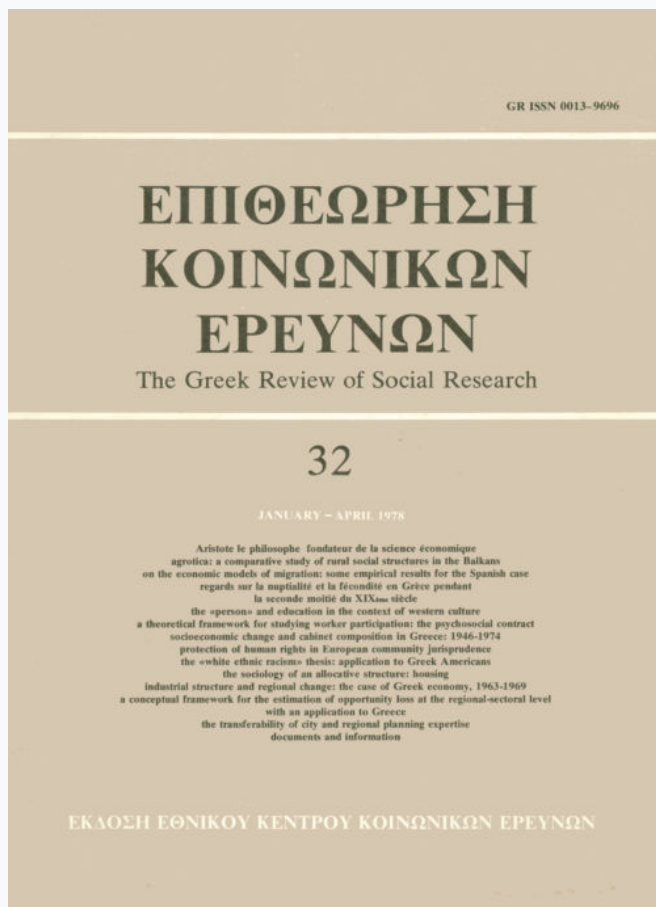


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## The "person" and education in the context of western culture: An essay in the philosophy of education

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# the «person» and education in the context of western culture

*An Essay in the Philosophy of Education*

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One of the ways to describe human beings is to say that they are «persons». It is assumed that important implications for educational discourse can be drawn from the concept of human beings as «persons». This becomes obvious in a general way when we ask what the result of denying that human beings are persons would be. The concept can be regarded as a categorical one when we use it to refer to what human beings fundamentally are. However, we are going to explore two other important conceptual areas where the notion of the person is thought to be relevant to education. The ethical principle of «respect for persons» proves significant for governing the teacher's relationship with the children he teaches (pupils). Equal regard will be paid to the claim that education should be considered, basically, with the «development of persons».

It has been suggested by L. A. Reid, in his book *Philosophy and Education*, that «'persons' can mean nearly anything and almost nothing», and such a statement draws our attention to the philosophical problems of meaning and justification, as well as to the difficulties involved in analysing such a general term, which should be overcome before we examine the relations between the concept of «person» and education.<sup>1</sup> The difficulties arise from the multiple ways of using the word «person».

The root meanings of «person» reside in the words «persona» (Roman) and «πρόσωπο» (Greek). In both cases «they are used to refer to people as not just biological individuals».<sup>2</sup> They refer to the mask, or image, which a man presents to the world, and also to the real person who speaks through the mask.

«In its legal use, it stands particularly for the notion of someone being a subject to rights, including a corporate body.»<sup>3</sup>

These meanings develop into terms referring to the moral and social significance of human beings, hence the present-day view of person as «an assemblage of roles».<sup>4</sup> It becomes clear that there can't be a definite answer to the question of the fundamental nature of human beings, for there is more than one correct way in which to use the word. Its meaningful use is limited by the different assumptions and beliefs on which the various senses of the word «person» are based.

In *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, B. F. Skinner offers an explanation of human nature fashioned according to empirical and scientific methods. He draws general conclusions from observed phenomena based on the underlying assumptions that human be-

1. L. A. Reid, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction* (London, 1962), p. 63.

2. Dorothy Emmet, *Rules, Roles and Relations* (London, 1966), p. 177.

3. Emmet, p. 176.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

haviour is subject to the same laws of cause and effect which govern the physical world. He asserts

«that it is the environment which acts upon the perceiving person, not the perceiving person who acts upon the environment».<sup>5</sup>

Human behavior is regarded as the result of responses to the forces of reward and punishment. In behaviouristic terms: we pursue and value as good that which reinforces us, and we call bad and avoid what negatively reinforces us.

«A scientific analysis of behaviour dispossesses autonomous man and turns the control he has been said to exert over to the environment.»<sup>6</sup>

The familiar usage of the term «person» makes it synonymous with «man», or «human being», and brings to mind a concrete image of a human being. The empirical concept of the «person» applies to the readily recognizable, ordinary appearance and presence of a living human body. However, we can substitute human being for person without a loss of meaning, only if we concede that human beings are by nature purposive and assertive. Then we could explain human behaviour in terms of reasons for action and not in terms of determining antecedent causes. To force the model of scientific explanation on human behaviour, and as a result to hold that human behaviour is merely a response to contingent negative and positive reinforcement is to deny that human beings are persons in any meaningful sense of the word.

In the process of examining the usages of the word that distinguish it from the concept of existent human being we will need to refer to the ideas and views of philosophers.

Through the process of deductive reasoning, Descartes arrived at the belief: «I think therefore I am». The essential characteristic of human being and the necessary condition for his existence as a person was consciousness, or self-consciousness. Descartes put it:

«'I am' precisely taken refers only to a conscious being; that is a mind, a soul (animus), an intellect, and reason—words whose meaning I did not previously know. I am a real being, and really exist, but what sort of being? As I said, a conscious being (cogitans).»<sup>7</sup>

Identity of the body is distinct from «personal» identity. The usual, common way of discriminating be-

tween one person and another is by means of the characteristic features of their bodies. However, if the person is conceived of as a spirit possessing only a point of view on the world, how are we to differentiate one spirit from another? The emptiness of the Cartesian concept offers ground for the Kantian assertion that there are a number of selves residing in a particular body at a particular time. And this is the result of equating an immaterial substance, the owner of mental states and the body, with the person. Hume, moreover, was unable to explain how the mind could unite experience without there being a subject of awareness as the means unification. He said:

«when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other... I never catch myself at any time without a perception, and can never observe anything but the perception.»<sup>8</sup>

Descartes' attempt to identify the concept of the «person» with a mental sub-stratum, and Hume's counter-assertion that such an entity cannot be discovered in experience, may both be rejected, for they refer to a passively observing mind receiving impressions and sensations from the outside. The empirical concept of a subject of experience refers to bodies which are capable of having impressions and sensations.

P. F. Strawson attempts to resolve the mind-body problem and uses two kinds of predicates to describe persons: the M-predicates, which can be applied both to persons and material objects, imply the possession of a physical body and serve as the only means of identification; the P-predicates can be meaningfully applied to persons, and they imply the possession of consciousness. To the question of how we are able to ascribe states of consciousness to ourselves he answers that

«One can ascribe states of consciousness to oneself only if one can ascribe them to others. One can ascribe them to others only if one can identify other subjects of experience. And one cannot identify others if one can identify them *only* as subjects of experience, possessors of state of consciousness».<sup>9</sup>

Strawson argues that both the mental and the physical are attributes of persons; the «person» in the underlying entity to which both mental and physical states are ascribed. Hence, the concept of the «person» is «logically primitive», which

«is the concept of a type of entity such that *both* predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal charac-

5. B. F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (London, 1971), p. 184.

6. Skinner, p. 200.

7. Elizabeth Anscombe, and Peter Thomas, *Descartes: Philosophical Writings* (London, 1954), p. 69.

Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'* (London, 1930), pp. 460-462.

8. P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense* (London, 1966), p. 169.

9. Strawson, *Individuals* (London, 1959), p. 100.

teristics, a physical situation, as equally applicable to a single individual of that single type».<sup>10</sup>

Through the process of social learning we acquire a conceptual scheme which enables us to ascribe P-predicates both to ourselves and to others. Our knowledge of ourselves comes from the consciousness of our own mental states, but that of others comes from their behaviour and especially their language, which becomes the main source of our information about them. Language enables us to ascribe M-predicates and P-predicates to persons who are necessarily bodies, centres of consciousness, can think, or can reason and who have sensations.

The concept of the self arrived at by Wittgenstein is not an immaterial substance, empirically unidentifiable, but transcendental, the basis and the limit of all experience at the same time. The «metaphysical self» is the necessary precondition of the existence of an intelligible world. It is the limit of the world since what could not be known by the self would not be part of the self.

5.62 The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of *language* (of that language which alone I understand) mean the limits of *my* world.<sup>11</sup>

5.631 am *my* world (the microcosm).

5.631 There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.

5.632 The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world.

5.633 Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found?

5.641 Thus there really is a sense in which philosophy can talk about the self in a non-psychological way.

What brings the self into philosophy is the fact that «the world is *my* world».

The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world—not a part of it.<sup>12</sup>

Although the possession of a body is considered to be a necessary requirement for the application of the notion of the person, there's no specific requirement that it be of the human variety. Locke brought out the distinction between «human being» and «person». He suggested that a parrot that could be heard to «discourse, reason, and philosophise» could be thought of as a person but definitely not as a man-human being. For Locke, person

«stands for a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places, which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and, as it seems to me, essential to it».<sup>13</sup>

10. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

11. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London, 1961), p. 115.

12. Wittgenstein, pp. 117-8.

13. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1964), p. 211.

There is need to distinguish persons from machines and from animals. With the great advancement in cybernetics and the progress in the construction of computers and generally of thinking machines, we may find it difficult in the future to deny that machines, namely, robots, are persons. We already attribute P-predicates to machines simulating the human mind. In the discussion of whether mechanical robots should be conceived of having feelings, or not, Ronald Puccetti argues that

«even the most idealised humanoid machine, if it is really a machine, cannot qualify as a person. What really cuts a machine off from the community of persons is not, therefore, a necessary lack of consciousness, but a highly probable lack of feeling».<sup>14</sup>

Scriven, however, asserts that if a robot is programmed with the language of feelings it should be regarded as having feelings.<sup>15</sup> Persons as embodied minds can be thought of as having thoughts and experiencing sensations, but Locke's formal use of the concept distinguishes persons from animals on the basis that the former can reason and talk, whereas the latter can not. Although, human persons belong to an animal species, they can be distinguished from animals by their «rationality», the use of language, and their ability to enter, or not, into personal relationships.

Jonathan Bennett, in *Rationality*, argues that the capacity humans have to follow rules or give reasons for their behaviour presupposes ability to relate not only what is present but also what is past by means of universal judgements. He claims that

«the expression of dated and universal judgements is both necessary and sufficient for rationality, and thus that linguistic capacity is necessary but not sufficient for rationality».<sup>16</sup>

The ability to theorise and reminisce facilitated by the use of sophisticated language enable the human person to elaborate very complex conceptual schemes. This idea of rationality agrees with Locke's concept of the «person», especially when we refer to the important functions Locke took the concept to have. «Person» was for him a «forensic» term only to be applied «to intelligent agents, capable of a law, and happiness and misery».<sup>17</sup> Only those beings who can remember past actions, who are aware of a continuing self and rationally plan future actions, can be held responsible in law for their actions. The forensic use of the term implies an important distinction within the category of human beings: between those

14. Ronald Puccetti, *Persons: A Study of Possible Moral Agents in the Universe* (London, 1968), p. 49.

15. Puccetti, p. 29, p. 55.

16. Jonathan Bennett, *Rationality* (London, 1964), p. 94.

17. John Locke, p. 220.

who can and those who cannot be held responsible, or partially so (e.g. the insane, and young children).

The notion of moral agency must be mentioned. A person in the possession of a body and a conceptual scheme can experience emotions and this capacity is characteristic of moral relationships. Having feelings and experiencing emotions due to the possession of a body, enables one to understand what it is to have similar feelings and emotions. Puccetti, thus, refers to a «person» as a «moral being».<sup>18</sup> The human person is a moral agent at the same time both moral object and subject.

«The proper application of 'moral' predicates to an entity is the *sine qua non* of correctly designating that entity a 'person'».<sup>19</sup>

The specific world-view associated with the concept of person may have different consequences for human behaviour. The empirical scientific explanation of causally determined behaviour comes as a threat to the forensic concept, for the predictive power of science may have serious implications for man's legal accountability and accordingly for the whole concept of moral responsibility.

The distinction between behaviour in accordance with a rule and behaviour which follows a rule should be made if we are to understand the nature of a human agent acting in an intentional manner, formulating rules to guide action in the future. The distinctively human actions can be understood only in terms of reasons rather than in terms of antecedent causal effect. To follow rules means that the rule-follower will be able to supply a reason for what he does. To be a responsible moral agent it is necessary to be initiated into the distinctive concepts and rules which constitute morality and which give meaning to moral actions. A child cannot be held responsible until he has learned to understand what stealing, lying etc. mean.

The forensic concept of the person makes sense only if we refer to human action in terms of reasons and purposes. The possibility of making decisions of social significance is crucial for the ascription of moral responsibility and is presupposed in the use of moral concepts if they are to have any meaning. But if, as Skinner believes, human behaviour is caused, then blame should not be attached to actions for which men are not responsible. Punishment in the form of referring back to what someone has done would, therefore, lose its meaning, and the main task, Skinner suggests, should be to organise men's behaviour in a socially desirable direction. He suggests that, once we have done away with autonomous man

and the notions of freedom, choice, and moral responsibility, we can produce people who are invariably good. The forensic term becomes meaningful as a part of the world-view in which man is regarded as free, rational, capable of purposive activity. The growth of consciousness of oneself as an individual person with rights and duties belonging to oneself as a result of merely being a person, is a relatively late social phenomenon.

With the growth of self-consciousness when one's role is no longer considered as the only determinant of one's duties and purposes in life, the specification of educational aims becomes problematic in the same way as the justification of moral, or evaluative judgements. In education the problem arises as to how a person ought to be educated rather than setting prescribing norms for training in the performance of particular roles. It becomes plausible to state as an educational ideal what Rousseau presents in *Emile*:

«Before his parents chose a calling for him nature called him to be a man. Life is the trade I would teach him. When he leaves me, I grant you, he will be neither a magistrate, a soldier, nor a priest; he will be a man.»<sup>20</sup>

The principle of respect for persons and the notion of the development of persons are the areas where the concepts of education and the person seem to be significantly related. In both cases, since the term «person» carries normative overtones and is, therefore, value laden, it is used for making evaluative conclusions.<sup>21</sup>

G. J. Warnock believes that «the essence of morality is 'respect for persons', and perhaps also in the idea that there are 'natural' rights, independent of status or any special claims».<sup>22</sup> The fundamental nature of the ethical principle of respect for persons is to be taken at least in its prescription of limiting conditions on how we ought to treat other human beings. The limitations, which respect for persons places on our purposes is that, if they are to be moral, they should never involve the use of other persons solely as instruments to achieve our ends. As Kant believed:

«Rational beings... are called «persons» because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves—that is as something which ought not to be used merely as a means—and consequently imposes to that extent a limit on all arbitrary treatment of them».<sup>23</sup>

and at another instance he asserts:

20. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* (London, 1911), p. 9.

21. P. H. Hirst, and R. S. Peters, *The Logic of Education* (London, 1970), p. 58.

22. G. J. Warnock, *The Object of Morality* (London, 1971), p. 150.

23. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (New York, 1964), p. 96.

18. Puccetti, p. 13.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

«... reverence is regarded as the 'effect' of the law on the subject and not as the 'cause' of the law». «All reverence for a person is properly only reverence for the law (of honesty and so on) of which that person only gives us an example».<sup>24</sup>

R. M. Hare considers the basic principle of morality to be that whatever rule a person applies to others he must be willing to apply to himself. There's a negative and a positive aspect to the meaning of respect for persons. It is negative because to respect another human being involves the avoidance of arbitrary interference, and indignity. In a positive sense respect for persons suggests the active seeking of happiness for others. A justification of the principle of respect for persons lies in it being a necessary presupposition of a «moral» form of life which takes seriously what it is to be a person.

Kant's idea is taken up and reconstructed by R. S. Peters. The agent or person is viewed as forming judgements, acting according to beliefs, and exerting regulation upon his participation in personal relationships. For Peters, the concept of «person» is normative and is characterised by

«the fact that consciousness is individuated into distinct centres, linked with distinct physical bodies and with distinctive points of view».<sup>25</sup>

However, this conception of person is meaningful only when the above characteristics are «taken to be a matter of importance in a society», where the individual is allowed to participate in a variety of social contexts, and is treated with respect.<sup>26</sup> Isaiah Berlin in his *Four Essays on Liberty* gives a long account of what is taken to be free to do things, and what liberty consists of.

«The 'positive' sense of the word 'liberty' derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master. I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind.» «I wish to be a subject, not an object»; «I wish above all to be conscious of myself as a thinking, willing, active being, bearing responsibility for my choices and able to explain them by references to my own ideas and purposes.»<sup>27</sup>

If it is granted that children are persons, or potentially persons, then the principle that they are owed respect is of obvious relevance for the teachers in the teaching situation. The concept is both an ethical principle prescribing modes of actions and an ethical attitude influencing one's outlook for other people. How does the principle of respect for persons apply to educational situations?

It is generally accepted that children have rights which should be recognised. To deny that children

are persons as part of the argument that human behaviour is causally determined is to reject the concept of moral responsibility and moral agency. However, we claimed that these are essential if sense is to be made of what we ordinarily understand by human experience. There is another difficulty to deal with, namely the different ideas about what constitutes respect in specific educational contexts.

H. J. Eysenck in the article «The Place of Indoctrination in a World of Rationalists» argues in favour of the causal account of human behaviour, and indicates consequences for education. In his words:

«Human conduct is essentially determined by irrational forces such as the hedonistic laws of reinforcement; reason has its main, if not, its only function in serving to facilitate the fulfilment of desires and needs which it can only recognise but not control».<sup>28</sup>

Human behaviour is to be explained in terms of punishment and reward. The task of parents and teachers, he concludes, is to indoctrinate the young into the set of values they support. In Eysenck's argument there can be no rational basis for the values into which the young are initiated. Indoctrination is morally objectionable. The indoctrinated man will have a closed mind and accept uncritically the doctrines he has been brought up not to question.<sup>29</sup> To indoctrinate is a case of showing disrespect to a person; and indoctrination is normally contrasted to forms of teaching which claim to enable the individual to make decisions based on a rational appraisal of all the relevant issues.

When we punish a child do we show lack of respect to him as a person? As in the cases of indoctrination the answer depends on what the «person» is taken to be. Some people claim that it is when a person is punished for wrong doing that respect is shown to him as a person, for, then, he is regarded as a rational agent capable of choice and able to suffer the consequences. To abolish punishment would imply that men are not able to choose. However, why should punishment be maintained since it is often ineffectual and indeed counter-productive? A possible outcome of punishing a child in school might be to alienate him from all that school stands for. If a child is punished, in view of the fact that it is not going to do him any good but only to serve as a lesson to others, then this would be a case of treating a person as a means and not as an end; hence, a case of lack of respect. The case put forward by some educationalists is that the only reasonable use of punishment in schools, or elsewhere, which doesn't imply lack of respect for children as persons is in the

24. Kant, p. 69.

25. R. S. Peters, *Ethics and Education* (London, 1966), p. 211.

26. Peters, p. 211.

27. Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (London, 1969), p. 131.

28. H. J. Eysenck, «The Place of Indoctrination in a World of Rationalists», *The Rationalist Annual* (London, 1967), p. 9.

29. T. H. B. Hollins, *Aims in Education: The Philosophic Approach*, John Wilson, «Education and Indoctrination», pp. 24-46.

intention of reform. Views of punishment for reform and punishment as retribution, although at odds with each other are allowed to be held in the educational context. It is true that children can learn to hate school, because they associate it with the threat of punishment; so one should consider psychological and sociological factors connected with the child's background in deciding how to deal with disobedient children. Nevertheless, punishment can be a means through which a child will learn what it is to be a member of a moral community and what membership of this community requires of its members. It is in this sense that he is being respected and honoured as a rational being.

We should now examine the real status of children as persons, for the notion of the inevitable immaturity of children has important effect, on the question of what ought to be taught and the question of how it should be taught. Forensically speaking, children below a certain age are not persons; they are not regarded as moral agents and moral actions are not imputed to them. A child is considered impulsive and as having not developed a pattern of rule-following for his goals. Following Kant, Piaget explains the moral development of children in terms of two concepts: autonomy and heteronomy. For a child to be autonomous it would be necessary for him to understand the rules he obeys and how they rest on reasons. It would also be necessary for him to abide consistently by these rules in practice. Since the child is thought to be deficient on both these grounds, he is most likely to be guided by the commands and sanctions of parents and others rather than by his own efforts and choices. The child's relation to rules in such a case is called by Piaget: «heteronomous». Although children are not «autonomous» persons they are still persons, hence bearers of rights. As A. I. Melden writes in his book *Free Action*,

«How except in human terms can a human being be understood? — Still, a child acts and so does an adult, so there must be something in common; and what they have in common is, surely, that both act, both are persons.»<sup>30</sup>

The argument that children should be respected as persons is related to the general demand for democracy in schools, and for more freedom for the child in education. «Child-centred» progressive theories of education can be conceived as attempts to highlight the notion that children are persons. Many practical benefits can be gained from introducing democracy, more freedom and adopting a child-centred approach. The progressives argue against authoritarianism and claim that if children are not treated as persons they are less likely to develop as

persons. The progressive demand that education should be centred on the child has consequences for how the child should be taught which will in turn have an effect on the content of what is taught.

Beside the instrumental value of democratic participation in important decisions, the principle of respect for persons demands that schools should be run democratically. Democracy could possibly be defined in terms of the principle of respect for persons whose origin lies in the notion of a person as a free, self-determining, moral agent capable of shaping his own life, i.e. able to develop an assertive viewpoint. Any restriction on a person's freedom must necessarily involve the subjection of one man's interests and purposes to the interests and purposes of another and this runs against the belief that persons should be treated as ends in themselves. John Stuart Mill argues against coercion of the individual even when coercion is regarded to be in the individual's own interests. Hence

«In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute.» «Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.»<sup>31</sup>

In *Interest and Discipline in Education*, P. S. Wilson defends the child-centred approach to education on the grounds that in teaching one should start from the interests of the child, for otherwise there is the danger that the child's mind will be prevented from developing; the assumption is that growth can come only from the existing interests. A teacher-centred method will lead to the closing of a child's mind since what the teacher is interested in is not necessarily what the child is interested in.<sup>32</sup> An opposite view to Wilson's is to be found in R. S. Peters' concept of an «educated man». He specifies what the end state of the process of education should encompass. There are many things a child must learn at school, which he is not particularly interested in and can barely understand, but which once taught to him will enable new interests and greater understanding to develop. The principle of respect for persons may justify both a compulsory curriculum and also the child-centred views. A lot depends on the particular standpoint we adopt towards the concept of the child as a person. If childhood is seen as the time when the capacities for future development as a person grow, the obligation to help the child acquire knowledge and experience seems strong. Thus, helping the child is to show respect to him as a person. In the process of moral education a child has to acquire habits and concepts he may not fully understand at the time. If the even-

31. John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government* (London, 1972), p.73.

32. P. S. Wilson, *Interest and Discipline in Education* (London, 1971), p. 88-89.

30. A. I. Melden, *Free Action* (London, 1961), p. 198.

tual aim is to enable the child to practice the habits he acquires in a discriminating fashion then there is no indoctrination and, therefore, no disrespect for persons. A child must submit to the discipline of teaching, because it is improbable that its mind can develop to any great extent solely out of his own unaided resources. There is the point that if children are always treated as children they will never grow up to be the mature responsible educated adults. However, it is equally mistaken to treat children as if they were adults before they acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to adulthood.

Examples in recent history indicated that it is fairly easy for people to treat other human beings as if they did not exist as persons. The Nazi extermination camps are an example, and forms of racial discrimination can be looked at as denying human beings their full dignity as persons. Especially in America the total lack of recognition that Negro children are persons gave rise to a number of forms of arbitrary discriminations in the area of education. They are still considered as «things» whose moral demands may be ignored. In the cases of indoctrination, paternalism, punishment, and coercion, persons at least were respected in that they were thought valuable enough to be manipulated and conditioned. Respect for a person in whatever context demands an understanding of him as an individual with a distinctive world-view, and set of values. Only in this way shall we know how to help and encourage him, and what to guard against in our own attitudes and actions towards him. The demand is from underprivileged groups of people that there should be a minimum degree of equality in consideration for all human beings, regardless of the label which contingent genetic, or social circumstances might have given them. People should not be denied the opportunities to develop their talents because they happen to have a coloured skin, or belong to a certain socioeconomic class. Moreover, equality of opportunity is not enough; it must be ensured that children have equal opportunity to use their intelligence as well as to acquire intelligence, since it is meaningless for opportunities to be offered when the necessary intelligence to take advantage of them does not exist.

We shall now look into the relationship between the concept of the «person» and educational aims. The surest guide as to how men ought to be educated might be in the notion of what they essentially are. Glenn Langford in *Philosophy and Education* expresses the view that «to become educated,... is to be successful in learning to become a person».<sup>33</sup> In his 1970 revised paper entitled «Education and the Edu-

33. Glenn Langford, *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction* (London, 1968), p. 60.

cated Man», Peters presents two contemporary concepts of «education»: the first, preserves an earlier notion of upbringing, or rearing, or instructing; the second, gains meaning through its connection with the notion of the «educated man». Important is the emergence of an ideal centering around the development of persons, which essentially became constitutive of a more sophisticated idea of education. Peters states:

«the notion of 'educated' as characterising the all-round development of a person morally, intellectually and spiritually emerged only in the nineteenth century». «...though before the nineteenth century there had been the ideal of the cultivated person who was the product of elaborate training and instruction, the term 'an educated man' was not the usual one for drawing attention to this ideal». «Nowadays, especially in educational circles, the concept of an educated man as an ideal has very much taken root.» «...those working in educational institutions... have become very sensitive to the difference between working with this ideal in mind and having limited and specific goals, for which they use the word 'training'».<sup>34</sup>

The suggestion is of a historical transition in the nature of an ideal from that of a «cultivated man», interpreted in a very general way, to that of an «educated man», which incorporates (a) the idea of a development to which knowledge and understanding made a significant contribution; (b) an emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, for the educated man is not restricted to an instrumental kind of understanding; and (c) the notion of the all-round development of persons.<sup>35</sup> When education is discussed in terms of an ideal, and where it is linked with human development, the inbuilt notion of an ethical requirement is inescapable. It is obvious that some normative idea enters into the processes thought to operate for the betterment of those concerned. Thus Peters in *Ethics and Education* expresses that

«given that 'education' suggests the instrumental bringing about of a desirable state of mind in a morally unobjectionable manner, it is only too easy to conceive of education as a mental process that is instrumental to something that is worthwhile which is intrinsic to it».<sup>36</sup>

Talking about the relationship between an ideal and an aim or a set of aims, Peters in his 1970 paper says that

«any statement about an aim or about x's aim of education, emphasises features of a person that are part of the understanding of what it means for him to be 'educated'. Of anything that we can call an aim of education we can also say 'So that's what you take an educated person to be like'».<sup>37</sup>

34. R. S. Peters, «Education and Educated Man», *Education and the Development of Reason*, pp.9-10.

35. Peters, pp. 3-11.

36. Peters, *Ethics and Education* (London, 1966), p. 27.

37. Peters, «Education and the Educated Man», p. 15.



Dewey in *Democracy and Education* defines education as

«...that reconstruction or reorganisation of experience which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience».<sup>38</sup>

and the concept of development in educational terms means

«(i) that the educational process has no end beyond itself; it is its own end; and that (ii) the educational process is one continual reorganising, reconstructing, transforming».<sup>39</sup>

The idea of learning is understood as becoming and not as acquisition; «education» is to be understood as concerned with bringing about a cognitive transformation as a contribution to the all-round development of a person.

The concept of the person for which we have been arguing all through this paper and its connection with education becomes more obvious in the form of education called «liberal education». P. H. Hirst claims that the origin of the notion of liberal education is a Greek ideal and dates back to Plato and Aristotle. Moreover, he says that

«whatever else a liberal education is, it is *not* a vocational education, *not* an exclusively scientific education, or *not* a specialist education in any sense».<sup>40</sup>

The value of liberal education is not its instrumentality, but its intrinsic value for the pursuit of knowledge as the essential good for man. It is, as Socrates would say, better for a rational agent to know, than to remain ignorant. A liberal education was regarded «as freeing the mind to function according to its true nature, freeing reason from error and illusion and freeing man's conduct from wrong».<sup>41</sup> The chief characteristic is that it is comprehensive, i.e. it is concerned with «the range of knowledge as a whole», and the initiation into various forms of knowledge familiar to human experience.<sup>42</sup> The notion of liberal education also implies the education of the «whole man», for it refers to the development not only of understanding but also of aesthetic judgements and moral awareness. It can also be understood in terms of the Socratic ideal of the search for «the good»—the attempt to discover and to act according to the standards of excellence and truth—which becomes the principle of unity and direction for one's life.

38. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York, 1944), p. 76.

39. Dewey p. 50.

40. R. H. Hirst. «Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge» in *Education and the Development of Reason*, p. 391.

41. Hirst, p. 393.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 408.

It is needless to stress that liberal education frees the individual from anything that could prevent him from developing «as a person». It is not claimed here that human beings who have not had a liberal education with an emphasis on «personal development» are not persons. The relevance of liberal education lies in the implicit assumption of rationality and enlarged awareness guiding personal development, self-directedness, and self-control. The ideal of «personal autonomy», as Dearden puts it, suggests a growth in self-awareness as a critical agent.<sup>43</sup>

It must be made clear that the scope of liberal education is neither limited to a specific number of academic subjects, nor incompatible with the acquisition of professional skills. If vocational education is made to be more than training and designed to promote feelings of worthwhileness in individuals it contributes to their development as persons. However, the pressure for specialisation as a result of the rapid expansion of knowledge justified on utilitarian and functional grounds is a threat to the concepts of liberal education and the rational agent. Utilitarianism as an educational phenomenon is to be found in the value of education as a means to a useful end. The criterion of usefulness is a dominant guideline for educational systems in preparing individuals for the function they are to perform in society. Some branches of knowledge (e.g. science and mathematics) provide more material benefits than others; therefore, specialisation in these is justified in terms of their utility. J. S. Mills stated the principle of utility to be

«that happiness is desirable...., as an end; all other things being only desirable as means to that end»;

and that

«the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable is that people do actually desire it».<sup>44</sup>

However, the problem arises as to the extremes to which utilitarianism can lead, for on what grounds should some desires be preferred to others? We are ready to object to the immoral use of control over human persons of the type presented in A. Huxley's «Brave New World» and George Orwell's «1984», which is consistent with utilitarianism. People should not be controlled by powers over which they can exercise no control whatsoever. The means-ends utilitarian view of education is readily opposed and contrasted to the aim of liberal education towards an understanding of rational principles guiding judge-

43. R. F. Dearden. «Autonomy and Education» in *Education and the Development of Reason*, pp. 461-464.

44. John Stuart Mill, p. 32.

ment. A.C. MacIntyre in «Against Utilitarianism» is arguing for liberal education as the means by which people learn to discriminate between their own desires and the socially induced wants and tastes, through the development of critical ability and intelligence.

The functional view of education is also inimical to the concept of liberal education, for it implies a manipulatory attitude towards persons, in the sense that the educational system satisfies society's needs for people to perform specific functions and to conform to

the social roles provided. The practice of over-specialisation is an impediment to the development of persons, because of the limitation it imposes on persons' minds, and, therefore, is discrepant with the ideal of the «whole man».

Skinner's views about changing behaviour through conditioning should be rejected in favour of the educational methods which aim at producing beliefs based on rational critical argument. Freedom should not be only freedom from methods of control, but freedom to reject on a rational basis the beliefs guiding control.

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