

## Educational Consequences

Rorty's philosophical deficiencies have important educational consequences. In order to see what these are, it is necessary to see what the implications of his positions are for the questions asked and answered by philosophers of education.

### *An Analytic Approach*

One possible approach begins by asking for a definition of *education*.<sup>i</sup> As James E. McClellan puts it, "'education' is sometimes puzzling in the distinctively philosophical way terms such as 'real' and 'meaningless' and 'value' are puzzling, and for much the same reasons."<sup>ii</sup> In other words, *education*, like *justice* or *murder*, is a contested concept, rival definitions of which express differing outlooks: just as what some people call "justice" others call "looting," so what some people call "education" others call "indoctrination."<sup>iii</sup> And the tension that leads to such disputes is built into our commonsense concept of education itself, which reflects both the intention to convey some definite content -- including some definite moral and evaluative beliefs -- and the desire that students should see "for themselves" the truth of what they are taught. As McClellan remarks, "to speak vulgarly, if you start out committed to transmitting what's worthwhile to kids in such a way that the *kids* will become committed to it, you're inevitably going to violate their 'wittingness and voluntariness.'"<sup>iv</sup> From Rorty's perspective the conceptual approach is hopeless: there is on his principles no reason -- at least if I can persuade my peers to accept my definition -- I should not count as teaching the abuse of students with racial and sexual epithets (or anything else a person employed as a teacher might choose to do). A version of this view has in fact been defended, under the name of "Komisor's Law": "there is nothing one could *do* that one could *not* do with valid

pedagogical intent."<sup>v</sup> But Komisor's Law is false: it is not possible (intentionally) to kill a person with the intention of teaching him something, even if one believes that after death God will do the teaching. And even if one accepts Komisor's Law, not everyone who intends to teach in fact teaches.

### *A Historical Approach*

Perhaps a historical approach will prove more useful. In a useful survey<sup>vi</sup> William Frankena formulates three questions to which philosophers of education from Aristotle to Dewey have given distinctive answers.

- (1) *What* dispositions are to be cultivated? *Which* dispositions are excellences?
- (2) *Why* are these dispositions to be regarded as excellences and cultivated? What are the aims or principles of education that require their cultivation?
- (3) *How* or by what methods or processes are they to be cultivated?<sup>vii</sup>

Thus, for example, Aristotle's philosophy of education is directed towards cultivating, in those persons capable of them, the moral and intellectual virtues, the chief of which is contemplation. Such virtues are to be cultivated because they are necessary to human happiness (or flourishing), as well as to the welfare of society. Aristotle's philosophy of education is politically conservative; it seeks at most the perfection of the existing constitution. (I pass over the complications that possibility of conflict between the requirements for goodness as a human being and goodness as a citizen may engender.) And the inculcation of these virtues or excellences requires, in the first place, a painful period of training.<sup>viii</sup>

Likewise, for Kant the aims of education are to instill into the pupil skills, prudence, knowledge, and (most importantly) moral virtue. In other words education promotes both natural and moral perfection, aims corresponding to the phenomenal and the noumenal side of the self

respectively. (By *prudence* Kant does not mean Aristotelian practical wisdom, but rather the art of achieving one's aims whatever they might be.) Teachers should also help bring about a new social order -- what Kant calls a regime of "perpetual peace" -- while conforming externally to the laws of the state in which they live. Providing education is a duty -- not one all people owe one another, but a special duty parents (and elders generally) owe the rising generation. In the performance of this duty they must respect the pupil's freedom and autonomy, but this does not mean, for example, giving nothing but non-directive counseling. On the contrary, education for Kant requires discipline and even a moderate asceticism so that the rising generation can learn to subordinate their inclinations to the requirements of duty.<sup>ix</sup> Dewey's views on the aims of education are not easy to pin down: statements like "Since in reality there is nothing to which growth is relative save more growth, there is nothing to which education is subordinate save more education"<sup>x</sup> leave us with a vaguely progressive taste in our mouths, but no way of finding out whether our present direction of movement, as individuals or as a society, is in fact progress rather than degeneration. Jacques Maritain has pointedly compared education without a general aim to architecture without any conception of the sort of building one wants to build.<sup>xi</sup> (In partial defense of the pragmatist view, a human being is never completed in the way a building is.)

Nonetheless, Dewey is right in opposing talk about the aim of education, if by that is meant some earthly state of affairs entirely distinct from the process of education itself.<sup>xii</sup> And it is possible to formulate his educational goals in oblique and approximate terms.

Dewey rejects both Aristotle's distinction between moral and intellectual excellence, and Kant's distinction between natural and moral perfection, as well as the more commonplace liberal distinction between morality and prudence in the sense of self-regarding virtue. "Morals," he writes, "are as broad as acts which concern our relationship with others. And potentially this

includes all our acts, even though their social bearing may not be thought of at the time of performance."<sup>xiii</sup> This doctrine plainly excludes Rorty's attempt to combine public liberalism with private ironism or aestheticism.

Negatively speaking, he opposes the fostering of any disposition out of keeping with the naturalism and experimentalism of his philosophy, in particular the transmission of either traditional philosophy or traditional forms of religious belief. On the positive side, he encourages reflective intelligence (as opposed to passive acceptance of inherited ideas), faithfulness in personal relations, devotion to democracy (and not only because our constitution happens to be democratic), aesthetic taste, and faith in the humanistic religion Dewey preaches. Education along these lines is, in Dewey's own words, "the fundamental method of social progress and reform."<sup>xiv</sup>

Underlying Dewey's views on education are two overriding aims: to release the potentialities of the individual, and to bring about a better society. He massively assumes, in the teeth of much evidence concerning the demonic side of both individuals and societies, that these aims are both compatible and mutually supporting. This philosophy means -- in sharp contrast with the tradition that emphasizes discipline and even asceticism as central features of education -- that "the child's school years must be made good in themselves and not taken as mere means to later years or another life."<sup>xv</sup> Yet Dewey defends discipline, insofar as it tends "to the power to recognize what one is about and to persistence in its accomplishment."<sup>xvi</sup>

In practice, Dewey's philosophy implies that teachers should take advantage of the child's active nature, and direct his activities in the desired direction. Maritain agrees. "The mind's natural activity on the part of the learner and the intellectual guidance on the part of the teacher are both dynamic factors in education, but ... the principal agent in education, the primary dynamic factor or propelling force, is the internal vital principle in the one to be educated; the educator or teacher is

only the secondary -- though a genuinely effective dynamic factor and a ministerial agent."<sup>xvii</sup> For Dewey, traditional culture is not to be suppressed altogether, but must be acquired only through first-hand activity on the children's part. Schools should be equipped with kitchens and shops as well as laboratories and libraries. In the catch phrase, children must learn by doing. In traditional curricular terms, history, while not to be eliminated altogether, is to be reduced in importance in favor of science. Method and subject matter are thus fused in Dewey's educational program.<sup>xviii</sup>

Dewey's philosophy of education is an expression of a new faith, hostile both to traditional religion and traditional philosophy. A central tenet of this faith is the harmony of individual fulfillment and social justice. Education for Dewey is a way of spreading this faith, and of as painlessly as possible preventing the transmission of older views to subsequent generations. Democracy is therefore not merely a system of government, but (Dewey hopes) the common religion of all citizens of a democratic society. In Rorty's philosophy of education, we see what happens when this faith collapses.

Rorty as much as Dewey is opposed to the dualisms that pervade the educational philosophies of Aristotle and Kant. But for Rorty, education must be concerned to inculcate two different sorts of dispositions -- a sense of social justice, conceived broadly along the lines set forth by Rawls; and an ironic detachment from all the mores of society including those that reflect a Rawlsian conception of justice. His philosophy thus shares the civic aims of older philosophies of education, without establishing any connection between these aims and the personal qualities it endeavors to foster. This dualism is indefensible on Dewey's principles, as on any other of which I am aware; it is tied in practice to a form of liberal democracy that no longer relies on serious and reflective belief in the rightness of its governing principles.

To the question, why these dispositions are worthy of cultivation, Rorty has no answer -- or rather he systematically refuses to recognize the legitimacy of the question. He believes neither in the Good for Man proposed by Aristotle, nor in Kant's Categorical Imperative. Nor does he accept the progressivist "meta-narrative" that holds Dewey's philosophy together -- or any other general principle capable of defining the aims of education. And while Rorty preserves Dewey's hostility to traditional philosophy and religion, he does not have (nor can he have) any principled reason for his hostility to them.

Perhaps Rorty can provide a political as opposed to a philosophical justification of his views on education and the dispositions he proposes to foster. But it is hard to see how either conservatives or reformers, if clear-headed, could accept his position at any point. For, as will become clearer as we consider methods and curriculum, there would be no place in Rorty's system for either the rational criticism or the rational defense of existing institutions. Nor would there be any place for the development and evaluation of proposals for change. His educational philosophy is conservative in the sense that it fails to support criticisms of the status quo, but it also fails to support criticisms of whatever ideas or slogans may prove fashionable at a given moment. I find it incredible that serious students would want to attend, parents to patronize, scholars or teachers to participate in, or donors or taxpayers to support, an educational institution constructed or conducted on such premises.

Rorty's indifference to the consequences of his ideas, including the undermining of the liberal institutions he claims to support, is from a political point of view particularly damaging. These bad consequences are amplified when his ideas are applied to education. For it is one thing to urge well-brought-up adults to "lighten up," and quite another to proclaim the emptiness (and not

merely the limitations) of our cultural tradition before confused and troubled young men and women. And he concedes that he is not claiming that

there could or ought to be a culture whose public rhetoric is *ironist*. I cannot imagine a culture which socialized its youth in such a way as to make them continually dubious about their own process of socialization. (CIS 87)

For ironism undermines the virtues necessary to liberal democratic government (and in fact to any system except perhaps the totalitarian). Hence Rorty's philosophy not only cannot, like Dewey's, express a devotion to democracy; it cannot even be stably combined with it.

There is also reason to fear that ironism, at least if widely accepted, will contribute to the proliferation of the "disorders of the self" with which many contemporary psychotherapists are concerned. Such disorders are manifested in "feelings of meaninglessness, feelings of emptiness, pervasive depression, lack of sustaining interests, goals, ideals, and values, and feelings of unrelatedness."<sup>xix</sup> For those who suffer from such afflictions, as many of our students do, Rorty's ironism is the worst possible medicine. An educational system constructed along Rorty's lines would not provide a chance for a student to discover goals he can endorse as genuinely worthwhile, as opposed to projects he might pick up and drop with equal ease; its effect would rather be to destroy the possibility of such a discovery.

Rorty's habit of announcing himself persuaded, without citing an argument, is also a political liability. One issue on which Rorty exhibits this trait is of special interest to educators. Adolescent sexuality is frequently unformed, and many adult heterosexuals have homosexual episodes in their past. Hence some parents are likely to fear that some educators will encourage young people involved in homosexual relationships (or even undergoing homosexual feelings) to label themselves as homosexual, to their permanent injury. Without so much as a hint of an

argument, Rorty accepts Eve Kossofsky Sedgwick's inflammatory description of policies designed, well or badly, to prevent such counseling as "child abuse" (PP 2:138). In an area of life where strong feelings abound, the attempt to override some of them requires claims on behalf of reason that he neither makes nor is in any position to make.

At one level, the justification for collective support for education is easy. Knowledge is valuable -- in itself, for a career, for citizenship, and for life. We do not want the rising generation unable to write intelligible English prose, blind to the difference between reasoned argument and mere sounding off, ignorant of the American Constitution or of the Civil War, or unaware of the problems of passion as explored in Shakespeare's *Othello*.

But education is corrupted, and the case for supporting it undermined, as soon as we start talking about the "knowledge industry." For those who find the products of that industry distasteful -- on the ground, say, that they are weapons of mass destruction -- are then left without reason for modulating their demands to help keep the system working. At that point, a theoretical defense of a concept of truth becomes necessary. Education, and even sanity, requires belief in a reality that does not yield to human whims and fantasies, and of rules of good reasoning, which cannot be changed just because one is losing the argument.

The most serious deficiencies in Rorty's philosophy concern the question, by what means the virtues of irony and concern for social justice are to be inculcated. Here Rorty develops Dewey's hostility to discipline and asceticism in a self-destructive way. There is no basis in Rorty's system either for a discipline designed to adapt human beings to the existing social order, or to equip them to challenge it in any but the most superficial ways. I agree with Alfred North Whitehead that "the two principles, freedom and discipline, are not antagonists, but should be so adjusted in the child's life that they correspond to a natural sway, to and fro, of the developing

personality."<sup>xx</sup> But adjusting them is a more difficult task than Whitehead supposes. Nor does Rorty provide us with any reason for preferring one curriculum or method of study to others.

As far as method is concerned, an educational system constructed on Rorty's principles would have two components (CIS 12 ff.). One would consist in faithful servants of the wealthy and powerful, and of the economic and political processes that brought them into power and sustain them in it. He explicitly defends the view that such persons should staff lower education. He argues that lower education

should aim primarily at communicating enough of what is *held to be* true by the society to which the children belong so that they can function as citizens of that society. Whether it is true or not is none of the educator's business, in his or her professional [sic] capacity. ... If a teacher thinks that the society is founded on a lie, then he had better find another profession. (D 42)

Or, as he puts it elsewhere, students in the lower grades should receive "the standard, patriotic, upbeat, narrative about our society, its history, and its values" (TC 236).

In mitigation Rorty observes, "in this particular country at this particular time it is still considered all right for teachers to suggest that our society is the result of skeptical doubt about the past" (D 42). In a slightly more liberal mood, he describes primary education as "nine parts socialization to one part liberation" (TC 236-7). (Contrast the "conservative" philosopher of education, Maritain: "The task of the teacher is above all one of liberation."<sup>xxi</sup> Or again: "From the very start the teacher must respect in the child the dignity of mind, must appeal to the child's power of understanding, and conceive of his own effort as preparing a human mind to think for itself." <sup>xxii</sup>)

In my judgment, all students should know that our society is a result of a break [or series of breaks] with the past; and, as soon as they are capable of understanding the issues, be informed of the problems as well as of the opportunities this break has caused. They should also receive training in critical thinking, which is not the same thing as indoctrination in the Left or Right wing political agenda, but lays the foundation for intelligent political convictions, whether of a radical or a conservative sort.)

The other component of an educational system constructed on Rorty's principles would consist of teachers authorized to develop private languages for the expression of their fantasies. Thus for higher education Rorty requires "teachers who do not worry about communicating knowledge, but as Acrilla nicely puts it, 'let their speech be moved by the shadowy situations they find themselves in'" (D 42).<sup>xxiii</sup> Even the most conservative parents and citizens would prefer teachers who advocate radical change supported by rational argument, from whom students who fail to be convinced can learn much, to teachers who use classroom time to explore their personal idiosyncrasies. Rorty thus combines a traditional, not to say authoritarian, array of educational methods in the lower grades with a style of education designed to give maximum scope to professorial narcissism at the college level, without making any attempt to establish a coherent relationship between the two approaches.

As for curriculum, Rorty supports "canon change" at both higher and lower levels, so long as it does not "lead us to give up the very idea of a canon" (TC 238-9). He would like to see high school students reading *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Giovanni's Room* as well as *Hamlet* (TC 239), not on the grounds that these works are comparable to acknowledged classics in quality or influence, but on the grounds that they represent constituencies with which he has chosen to align himself or desires to placate. In his own words, "they help students learn what it has been

like (and often still is like) to be female, or black, or gay" (TC 239). He shows no interest in helping students learn, say from Flannery O'Connor, what it is like to be an impoverished Southern white -- what is called a "redneck" by men and women otherwise horrified by derogatory names for groups of people.

Rorty's views on curriculum represent the status quo superficially modified in the interest of a handful of currently fashionable causes. Hence his form of education will equip students neither for the defense, nor for the rational critique, of existing institutions. Nor can he equip students in any other way to deal with the economic, political, and spiritual malaise that appears to be a permanent feature of our world.

### *A Problems Approach*

We reach similar conclusions if we examine some of the dilemmas of education, as they arise for parents and teachers of broadly liberal views. Moral education raises particular problems; McClellan has formulated the "paradox of moral education" as follows.

Moral education must either be immoral or ineffective. For getting a child to act in the way your moral theory requires him to act requires treating the child in ways your moral theory forbids; while not treating the child in the ways that are morally forbidden guarantees that, when a child becomes an adult he will not even acknowledge the difference between morally required and forbidden.<sup>xxiv</sup>

This paradox arises from two features of many people's moral beliefs, together with a persistent feature of our *mores*. First, most people, with varying degrees of emphasis, believe that we are obliged to respect the autonomy of other people. Second, we believe that children ought to grow up accepting a moral code, including (though not necessarily limited to) principles

commanding respect for other people's autonomy. But, third, our *mores* rest, in varying degrees, on the brute fact of their acceptance; if there are reasons for them, the wisest adult often cannot understand them, let alone explain them to a child.

Rorty cannot see the force of this paradox, nor once one sees it, do anything to resolve it. For there is no place in Rorty's system for a distinction between education and manipulation. His aspersions on logical argument (e.g., CIS 78) undercut any objection even to the most manipulative or coercive methods of education. And if we for some reason (or none) happen not to like manipulation and coercion, there is no way of bridging the gap between the means and ends of moral education either by nurturing the child's nascent rationality, or by reforming our mores in order to make them rationally intelligible. For the "child's nascent rationality" is a bit of Aristotelianism of a sort that Rorty would extirpate root and branch (see PP 2:159). And there is no way, on Rorty's showing, of concluding that our mores are irrational (see CIS 59).

A teacher tells his students what parents and other authorities want them to hear -- say that stealing or rape is wrong, or that racial discrimination is irrational and unjust. But a bright, or if you prefer a smart-alecky, student asks, "Why shouldn't I take things -- or force myself on women -- if I feel like it? Why shouldn't I discriminate against blacks (or whites, or Koreans) just because I don't like them?" And the same question can be asked in more narrowly cognitive terms. "Why shouldn't I believe in astrology, or the more exotic stories purveyed by the *National Enquirer*, if that's what I want to do?"

A teacher of Rorty's sort cannot offer a serious defense of the conventional wisdom. For on Rorty's showing his attitude must be one of irony. Nor can he say to the student, "The judgment of your society is against you; if you disagree you should examine its reasons and try to refute them." For on Rorty's premises neither society nor the dissident student can have reasons requiring an

answer. The most such a teacher can honestly say is, "I have to say this; if I didn't I would lose my job or get into serious trouble. And you would be well advised to keep your opinions to yourself if you want to get along in the world."

McClellan formulates another moral dilemma for education, arising from the relationship between education and worldly success.

On the one hand [he writes] teachers of young children are saddled with the task of getting each child to read with a degree of proficiency such that he or she will not be penalized in later life. But this task is literally impossible to accomplish. For it is *relative* proficiency in reading (together with a lot of other things highly correlated with proficiency in reading) that, in direct or indirect ways, determines access to the world's goods. And the rule relating teaching and relative proficiency (in *anything*) is this: the more effective the teaching, the greater the variation in performance. Thus, the more the teacher tries to protect the future of the individual child, the more effective is the teacher in perpetuating the system of exploitation. On the other hand, *not* to accept that impossible obligation and strive to fulfill it is to let the full weight of the exploitative system fall directly on those individual children whom one might have helped to escape its worst effects.<sup>xxv</sup>

Once again: Rorty cannot take this dilemma seriously, nor if it arises despite him, do anything toward resolving it. For he refuses to ask the question McClellan's argument directly poses, "Is this a moral society?" (CIS 59). And, on his own showing, any answer we give to a moral dilemma is a way of smoothing a change in social (in this case, educational) practice that we are adopting for other reasons or for no reason at all (see CIS 194-5n.6).

McClellan addresses these and other quandaries of education by imagining a society, which he calls the "Soo," in which only those forms of education consistent with respect for the learner's

freedom and rationality are practiced.<sup>xxvi</sup> Constructions like McClellan's are strongly encouraged by Rorty's philosophy: it is, on his view,

the aim of a just and free society [to let] its citizens be as privatistic, "irrationalist," and aestheticist as they please, so long as they do it on their own time -- causing no harm to others and using no resources needed by the less advantaged. (CIS xv)

But the very grounds on which Rorty encourages such thought experiments -- of which there are likely to be as many versions as there are experimenters -- exclude our taking them seriously when we make decisions concerning the education of our children.

The most important assumption involved in McClellan's invocation of the Soo becomes explicit on the last page of his book: "The Soo have worked it out in practice, or so we assume when we assume that they constitute a possible society."<sup>xxvii</sup> Many theorists of education would deny that a society in which children, however young, are never indoctrinated could survive from one generation to the next. McClellan's assumption makes sense within a progressive meta-narrative like Dewey's, in which what we cannot work out in practice our descendants may. But Rorty abandons this meta-narrative, or more exactly uses it only opportunistically to stigmatize opponents. Hence a society like the Soo must be for him nothing more than a fantasy.

I do not assume that McClellan's approach is the best, let alone the only possible, resolution of the quandaries of education. I cite him because he seems to be vaguely within Rorty's ideological family. (More precisely he -- and the other writers whose ideas he summarizes -- represent an older stage of the liberal tradition in education, before the disappointments of the late Sixties and afterwards registered fully.) But the burden is now on Rorty and his defenders to develop an approach to these quandaries that is coherent with Rorty's philosophical and political assumptions.

## *Conclusion*

Any philosophy of education, of whatever ideological coloration, requires three elements:«

1. An account of the human material, i.e., of the pupil(s) to be educated;
2. An account of the bits of knowledge, traits of character, and habits of thought that the teacher desires that the pupil should acquire; and
3. An account of the social and political context in which education is carried on, and in which the pupil must subsequently live.

The stand one takes on these issues will principally determine both one's methods of instruction and the subject matter that one proposes to teach. And Rorty is incapable in principle of giving adequate accounts of any of these matters.

1. Rorty's hostility to any account of human nature resistant to redescription implies that he is unable to give an account of the human material with which education works. For whenever a teacher or a pupil finds that the regnant account of human nature conflicts either with his perceptions or with his wish-fulfillment fantasies, he can simply re-describe the human material to evade the problem. Physical and mental handicaps can likewise be handled with the help of bureaucratic euphemisms. This feature of Rorty's position also has implications for the social context of learning. If a student experiences difficulty in education because his parents are getting divorced, or because he is being raised by a single mother, we could, on Rorty's view, make the problem go away by avoiding language suggesting that the two-parent family is normative.

2. Likewise, Rorty's philosophy precludes an account of the sorts of knowledge, traits of character, and habits of mind we desire to instill into our pupils. For whenever the gap between performance and accomplishment becomes serious and persistent, we can evade the problem by fiat

-- say by dismissing difficult material as "irrelevant." And if the current crop of students does poorly on the SATs, the problem can be resolved by making the SATs less challenging.

3. Nor can Rorty understand the broader social context in which education goes on. For the meaning of our laws, institutions, and practices is contested: to understand them in this way rather than that is already to take sides in social and political conflicts. But Rorty's ironism keeps him from *either* seriously endorsing *or* seriously challenging existing institutions, however understood; and hence also prevents him from understanding them, or seriously attempting to do so: it invites an unserious, aestheticized radicalism which leaves social practice untouched, except perhaps for weakening the force of moral rules. The result of all this is a hidden curriculum, as a result of which Rorty's pupils (and their pupils also) are likely to end up pursuing a yuppie way of life, for which the absurdity of the universe and the injustice of our institutions have become pretexts for self-absorption and self-indulgence.

It is likely that theoretical deficiencies of this sort will have implications for practice. Rorty himself sees how difficult it is for persons with his views to educate children; he cites with approval Derrida's rejection of "the child" (CIS 127-30) -- a ~striking position, in view of the fact that Rorty himself has three children. <sup>xxviii</sup> Many parents these days -- particularly in the declining middle class -- have experienced a loss of belief in the future of their children, and of willingness to struggle and sacrifice for their sake. And teachers also need (and have often lost) belief in their students' future: as Plato reminds us, the children of our souls can be as important as the children of our bodies. Rorty can do nothing for parents or teachers in such a situation but make their problems worse.

In any event, Rorty has conceded that, at the one point where public culture and the development of the individual personality necessarily meet -- in the formation, at home and school,

of the rising generation -- ironism collapses. And this is as close to a knockdown, drag-out refutation of Rorty's position as can be expected given the nature of the issue.

The failings of Rorty's philosophy of education are rooted in pervasive features of his thought. His refusal to draw the radical conclusions some of his followers would like him to have drawn does not reflect a failure of nerve on his part, but on the contrary represents a coherent working out of the implications of his position, insofar as one can speak of coherence in dealing with a writer like Rorty.

For denying the sorts of truth Plato and Kant believed in, without at the same time asserting something equally robust, has educational and political implications of a devastating sort. One cannot teach students the distinction between sound and unsound arguments, or reasonable and unreasonable interpretations of evidence, if there is no distinction between truth and what someone believes. Nor can one, without a robust concept of truth (and related concepts such as "good reasons"), distinguish education from its counterfeits, such as training the "pupil" to recite formulas of whose meaning he has not the faintest glimmering. The logical connections between the concept of truth and those of teaching and learning are quite complex. But it is sufficient for my purposes that some such connection exists. Appeals to prejudice, and the coining of slogans, have won far many more debates than the most carefully (or eloquently) articulated argument. There is no reason, on Rorty's account, why teachers should not employ the worst sort of sophistries and teach their pupils to do the same.

We must now raise a broader question: whether, if Rorty fails, some other liberal conception of education can succeed. And this question is at least doubtful. In the absence of an agreed-on conception of the sort of world we inhabit, and of the sort of life appropriate to that world, the education of children too young to make their own judgments is a parlous business. The

distinction between private and public, though much contested, makes some sense for adults. But for those whose characters are unformed, the question, what sort of people do we want in our world, becomes urgent and inescapable. We must now ask the question; where besides Rorty we might find answers to these questions.

## NOTES

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<sup>i</sup> For an example of this approach, see James E. McClellan, *Philosophy of Education* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976).

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>iii</sup> For an attempt to define *indoctrination*, see *ibid.*, pp. 139-44.

<sup>iv</sup> McClellan, p. 20, quoting R. S. Peters, *Ethics and Education* (Chicago: Scott Foresman, and Co., 1967), p. 20.

<sup>v</sup> McClellan, p. 35, citing B. P. Komisor, "Teaching: Act and Enterprise," in C.J.B. Macmillan and T.W. Nelson eds., *Concepts of Teaching* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1968).

<sup>vi</sup> *Three Historical Philosophies of Education* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, and Company, 1965); for a related collection of original sources see his *Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

<sup>vii</sup> *Three Historical Philosophies*, p. 8.

<sup>viii</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 2.

<sup>ix</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 3.

<sup>x</sup> "Education as Growth," in Frankena, *Philosophy of Education*, p. 20.

<sup>xi</sup> "Man's Nature and the Aims of his Education," in Frankena, *Philosophy of Education*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>xii</sup> R.S. Peters, "Must an Educator Have an Aim?" in Frankena, *Philosophy of Education*, pp. 44-51.

<sup>xiii</sup> "Interest, Discipline, Method, and Subject Matter in Education," in Frankena, *Philosophy of Education*, pp. 73-4.

<sup>xiv</sup> *On Education*, ed. M.S. Dworkin (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1959), p. 30, quoted in Frankena, *Three Historical Philosophies of Education*, p. 153.

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- <sup>xv</sup> Frankena, *Three Historical Philosophies of Education*, p. 162.
- <sup>xvi</sup> "Interest, Discipline, Method, and Subject Matter in Education," in Frankena, *Philosophy of Education*, p. 53.
- <sup>xvii</sup> "Intellectual and Moral Education," in Frankena, *Philosophy of Education*, p. 88.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Frankena, *Three Historical Philosophies of Education*, ch. 4.
- <sup>xix</sup> Morris M. Eagle, *Recent Developments in Psychoanalysis* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1984), p. 73, quoted by Guignon and Hiley, RR 356
- <sup>xx</sup> "The Rhythmic Claims of Freedom and Discipline," in Frankena, *Philosophy of Education*, p. 77.
- <sup>xxi</sup> "Intellectual and Moral Education," p. 88.
- <sup>xxii</sup> *Ibid*, p. 97.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> The reference is to René Acrilla, "Education, Conversation, and Narrative," *Educational Theory*, 40 (Winter 1990), 35-44.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> McClellan, *Philosophy of Education*, p. 156.
- <sup>xxv</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 127-8.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> *Ibid*, pp 132ff.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> *Ibid*, p. 166.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> L.S. Klepp, "Every Man a Philosopher-King," *New York Times Magazine* 140 (Dec. 2, 1990), pt. 1, pp. 117-18.