

Education and the Education of Teachers.

R. S. Peters, *Education and the Education of Teachers*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977. 195 pp. \$11.50.

Professor R. S. Peters, a leading contemporary philosopher of education, has conveniently gathered together some of his essays, addresses, and articles. Most of the selections are drawn from the 1970s; the earliest one is 1964, which was about the time that Peters began to shape British philosophy of education; this influence later was spread to many parts of the English-speaking world. Its impact has primarily centered in philosophy of education, I believe, rather than extended to school programs and practices (as with, say, Dewey and Kilpatrick).

Three differences can be discerned between this collection and his landmark *Ethics and Education* (1966). His transcendental arguments, initially developed by Kant and first employed in education by Peters in his earlier book are to be found herein. A second difference is that here he focuses exclusively on educational programs and concerns, where in *Ethics and Education* the content seemed to be suggested as much by some of the prevailing issues in moral and political philosophy as by those in educational philosophy. A final difference is that whereas the earlier book was philosophical in approach throughout, some of these essays were originally presented to general audiences and utilizes a form which essentially introduces clear distinctions and offers perceptive observations and suggestions.

Two of these essays deal with the concept of 'education,' a topic which Peters has explored first in the essay "Must an Educator Have an Aim?" (1964). Although he has continued to develop and refine the concept, a number of readers are likely already to be familiar with these solutions when they appeared in his *The Philosophy of Education* and the *Proceedings* of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain. Instead it may prove more useful to focus on two themes found in most of the remaining eight essays, which have received less emphasis in his previous books. These themes are liberal education and the education of teachers.

In indicating several different interpretations of liberal education, Peters highlights a misconception of practical and theoretical inquiries. Concern for practical ends, he says, need not be particularly limiting as Freud's inquiries demonstrate. Some types of practical problems require far-reaching inquiries and others do not — and the same is true for theoretical inquiries. Practical inquiry may be considered less valuable when a particular ethical theory prevails, such as the Greek doctrine of function. The dichotomy between 'knowledge for its own sake' and 'knowledge for practical ends' is a distinction developed within the context of the advancement of knowledge and mistakenly transferred to the situation of the learner. Both theoretical and practical activities can be pursued for their own sakes.

In considering an interpretation of liberal education as initiation into all distinct forms of knowledge, Peters recommends that persons should acquire over long periods of time different conceptual schemes by means of which information is given a place and organized. The student should learn to apply these schemes critically, which means understanding different criteria of truth; and he should acquire principles which would help organize his experiences and encourage critical and imaginative thinking. Peters also notes that although it is desirable to encourage spontaneous problem-solving and learning pursued out of individual interest, to suggest that all learning should be pursued in this way overlooks the way most beliefs and conduct have been learned by the human race — by example and instruction of authorities.

Turning to teacher education, Peters says that as a whole it can be viewed as a kind of spiral in which over the years a range of problems continually arise and can subsequently be treated in more depth and differentiation. Students will become more sensitive to the range of questions concealed within these general problems, and their understanding of a proper combination of theory with practice.

Peters' notion of a discipline rules out educational studies by definition. He says that such studies are not a discipline "if by 'discipline' we mean a form of learning that is structured in terms of a single type of truth-criterion and a determinate methodology that is derivative from it." (p. 168) If he had instead defined 'discipline' as a field of study governed by a set of guiding rules, then educational studies would be a discipline. As it turns out, this lack of disciplinary status is not fatal because educational studies constitute a meeting point of a number of disciplines in relation to a collection of concrete problems at a time when interdisciplinary studies should be encouraged.

His views on the education of teachers changed considerably from 1964 when he uncharitably referred to what passed in England as philosophy and principles of education as "undifferentiated mush" and suggested that philosophy of education was nothing but the application to educational issues of the philosophy of mind, ethics and social philosophy, and theory of knowledge. This early phase, Peters adds, moved into a second phase of a differentiated approach to educational problems. It was assumed in this phase that students should be trained in the relevant disciplines in isolation from one another and that students would make the integration; it resulted in either institutional or intellectual separation of persons pursuing similar problems or considerable work in an area by one group of specialists but without corresponding work by another.

The third phase is only beginning; it is an attempt to integrate the disciplines in terms of concrete problems. Peters warns of difficulties likely to be encountered, and advises more careful planning combining a differentiated approach with interdisciplinary, problem-centered work. He recommends that faculty should form a research or teaching group with others in relation to some particular problem or area of interest.

I have only been able to suggest some of the many perceptive and fecund ideas in these essays. Of his numerous books, this is probably the most accessible to the general reader.

John Martin Rich
The University of Texas at Austin