

Carter, Robert, E. *Dimensions of Moral Education*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984, 242 pp.

In his book *Dimensions of Moral Education*, Roberts E. Carter explores several dimensions of moral experience in order to outline an approach to moral education which not only countervails the tendency inherent in Western culture to view reason as the primary characteristic of human beings, but also avoids the sterility of moral absolutism and the shallowness of moral relativism. Moral education, he suggests, should aim to nurture the growth of young people into adults who can see for themselves the "truths" of morality, who can think critically and clearly, feel intensely, will firmly and with commitment, and who can put their decisions into practice with accuracy and effectiveness. Such persons, if they are in harmony with themselves, may be regarded as having a healthy system of values.

Carter's view of the aim of moral education, while not in itself original (John Wilson adopts a similar view), is nevertheless welcome. The eclecticism with which he supports it is more interesting, although it is the source of some intractable difficulties.

In the introduction, Carter sets the stage for his discussion by claiming that "intellectual myopia", i.e., the recognition that we do not "know" with apodictic certainty, should be a key factor in the methodological stance adopted by educators. In Chapter 1, he cites the Socratic method of dialogue as an instance of this myopia in action. Espousing the Platonic doctrine that the capacity for insight is inborn, he then argues that appeals to authority should never replace efforts to teach students to "see" for themselves. The problem here is that the myopia Carter champions is incompatible with Plato's doctrine. The capacity for insight presupposes both an appropriate object (whose ontological status is problematic) as well as a criterion whereby to distinguish between correct and incorrect insight (otherwise it becomes a light no one can use). If a particular insight can be known to be correct, however, then what is the point of myopia? Socrates' myopia, it should be remembered, was feigned since he knew where he was going all along.

After a brief discussion of values clarification (which Carter rightly rejects as facile and relativistic), most of Chapter 2 is devoted to a sympathetic discussion of Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental approach to moral education. The virtue of Kohlberg's approach, he argues, is that it provides educators with both an empirically supported model of moral development and a sound conception of moral judgement. Carter's critique of Kohlberg is cogent and fair. He does not, however, examine in sufficient detail the problem of explaining how purely formal principles can yield particular moral content and, hence, fails to adequately defend Kohlberg against the charge of moral relativism. Carol Gilligan's claim, moreover, that Kohlberg's findings are not reflective of women's moral thinking merits much more discussion than the brief footnote reference he accords to it.

In Chapter 3, Carter focuses upon existentialism, and the views of Albert Camus in particular. The existentialist stress upon the a-rationality and absurdity of the world we find ourselves in, together with its strong emphasis upon authenticity, commitment and our inescapable responsibility for choosing how we are to live and who we are to become underscores, for Carter, a vital and necessary dimension of moral experience ignored in Kohlberg's approach. He builds upon Camus's view that our experience of the world is pervaded by the tension between the experience of order and what he calls (unhappily) the nostalgia for disunity, i.e., the spirit of critical reflection ("myopia" would have been a better choice of words). Together these tensions provide a model of assessment to be used by teachers (who are to be Socratic gadflies) to determine which direction their interaction with specific students should take. Carter's eclecticism here begins to run into trouble. The problem is that the a-rationality and absurdity presupposed by existentialism runs counter to the rationality inherent in Kohlberg's approach. Furthermore, Kohlberg's emphasis upon the universal aspects of human nature is incompatible with the existentialist view that we are who we choose to be. Carter does not address how, if at all, these conflicting presuppositions are to be resolved. Moreover, he leaves virtually unexplored the vital role of habit in the conduct and formation of character.

Chapter 4 is devoted to a discussion of various analyses of the concept of "intrinsic value" in order to illustrate the diversity of view in met-ethics and, by implication, ethics. It is not, however, necessary to bring sand to the desert. This chapter proves to be the least interesting and could be expunged without affecting the argument of the book.

Chapter 5 opens with a brief discussion of the emphasis in Zen Buddhism on overcoming ego and becoming completely absorbed in the experiences of living as a prelude to an extended discussion of Robert S. Hartman's

axiology. Carter's exposition of Hartman's theory and his discussion of its implications for moral education are the most interesting aspects of the book. Beginning with Hartman's analysis of intrinsic value as the fulfillment of a person's unique self-concept and his view that the whole personality is involved in valuation, Carter goes on to argue that moral education should foster the development of an individual's "transparency" (i.e., self-awareness) since it engenders compassion, and that educators should never lose sight of the infinite growth potential of every person. Once again, the problem here is with Carter's eclecticism. The Aristotelian current running through Hartman's view of self-fulfilment conflicts with the existentialist emphasis on self-creation. There is a huge difference between becoming who one is and deciding who one is to become. Carter does not address the question of how this conflict is to be resolved.

An approach to moral education should have a theoretically coherent grounding. The conflict of presuppositions inherent in the eclecticism of Carter's approach precludes this and is thus its major weakness. This notwithstanding, Carter has given us a thoughtful and interesting book exemplifying the openness and sensitivity he urges moral educators to foster in their students.

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Purpel, David, E., and Shapiro, H. Svi (Eds.). *Essays on the Moral Nature of Schooling*. New York: University Press of America, 1985, 254 pp., \$12.75 (paper).

*Schools and Meaning* is a cry for help, a scream to be released from hierarchial servitude, a plea for a deliverer. More carefully, *Schools and Meaning* encourages us to deliver ourselves from our own manufactured hierarchial structures and systems — oppressive creations that encroach on our liberties, dwindle our humanity, and threaten our survival.

To communicate the content of their book more precisely, the editors might have entitled this book *Schools and Meaningfulness*. Their subtitle was accurate enough, since the book stressed the moral over the moralistic nature of schooling. An existential flame burns throughout the book. Dealing with ultimate as well as practical values, the book considers broad moral and philosophical questions pertaining to schooling, especially in North America.

Purpel and Shapiro have assembled a book of enormous value, even though it is not perfect. This book would benefit any intelligent person concerned with the meaningfulness of schooling; it would be of special use to school administrators, teachers, and professors in all fields. While it would be particularly helpful to administrators and professors dealing with the subject of educational foundations and philosophy of education, it would benefit any administrator or professor in any of the numerous subject areas of education.

Stressing meaningful human values in schools, the writers cover the topics of equality and excellence, freedom and responsibility, community and institutions, and evaluation and dignity. In classical rhetorical fashion, the editors have structured the book so that it tells us what it will discuss, it discusses it, and then comments on what it discussed.

Following an introduction by Purpel, Part One of the book includes nine essays on the above listed topics, while Part Two offers three critical commentaries on the essays. The essays originated at a conference sponsored by the "Center for Educational Reform at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro" (p. x). The book was developed from the formal papers given at the conference; these papers had been organized into the four topics listed above. They were value issues, paired to show continuity rather than dichotomy (p. xxi). The writers came from diverse disciplines reflecting several perspectives. While the contributors come from philosophy, sociology, theology, literature, and drama, perspectives range from American functionalism to European criticism. The writings as a whole constitute a dialectical counterpoint to educational traditionalists, conservativists, and other status quo apologists.

For readers with liberal humanistic backgrounds and sympathies, the book will serve as an exhortation. For those without such backgrounds and sympathies, it will serve as an exposition or criticism. While abuses of the behaviouristic perspective are mentioned throughout the book, readers with a Skinnerian behaviouristic viewpoint will find significant compatibilities in these contributors. Especially relevant would be Shapiro's essay