

ABSTRACT

Contrary to the view of numerous philosophers, it is argued that open-mindedness is logically unrelated to (1) the specific beliefs one holds, (2) a state of neutrality, doubt, or ignorance. Rather it involves a willingness to formulate and revise one's beliefs in the light of evidence and argument. This attitude is not, contrary to Allport, impossible, nor inconsistent with other desirable traits, notably the principle of tenacity. It is an essential aspect of what it means to be educated.

William Hare*

Open-Mindedness as a Feature of the Educated Outlook

If we attempt to draw up a catalogue of virtues and vices, "the very nature of language guides us almost infallibly."¹ Hume was thinking primarily of the social virtues, but his observation applies equally well to the intellectual virtues. More often than not, we are in no doubt as to whether we are being praised and flattered or criticized and condemned. The "almost" qualification is important, however, because at times the implication is not clear. (Is "fastidious" complimentary or not?) Hume's test fairly clearly places open-mindedness in the catalogue of virtues, though some counter-examples can be found. Such a distinguished critic of education as Jacques Barzun refers to open-mindedness as "one degree worse than a sieve."² The metaphor suggests, however, a somewhat different understanding of the term than that which will be defended here, and involves, I suspect, a confusion with an empty or vacant mind. Barzun's comment, however, serves to remind us of the need to *show* how open-mindedness is an intellectual virtue.

It will be argued here that open-mindedness is possible, that it does not conflict with other valuable attitudes, and that is a necessary condition of the educated outlook. It will not be possible to enter into a full analysis of the concept, nor a detailed review of rival analyses, but it is necessary to chart, in summary fashion, some of the major conceptual points.

1. *The Concept of Open-mindedness*

(1) It is sometimes claimed that the possession of certain beliefs is necessary and/or sufficient condition of open-mindedness. This claim appears, for example, when people are barred from the teaching profession, as necessarily closed-minded, because they hold certain political beliefs.³ But against this there are several objections. If a specific belief were a necessary condition of open-mindedness, the process of inquiry which first led to the discovery of that belief could not be characterized as open-minded. Yet we often want to so characterize a process before we know the results. Again, if specific beliefs are held to be necessary, we would not be justified in ascribing the trait if we did not know (or did not think we knew) the person's opinions. But in the case in which a person has no specific belief because he has not yet made up his mind, clearly we cannot know his option. Yet we are often justified in ascribing open-mindedness to the person who is still trying to make up his mind. If a specific opinion were demanded, then neutrality would be inconsistent with open-mindedness, whereas it is commonly the case

*Department of Education, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

that one's very open-mindedness leads one to be neutral. Finally, it cannot be claimed that a person's reluctance to embrace a particular belief shows that he cannot have been seriously considering the arguments or evidence which support the belief. The person may seriously attend to the arguments and evidence and simply fail to be won over by them.⁴ Against the view that the possession of a particular view *guarantees* that the holder is open-minded, it is surely a decisive objection that a person can be indoctrinated into holding particular beliefs. Even a person who asserts that any belief should be rejected if good counter-evidence emerges may show *in practice* that he falls far short of the open-mindedness which he professes.

(2) Equally popular is the view that neutrality is a necessary condition of open-mindedness, or even that the two ideas are equivalent. This erroneous view seems to be fostered by the fact that we sometimes express our neutrality by saying "I am keeping an open-mind on the matter", and by the fact, noted above, that open-mindedness *often* leads one to a neutral stance. This latter situation commonly arises with respect to controversial issues, and philosophers have been tempted to offer analyses of open-mindedness which restrict the attitude to the area of ongoing controversy.⁵ But against this, it must be pointed out that we expect (normative sense) scientists, for example, to remain open-minded with respect to issues which are regarded as *settled* and about which they are not neutral. The open-minded scientist remains ready to abandon the best corroborated hypothesis *if* counter-evidence begins to turn up. Secondly, if neutrality were a necessary condition of open-mindedness, the expression "an open-minded Catholic, Protestant, Jew, etc." would contain a contradiction, whereas one distinction which we often want to make is precisely between those religious persons who are, and those who are not, open-minded. Finally, we may note that neutrality does not provide a sufficient condition of the trait, for a person may remain neutral i.e., in the state of not having made up his mind about some issue, because he cannot be bothered to think seriously about it or because he does not want to get or be involved. If an individual reserves judgement on an issue because, having examined all the available evidence and argument, he cannot decide which side is in the right, then he is both neutral *and* open-minded. But it is not his neutrality *per se* which guarantees his open-mindedness. The latter is ensured when we learn *why* he is neutral.⁶

(3) Philosophers who have recognized the untenability of the analysis in terms of neutrality are sometimes tempted to adopt a different position, one which abandons neutrality but which makes a last-ditch gesture in its direction. This view accepts that the open-minded person can have options on the issue in question i.e., he need not be neutral, but he must not hold his opinions very *firmly*. Thus, Bertrand Russell wrote:

When you come to a point of view, maintain it with doubt. This doubt is precious because it suggests an open mind.⁷

Admittedly, this comment does not occur in a formal piece of philosophy but in correspondence, and may be interpreted as *pragmatic* advice, useful in view of the common tendency to accept views uncritically. Furthermore, Russell does say that it *suggests* an open mind and not that doubt is a logically necessary condition of an open mind. Still, the view that open-mindedness excludes firm belief is common, and it is worth showing that it is false, for other philosophers have felt obliged to protest at "that corruption of the ideal of open-mindedness, where everything is always 'up for grabs.'"⁸ The corruption rests on a failure to distinguish (i) a doubtful state of mind, and (ii) a readiness to submit all claims to the test of evidence

and argument. Open-mindedness demands that we be willing to regard our beliefs as *revisable* in the light of future evidence, but this does not entail that we have any doubts *now*. In the *Enquiry* from which I have already quoted, Hume is concerned to make the point (a psychological observation) that "where men are the most sure and arrogant, they are commonly the most mistaken." Yet, reviewing his own thesis in the *Enquiry*, he adds:

... I must confess, this enumeration puts the matter in so strong a light that I cannot *at present* be more assured of any truth which I learn from reasoning and argument.⁹

The point is clear. He may later come to see defects in, and be forced to revise, a position about which he has no doubts at all at the *moment*. And it is this disposition to change which earns Hume the ascription open-minded, and not any inability to have confidence in his own arguments. We will, if we are rational, have a firm preference for a well-corroborated theory over one which is less well-corroborated; but whether or not we are rigid, inflexible and dogmatic thinkers will depend upon our reactions *in the future* if the well-corroborated theory suffers in an attempted refutation. A person's belief or confidence could be quite firm without any implication that he has closed his mind to the existence of the existence of reasons which indicate that his view *may* be shown to be false. We can acknowledge that a theory may be falsified in a given test, and proceed to conduct the test in a fair and open-minded way, while remaining utterly convinced that the theory will indeed *survive* the test. I believe that the temptation to hold that doubt is necessary is fostered by the fact that often the expression "I have made up my mind" is employed with that finality which suggests a closed mind. The logical point is, however, that making up one's mind does not preclude being prepared to change one's mind in suitable circumstances.

(4) Finally, we may consider the possibility that open-mindedness is conceptually linked with ignorance. It follows from the arguments above that ignorance cannot be a necessary condition of open-mindedness, because we have seen that a person may be open-minded about what he knows. (See section 2 above.) Is there any reason to think that ignorance *ensures* open-mindedness? Some philosophers have attempted to establish such a link. Thus Dewey wrote:

Genuine ignorance is more profitable because it is likely to be accompanied by humility, curiosity and open-mindedness, while ability to repeat catch phrases, cant terms, familiar propositions gives the conceit of learning and coats the mind with a varnish waterproof to new ideas.¹⁰

It is possible that a similar idea lay behind Descartes' claim that:

those who have learned the least of all that has hitherto been called philosophy are the most capable of learning the true one.¹¹

The idea which is at work in both of these cases is probably that which is found in Plato's observation that a person is not likely to look for, or attempt to learn, what he thinks he already knows.¹² The conceit of learning referred to by Dewey (an echo of Plato's criticism of the Sophists) is that of believing we know something when we do not. And Descartes is referring to those who have acquired the false opinions of traditional philosophy which have "prejudiced their minds." The suggestion is, then, that the person who has learned nothing of these matters will be more accessible to new ideas than the person who has either acquired (a) pieces of information without understanding or (b) false beliefs.

This position rightly identifies a willingness to accept new ideas as an aspect of open-mindedness. It errs, however, when it attempts to go beyond an empirical generalization in psychology, about the importance of ignorance, to the statement

of a logical or conceptual point. To consider Plato's view, first, we can point out that there is no reason *in principle* why a person who thinks he knows could not continue to examine the beliefs he holds. Similarly, it can be replied to Descartes that it is perfectly possible for a person to replace a false belief with a true one, and indeed there are many cases where it will be extremely difficult to understand the true belief unless one has worked one's way through erroneous positions. There is nothing in the possession of a false belief *per se* which hinders the grasp of the true position, though it is certainly the case that certain ways of *holding* the belief (dogmatically, arrogantly, with finality, etc.) can be a hindrance. Coming to Dewey's view, we need to remember that there is no contradiction at all in saying that a person did not know something, and yet refused to consider seriously the correct answer when it was proposed. Apparently, it had not occurred to Queen Victoria that there might be such a thing as a lesbian relationship. But her genuine ignorance here did not prevent her from refusing to believe that such a practice might exist. In belief, each of the above claims at best assert a contingent truth rather than a conceptual connection.

We cannot tell then from knowledge of a person's beliefs, or from knowledge of his neutrality or non-neutrality alone, or from evidence of his ignorance whether or not he is open-minded. And our knowledge that a person is open-minded does not itself tell us what his particular beliefs are or whether or not he is neutral with respect to some issue or how knowledgeable he is with respect to that issue. Whatever his particular beliefs may be, whether or not he is neutral, despite his knowledge or lack of knowledge, the open-minded person is one who is willing to look seriously at fresh evidence and new arguments, and ready to base his beliefs on the best assessment he can make of these. Thus when we read that Plotinus said:

But if when Porphyry asks questions we do not solve his difficulties, we shall not be able to say anything at all to put into the treatise.¹³

we can recognize the attitude of an open-minded philosopher, though we may know nothing of his philosophical beliefs.

2. *The possibility of open-mindedness*

If we are ever to show that open-mindedness is a *necessary* condition of being educated, it is important to deal with objections which attempt to show that open-mindedness is impossible. Allport, for example, in his very influential work on prejudice, dismisses the claim that open-mindedness is a virtue because "strictly speaking; it cannot occur."¹⁴ (It would be interesting, from an historical point of view, to investigate how far such a view accounts for the comparative lack of interest shown by educational theorists in the notion of open-mindedness compared, say, with the idea of neutrality.) What is Allport's reason for this view? He argues thus:

A new experience *must* be redacted into old categories. We cannot handle each event freshly in its own right. If we did so, of what use would past experience be?"¹⁵

Notice that, although writing basically as a social psychologist, this comment does not read as an empirical claim. It sounds as if Allport thinks he has found a reason *why in principle* open-mindedness is impossible. And this, it seems, is because new experiences must be interpreted by means of an existing conceptual framework—the old categories. We can readily agree, of course, that it is not at all easy to be open-minded, and that even if we achieve this attitude in some aspects of our thinking, there may be other areas in which our minds are closed. It is harder still

to achieve a predominantly open-minded atmosphere in society as a whole. All this is confirmed by historians of thought¹⁶ and social psychologists,¹⁷ as well as in our own everyday experience. None of this evidence, however, shows that open-mindedness is logically beyond our reach, than it can no more exist than a square circle. It is important then to face up to Allport's challenge, because if open-mindedness logically cannot be attained, then we cannot work towards it and there is no point recommending it. If, on the other hand, it is just extremely difficult to attain it, we can still hold on to it as an ideal and seek ways of removing the obstacles to it, and attempt to approach it more closely.

It may be admitted, in response to Allport, that we do try to make sense of a new experience in terms of the conceptual and theoretical framework which we already possess. This does not mean, however, that all new experiences must be forced into a pre-existing mould which is sacrosanct. Even if new experiences are to be dealt with in terms of existing categories, open-mindedness is possible because it remains open into *which* categories the experience is to be fitted. At times, however, we are simply unable to handle new experiences in terms of present concepts and theories, and we are forced to develop new categories, or even to modify and discard former ones. Allport fallaciously moves from the fact that we *come to* new experiences with a certain *set of categories* to the conclusion that the new experience must be *fitted into* that set of categories. Open-mindedness is possible just because we are aware that our existing conceptual and theoretical framework may not be adequate to deal with future experiences. Even if it were adequate, it itself consists of various alternatives which would have to be considered. Allport's mistake is reflected in the popular view that all teaching is necessarily indoctrinatory, because it involves passing on a certain framework to children. Even at the earliest stages of language acquisition, a conceptual orientation to the world is being acquired. Surely the response to this is that the very framework we possess can be used in order to bring us to a new position in which the old framework is modified or abandoned. This is what Einstein did with the Newtonian framework, what Picasso did with the prevailing artistic norms, and indeed what most of us do to a greater or lesser extent with the absolute moral rules we are taught as children. Since some creative thinkers have destroyed the framework which they grew up with, it cannot be *impossible* to produce a new framework for new experiences. Although it is *possible* to get locked into a particular framework, as successful indoctrination programmes have shown, our concepts need not form a mental prison for us, but can provide a stepping stone to new and hitherto undreamed of ways of looking at the world. Educators commonly talk as if teaching were somehow at odds with the child's creative development. Apart from the logical point that one *can* create new ideas from the basis of an existing framework which one has not created for oneself, all the empirical evidence would indicate that creative moves are only made by those who are well versed in the best existing theory or practice. In philosophy we have the examples of Kant who confessed to being awakened from a dogmatic slumber by Hume's work; and that of G. E. Moore who thought that philosophical problems would not have occurred to him had it not been for things which other philosophers had said. It is true, of course, as Descartes points out,¹⁸ that many disciples of a great philosopher never get beyond that philosopher's framework. But as Descartes himself notes elsewhere,¹⁹ it is not the study of the ideas of others *per se* which is the problem, but the attitude which we bring to that study. Open-mindedness does not, of course, mean that we refuse to apply an old category to a new experience, but that we are willing to consider in an open way which category best accommodates the new experience. Often

an existing category is perfectly adequate and therefore useful. Even when the old category is finally abandoned, it may well have been useful in as much as without it the new insight would never have been achieved. Open-mindedness then involves being willing to revise our existing categories if they are found to be inadequate in the light of future experiences.

Curiously, Allport does report the existence of what he calls "the somewhat rare condition of habitual open-mindedness."

There are people who seem to go through life with little of the rubricizing tendency . . . Realizing the complexity and variety in human nature, they are especially chary of ethnic generalizations. If they hold to any at all it is in a highly tentative way, and every contrary experience is allowed to modify the pre-existing ethnic concept.²⁰

Leaving aside the question of whether or not this can be reconciled with his own earlier statement, this assertion clearly suggests that open-mindedness may *conflict* with other valuable attitudes, such as the determination to hold on to our beliefs until there is clear evidence which shows that they are faulty.

3. *Is open-mindedness undesirable?*

Notice that Allport is not saying that people who have been independently identified as open-minded tend to have the above characteristics. Rather he ascribes to a person the condition of habitual open-mindedness *because* he has such characteristics, i.e. these are, for him, defining characteristics of the state. Open-mindedness, however, does not rule out having firm beliefs, as we saw in section 1. Our beliefs need not be held *tentatively* if this implies that we have little confidence in them. This is not to deny, of course, that with respect to certain generalizations (such as the ones referred to by Allport), *empirical* tests might show that all open-minded people do treat them with considerable suspicion. but we cannot logically infer from the fact that a person has great confidence in a particular ethnic generalization that the person has a closed mind. Nor is it appropriate to regard a person as open-minded because he is forever changing his mind.

It is also desirable that we do not give up our beliefs too readily, for we want to make sure *that* they are faulty, *why* they are faulty, and to rescue whatever element of truth there may be in them. It is important to recognize that open-mindedness does not clash with the "principle of tenacity", as Basil Mitchell has dubbed it:

Characteristically, the central postulates of the system are protected from alteration as long as possible and modifications are made at the periphery; and the impression is thus created that no counter-arguments will ever be allowed to count against the fundamental assertions of the system. This tendency is not unreasonable, for unless some "principle of tenacity" is accepted, the system will not be persevered with long enough for its potentialities to be thoroughly explored and tested.²¹

We might employ here a distinction drawn by Bryan Magee, who applied it to Karl Popper, and say that the open-minded person should be a naive falsificationist at the level of logic but a highly critical falsificationist at the level of methodology.²² It is clearly all too easy in practice to dismiss a person as being closed-minded just because he is anxious not to abandon his ground before he sees quite clearly why it should be abandoned. There are great demands on a teacher at this point, for he must not only insist that sound reasons be given to him before he gives up a position, but he must avoid creating the impression that nothing will make him give it up.

4. *A Link with Education?*

Having attempted then to answer the objection that open-mindedness is

logically impossible, and the objection that it clashes with other desirable attitudes, let us return more directly to the question of its positive educational value. Typically, open-mindedness is thought to be connected in some way with education but the nature of this connection is rarely spelled out.²³ (1) The connection might be thought of as *instrumental* in as much as a person who is independently found to be open-minded might also be found to be more capable of certain intellectual tasks and learning activities than a person with a closed mind. If such tasks and activities were held to be valuable, then the attitude of open-mindedness could be regarded as having instrumental value if it were found to be the trait which makes such tasks and activities possible. The discovery of empirical connections of this kind is a task for social science, and psychologists such as Milton Rokeach have made important discoveries in this area.²⁴ (2) We can also inquire, however, whether or not there is any *necessary* connection between our idea of the educated person and the concept of open-mindedness. If there were such a connection, then the attitudes of open-mindedness would not simply be valued because it *leads on* to other things of value, i.e. it would not simply be valued as a *means* (though it could still be valued as such), but it would also be valued for its own sake. An investigation of such necessary connections is, of course, philosophical in character. If open-mindedness is a necessary condition of education, then to say that a person is educated is at once to say that he has an open-mind.

Let us look immediately at a view, expressed by a well-known author of a popular book on clear thinking, which is apparently at odds with the suggestion that there is any such necessary link: Referring to prejudice, Thouless writes:

Education does not in itself save us from this disability. It ought to help us in the direction of freedom from prejudice, but it does not necessarily do so. Learned men are often as bound by their prejudices as anyone else.²⁵

A number of points need to be made here. (i) If we use "education" to mean "schooling" (and there is some evidence elsewhere that Thouless does at times use it thus)²⁶ then, of course, there is no necessary link between education and open-mindedness. A school may well be a centre of propaganda and indoctrination. (ii) The Point might also be that even if a school attempts to dispel prejudice, it may be unsuccessful. Thus "it does not necessarily do so" may simply mean that attempts to teach can carry no quarantees of success with them. (iii) Again if we identify the concepts of "educated" and "learned" (as Thouless apparently does above) then again it will follow that there is no necessary link with open-mindedness. For "learned" means that a person is in possession of a certain amount of knowledge or learning, and does not tell us what *attitude* the person has to the claims to knowledge which he makes.

On the other hand, we do not invariably use "education" as synonymous with "schooling" or with "learning"—we often use it precisely to distinguish some kinds of learning from others. We ask at times: "Your son is learning a lot, but is he getting an education?" or "Is this school really an *educational* institution?" In other words, we sometimes use the concept of education in a more *restricted* way. Consider the difference. It may be foolish but is not nonsensical to set about *learning*, regardless of whether or not what we learn is true. But it is queer indeed to propose to set about *educating* ourselves, regardless of whether or not what we learn is true. Is not the reason for this oddity the fact that *education* necessarily involves a concern to distinguish the true from the false (and the reasonable from the unreasonable, etc.)? This is not to say that the views of an educated person

actually *are* true, for the educated astronomer in the fourteenth century had very many false beliefs, and the twentieth century astronomer may well have also. But the educated person is trying to sort out the true and the false, and indeed *cares* about the distinction.²⁷ But as we have seen, open-mindedness is the name of that attitude which continually strives to be open to counter-arguments to the beliefs which we hold. It involves being willing to consider objections to our own position and being willing to revise it in the face of good counter-argument or evidence. If A is not willing to consider objections which others may have, can we seriously say that he has a concern for truth? If he is not willing to revise his position, can we say that he is concerned to get things right? It might be thought that a counter-example to these claims would be the case of a person who had reason to believe that the objections were all false. Would it be necessary for the person to consider them? The point is surely that if he has reason to believe them false, this must be because he has *already* considered them (or considered the views of experts whom he has reason to trust). He need not feel obliged to *re-consider* the issue.

To have the attitude of open-mindedness is to have a concern for truth. If then an educated person is one who has a concern for truth, the attitude of open-mindedness will be a characteristic of that person. Open-mindedness is then necessarily an aim of education in so far as education involves the pursuit of truth and this will be true of all societies and not merely democracies.²⁸

All of our claims to knowledge rest upon evidence or argument, and there is no way in which such claims can *in principle* be put beyond the bounds of challenge. Open-mindedness is the attitude which recognizes this. Thus, while it is true to claim instrumental value for the trait in as much as it permits unfettered inquiry and allows the emergence of new ideas, it is also to be seen as having *intrinsic* value because it is the attitude which recognizes claims to knowledge for what they are, i.e. revisable. It is, in summary, the attitude which is *appropriate* to knowledge claims.

As our discussion of the principle of tenacity should remind us, however, virtues have a way of turning into vices. Recklessness can easily replace courage. In some cases, it is a matter of taking the virtue too far. We can be *too* generous, and help others at the cost of impoverishing our own family. Perhaps we would speak of a person being too open-minded if he were willing to pay *serious* attention to imaginative, but quite implausible, speculation such as that a famous personality might have been kidnapped or murdered and his place taken by a clever imposter. (cf. the film *The Prize*). One can reasonably demand *very strong* evidence if certain claims are to be taken seriously, or very strong counter evidence if certain beliefs are to be reconsidered. We need to distinguish open-mindedness and naivety; the sensational tabloids make handsome profits when people are unable to reject nonsense outright. On the other hand, philosophers are not to be charged with naivety because they pay serious attention to paradoxes which people in general simply reject as obviously wrong. We know, of course, that fast runners can and do overtake slow runners in front of them, but it remains interesting and important to see *how* Zeno's paradox arises, and to attempt to resolve it. Open-mindedness here does not involve entertaining the idea that Zeno might be correct but rather in being willing to find out how the paradox arises and how it can be resolved.

Having argued that it is a necessary condition of being educated, it is perhaps worth noting that unlike *abilities* such as creativity and effective thinking, open-mindedness can be aimed at *in general* and not simply in relationship to a given subject or discipline. We cannot assume that creative ability in philosophy will

guarantee that the person will do creative work in, say, science. As Hirst has said:

... the use of broad, general terms for these abilities serves in fact to unify misleadingly quite disparate achievements.²⁹

There may well be some "carry over" to other subject areas (transfer of training), but such links would have to be revealed in empirical research. Thus, teachers do not aim at creativity *per se*, even though they may *wish* their pupils to be creative in maths, physics, literary criticism, etc. But open-mindedness is the name of an *attitude*, and once one realizes what it involves and begins to adopt it, there is no logical reason why one could not be open-minded about *any* of one's beliefs. Having said this, however, we must remember that there may be particular reasons why A will *not* achieve an open-minded outlook in some areas of his life. Religion may remain a blind spot, for example, because of indoctrination. Of course, A is not said to be open-minded about some issue with which he is not at all familiar and thus he must have some knowledge of philosophy if he is to be open-minded *about* philosophical issues (as opposed to approaching the study of philosophy as a beginner in an open-minded way). But whereas he cannot necessarily transfer his creative abilities in science to his knowledge of philosophy because different sorts of achievements are involved in two areas, there is no reason *in principle* why he cannot transfer his open-minded scientific outlook to his knowledge of philosophy.

It is also clear that open-mindedness is not a sufficient condition of being educated. A can be open-minded with respect to whatever knowledge he may possess, but this may be minimal. A skilled craftsman who is not yet an educated man may be open-minded about his craft. And if we take the notion of educated to rule out narrow specialization, clearly the narrow specialist could be open-minded about his speciality. Thus, the claim is not that open-mindedness is the sole aim of education. It is claimed here that it is a necessary aim of education.³⁰ And it may be that it is an aim which will make possible the achievement of other aims, such as familiarity with a range of subjects, by breaking down resistance to new ideas.

Footnotes

¹David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. Section 1.

²Jacques Barzun, *The American University*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 83.

³Arthur Bestor, *The Restoration of Learning*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 418.

⁴Contrast Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*. Section II. "If the reasoning of the second was sound and clear he would be able to lay it before the other as finally to succeed in convincing his understanding also."

⁵Compare John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*. (New York: the MacMillan Co., 1930), p. 206.

⁶For further discussion of the neutrality thesis see my papers "Openness in Education," *Philosophy of Education 1974: Proceedings of the Thirtieth Annual Meeting* (ed.) Michael J. Parsons, (Edwardsville, Illinois: Studies in Philosophy and Education, 1974), pp 218-226. And "The Open-minded Teacher," in *Teaching Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 1976, pp. 25-32.

⁷Barry Feinberg and Ronald Kasrils (eds.), *Dear Bertrand Russell* . . . (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1969), p. 108.

⁸Joel Feinberg, "The Idea of a Free man," in James Doyle (ed.) *Educational Judgments*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1973), p. 166.

⁹Hume, *op. cit.*, Conclusion.

¹⁰John Dewey, *How We Think*. (London: D. C. Heath & Company, 1909), p. 177.

¹¹Descartes, *Letter From the Author*. (to the translator of *The Principles of Philosophy*).

¹²Plato *Meno* 84c.

¹³Quoted in A. H. Armstrong, "Tradition, Reason and Experience in the thought of Plotinus," in *Academia Nazionale dei Lincei*. 1974, p. 175.

¹⁴Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1954), p. 20.

¹⁵*op. cit.*, p. 20

¹⁶J. B. Bury, *A History of Freedom of Thought*. (London: Williams and Norgate, Ltd., 1913).

¹⁷Milton Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960). Incidentally, Rokeach's empirical work is the more interesting and valuable because he has not neglected conceptual analysis cf. "Our own view is that before we can explain a phenomenon, we must first know what it is we want to explain" *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁸Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, ch. 6.

¹⁹Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, III.

²⁰Allport, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

²¹Basil Mitchell, "Reason and Commitment in the Academic Vocation," in *Oxford Review of Education*. vol. 2, No. 2, 1976, p. 107.

²²Bryan Magee, *Popper* (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1973), pp. 23-24.

²³An important exception is D. J. O'Connor, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), pp. 11-12.

²⁴Rokeach, *op. cit.*

²⁵Robert H. Thouless, *Straight and Crooked Thinking*. (London: Pan Books, 1974), p. 144.

²⁶*op. cit.*, p. 166.

²⁷C. R. S. Peters, "Education as Initiation," in R. D. Archambault, (ed.), *Philosophical Analysis and Education*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 96.

²⁸Contrast George F. Kneller, "Education and Political Thought," in George F. Kneller (ed.) *Foundations of Education*. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1963), p. 197.

²⁹Paul H. Hirst, "Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge," in Archambault, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

³⁰For some practical suggestions on how the aim might be pursued, the reader is referred to Max Van Mannen, "Teaching Open Mindedness," in *History and Social Science Teacher*. Vol. 12, No. 4, Summer 1977, pp. 250-256.

Résumé

Contrairement à l'avis de nombreux philosophes, nous croyons que l'absence de parti-pris n'implique ni (1) des idées spécifiques ni (2) des conditions de neutralité, de doute ou d'ignorance.

Cette attitude implique au contraire une volonté d'exprimer et de revoir ses propres connaissances à la lumière de l'expérience et de la discussion. Contrairement de l'avis de Allport, cette attitude n'est ni impossible ni incompatible avec d'autres attitudes souhaitables comme par exemple l'attachement à ses principes. C'est un des aspects essentiels de la vraie éducation que cette absence de préjugés.