal concern in education for radical critics is typically the child-centered movement, or "reform-pedagogy." For them, legitimate child-rearing can no longer be characterized simply as an activity pursued by adults in order to bring children to adulthood, since this seems to entail a kind of instrumental manipulation of the child. The validity of a post-Kantian idea of *Bildung* is thus now in question. But not all take this radical route. Across different centers of philosophy of education, a varied landscape emerges. Some philosophers of education continue to follow the traditional paths as if nothing has really changed. After all, within the traditional North European approach several paradigms could always be found: phenomenology, existentialism, transcendental (Kantian) pedagogy, critical rationality, *geisteswissenschaftlich*-hermeneutic, and critical-emancipatory.

A leading traditional approach to the theory–practice problem is the insistence on *Allgemeinbildung* (see Klafki in Tillmann, 1987; Pleines, 1987), which could be translated as "general development." One of the aims of *Allgemeinbildung* is self-determination. Its general character can be justified by reference to Kant's practical philosophy and the recognition of human freedom as an aim in itself. Education is necessary because, in practice, Kantian self-determination is not given but achieved and requires cultivation by a teacher. The curricular content most suited to self-determination has to be specified and justified, and this raises problems concerning the epistemologically general and the morally universal, and questions of the relations between self-determination and communal solidarity. In response, Oser (1986) draws upon Kohlberg's investigations of the laws of the development of moral

reasoning in the individual. And of course this traditional approach has been echoed in the English-speaking tradition.

Nonetheless, in general, the scene is dominated mainly by those who have put these positions in question (see for instance *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik*, 1990, vol. 36, no. 1). Some of these writers, particularly in the German literature, see the late modern crisis of educational theory as one of legitimation or justification, and so discussion of the relationship between theory and practice is widespread. As in conservative circles in the English-speaking world, some see theory and practice as straightforwardly reconciled by an appeal to "common sense" (see Herrmann et al., 1987). But what exactly is common sense, and just how "common" is it? Post-Marxists speak rather of *praxis*, of a critical practice, in education as elsewhere, itself suffused by defeasible theory, while a basic claim in the anti-Marxist *system-theory* of Luhmann and Schorr (1982) is that theory cannot formulate any rules for the legitimation of actions. Instead, educational practice must be characterized by the self-sufficiency of the system. Indeed human agents themselves have to be understood as a self-referential system, and this too, it is argued, is incompatible with any technicist kind of approach. But systems theory does not legitimate practice. Rather, it problematizes the very demand for legitimacy, as itself nothing more than an internal function of a given and ineluctable system.

However, just as Habermas, in his later work, resists the cynical pessimism of Luhmannian systems theory, the radical *critical-emancipatory* tradition, which draws importantly on the Frankfurt School, also shares many of the interests in autonomy of *Allgemeinbildung*. Thus, the critical-emancipatory tradition survives in the Continental tradition, though it has never flourished widely in the English-speaking world. For the latter, it is the pessimism of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) that seems most characteristic of Frankfurt before Habermas. But even in Continental Europe this particular phase of Critical Theory had nothing to say to education. If reason entails distantiation from a prereflective bond with nature, and thus the possibility of transforming nature into an object to be dominated, then the consequent fear of being dominated, as part of nature oneself, induces a will of domination over others. So if education is the cultivation of reason, it is also a key to domination – a "scandalous" belief, repudiated in the English-speaking world in reaction against the student revolts of the late 1960s. By contrast, the critical-emancipatory tradition proper to Continental Europe has been able to draw on both the earlier and later work of the first Frankfurt School and the constructive work of Habermas and his circle. This remains relatively poorly known in the English-speaking world, though it is possible to trace a line of descent through to interest in discourse ethics in North America.

More recently, a different radical reaction to the blind alley in which education allegedly finds itself has been *antipedagogy* (see Giesecke, 1987). An education that depends upon preparation for the future for its "justification" cannot be justified if established knowledge can no longer be relied on as a guide to a rapidly changing future. In such circumstances, education is but a form of socialization, inducing a loss of personal responsibility, and the manipulation of relationships and of communication. For some philosophers of education in Northern Europe, this suspicion has evolved into a full condemnation of all pedagogy. It was this position, at the end of

the 1980s, that evolved into a full-blown postmodernism, a repudiation and deconstruction of foundational conceptual frameworks and of the kind of rationality that has come to dominate the Western world.

III

The nature and development of philosophy of education has been strongly affected by its relationship to two institutional issues with which, particularly in the English-speaking countries, it has always been closely connected: professional teacher education, and educational research. In many countries teacher education has changed radically over the past 40 years, and this change is directly related to an altered conception of the relevance of theory to practice. The discipline-based study of education in initial teacher education has been displaced in many countries by what is presumed to be a more practical approach – one that often involves a kind of deskilling of teachers, notwithstanding its espousal of the vocabulary of skills and competences. Whereas in the past educational research fed directly into initial teacher education, the tendency now is for there to be a greater separation: on the one hand, there is the training in skills and competences that will equip teachers to deliver the curriculum effectively, while on the other hand research is expected to orientate itself more and more to providing the evidence that may influence or inform policy. It goes without saying that the increased prominence of external funding in the support of research accelerates this trend.

These changes have occurred against a backdrop of uncertainty about education at two levels at least. In the first place there has been a tendency to doubt the success of teachers in preparing young people to live in an increasingly complex world; in some countries teachers are routinely blamed for failure in this respect. Secondly, the credentials of educational research have been called into question: while some have castigated it as "barmy theory," the more common response within the academy, if not among the wider public also, is to see it as lacking in scientific credentials, and as loaded with ill-founded ideas and spurious jargon. These factors have led to interference and change in the study of education in the university, and have engendered an unsteadiness and self-consciousness within the academic community about its role and about the rationale for its research.

In the light of this, the currently burgeoning literature on the methodology of educational research is no surprise. Questions about the relation between quantitative and qualitative research are legion, dominated at one extreme by an anxiety to live up to the highest standards of empirical science and at the other by a desire to align research with the insights and approaches of postmodernism. As for social scientific rigor, there are two factors that militate against achieving it. The first is the sheer complexity of educational practice and the consequent difficulty and questionable justifiability of isolating factors for study. This is a problem not only of coping with the number of variables that impinge on any educational practice but of acknowledging and dealing adequately with the essentially contestable terms that characterize such practice. Thus, in connection with the problem of multiple variables,