Position Paper

A Discussion of
The Purpose of Life and Educational Philosophy

ED 7701

Educational Philosophy and Change

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a discussion of the author's personal philosophy and a discussion of the philosophy of education. Topics discussed include: knowledge and content; curriculum content, approach, and development; teachers' roles; students' roles; learning styles; instructional methods; home schooling; technology and teaching and learning; distance, online, or other alternative delivery methods of education; global education; inclusion, multicultural education, and diversity; and the relationship between schools and community Also discussed are various theories of educational philosophy and change that have been developed throughout history.

PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY

What is the essential nature of human beings?

The essential nature of humans is benevolent, social, cooperative, and collaborative; however, their strongest drive, survival, can cause them to resort to uncharacteristically hostile behavior if their survival drive is threatened, or if they believe that their survival is in danger.

What is the basic meaning or purpose of life?

This question has never been answered to everyone's, or perhaps to anyone's, satisfaction throughout the course of human civilization (and is in fact, I think, beyond the range of human comprehension as is understanding the concept of infinity) so I will only *discuss* it.

To examine the purpose of something, it first must have a beginning or origin and then a direction or goal. The main philosophical question is: why is there something (the universe) instead of nothing (infinite nothingness)? Exponents of the (1) Big Bang theory say that, since the universe seems now to be expanding, based on Edwin Hubble's observations, the universe began with a point of infinite density, smaller than an atom that contained all of the present matter of the universe and that particle existed in an infinite ocean of nothingness. Around fifteen billion years ago that particle exploded and the resulting matter eventually formed the universe in which we all now reside. This is a difficult theory to believe as are the ideas that (2) ours is a infinite universe of infinite matter that has always existed or that (3) the current universe was created by a Supreme Being or God. There may be other explanations that will be offered in the future but these are the main three views now currently considered as explanations for the origin or existence of the universe.

There have been several thinkers in the past that have ascribed to a God-created universe. Arguments for the existence of God have taken various forms including those using ontological, cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments. The ontological argument concerns the meaning of the term God and the nature of being or existence. The cosmological argument concerns the origin, structure, and space-time relationships of the universe. The teleological argument concerns the existence of a design, purpose, and order in nature and the resulting necessity of a designer. The moral argument argues that God is the source of moral awareness.

God can take the form of Plato's ultimate form of all forms making him the ultimate good, the highest in the hierarchy of forms or the Supreme Being and greatest reality similar to Anslem's definition of God as being greater than anything the human mind can conceive (that "being than which nothing greater can be conceived"). Anslem proved God's existence (to himself) based on the idea that the existence of God is contained within the definition so that God exists solely on the idea of God itself. Human beings also have a tendency to anthropomorphize their conceptions of God even though if there is a God then that being must be beyond human characteristics. Like Hegel`s Absolute Idea and ultimate truth towards which all nature and activity gravitates , the attainment of which all human activity would cease, God could be considered a cosmic magnet of perfection, the final, rather the first, cause towards which all things move. To Spinoza, God is "the infinite and eternal substance of all finite existences". Maimonides thought God could only be described via negativa by saying what he is not. Plotinus thought of God as the power of the One or the Primal Source (Stewart, 1988). Aristotle argues in his Physics, based on his concept motion and change, for the existence of an unmoved mover or first cause which he calls God (Aristotle, 1952, p.512).

Locke believed "there is an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing being" (Locke, 1952, p.552). Augustine said in his confessions that "the heavens were not created by themselves therefore there must be a God" (Augustine, 1952, p.268-269). Descartes considers God as an absolutely perfect being and human beings as imperfect approximations (Descartes, 1952). Berkeley believed that because there is a universe there is a mind of some Eternal Spirit that exists but is not necessarily capable of being perceived "being perfectly unintelligible and involving all the absurdity of abstraction" (Berkeley, 1952, p.414). Newton used the mechanistic argument and A posterior proof by using the teleological argument with some spiritualism describing God as the designer or architect of the universe:

> "This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being. This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all. God is the same God, always and everywhere. He is omnipresent. In him are all things contained and moved; yet neither affects the other: God suffers nothing from the motion of bodies; bodies find no resistance from the omnipresence of God. It is allowed by all that the Supreme God exists necessarily; and by the same necessity he exists always and everywhere.
>
> He is a uniform Being, void of organs, members or parts, and they are his creatures subordinate to him, and subservient to His will. The organs of sense are not for enabling the soul to perceive the species of things in its sensorium, but only for conveying them thither; and God has no need of such organs, He being everywhere present to the things themselves. And since space is divisible in infinitum, and matter is not necessarily in all places, it may also be allowed that God is able to create particles of matter of several sizes and figures, and in several proportions to space, and perhaps of different densities and forces, and thereby to vary the laws of Nature, and make worlds of several sorts in several parts of the Universe". (Newton, 1952, 369-371).

Immanuel Kant thought God was "the postulate of pure practical reason as the necessary condition of the possibility of the summum bonum" or ultimate happiness and used subjective and objective criteria to prove his moral argument (Kant, 1952, p.595). One interesting psychoanalytical alternative to the concept of God is offered by Sigmund Freud. To some, like Freud, the concept of God is a human invention and therefore exists only in the mind or the collective unconscious of human society representing what human beings are not yet able to explain scientifically. Freud says mankind's need to create a God or gods in his own image is his need for finding a surrogate father. "In western religion God is openly called Father. Psychoanalysis concludes that he really is the father clothed in the grandeur in which he once appeared to the small child. Though the adult realizes that his father is a being with strictly limited powers and abilities, he nevertheless looks back to the admired father of his childhood and exalts him into a deity or divinity and brings it into the present and into reality." (Freud, 1952, p.876).

If the world was created by pure chance then the random creation itself, based on principles of human reason, had to have a beginning. The beginning-and-end oriented scientific minds of physicists and astronomers have developed the Big Bang theory based on Hubble's evidence of an expanding universe. Even if the universe with its billions of galaxies each containing billions of stars and solar systems (some besides ours possibly supporting life) began with an explosion of a microscopic particle containing all of the potential matter of the universe, the question naturally arises: where did that particle come from? To satisfy astronomers, God can be called the first cause prior to the Big Bang and to the scientifically religious he only initiated the process and left the universe unattended. According to religious minds, God intervenes whenever miracles or designing are necessary to maintain his creation. Even Darwin's theory of evolution can support the argument of a cosmic designer and scientific biblical supporters can claim the biblical Genesis account of creation should be considered as metaphorical, with the days symbolizing millions of years.

Thomas Huxley's concept of agnosticism is based on not being able to know whether or not a God exists and atheism is the denial of God's existence. There is also pantheism which states that God is nature or God is life and with that definition everyone would agree that God exists since nature and life exist. Those who define God as love and goodness would have more difficulty convincing others of God's existence because of what is known as the problem of evil since evil and suffering exist in the world.

Explanations for the existence of God range from the astronomical to the psychological. Perhaps the best argument for the existence of God is that the concept, based on various definitions, satisfies a basic human need and finds its expression in a multitude of forms.

Knowing how the universe and life began would contain the answer of the question of the meaning of life with its continuing evolution. The purpose, or goal, of life for the organisms that are all presently involved in living it is, stated simply, to survive. Astrophysically, survival involves the continuation of celestial bodies (galaxies, stars such as the sun, etc. — all of which will eventually extinguish) and the planetary survival of our own solar system. Survival on Earth involves survival of the planet (supply of natural resources, avoidance of asteroidal impact, atmospheric retention, species survival, etc.). Survival of the human species (though this species may evolve into other, new species in the future) mostly involve the requirements above mentioned for planetary survival and also avoidance of incurable epidemics, avoidance of nuclear war, and population supply — though in the future (and now in China and India where the population of each country is over one billion people) population excess will be a detriment to survival.

Individual survival of living organisms requires that their biological needs be met. Personal survival of human beings requires also that their biological needs be met (food to eat, air to breath, water to drink, moderate climate and temperature, shelter, etc.). Humans also need psychological and emotional support and they are the only species that needs intellectual enlightenment, not only for their enjoyment, but also for their species and personal survival and this is accomplished mostly through the procedures of educational processes.

Morality, which according to Emmanuel Kant proves the existence of God, is determined some say by God or religious principles or mandates but I would say by general consensus of what human beings consider behavior that is conducive to fair, just, productive, and efficient human interaction which is behavior that is ultimately beneficial to human survival. All societies and cultures seem to have developed separate and unique, but similar, moralistic systems which would lead one to believe that there are indeed universal moral values. Examples are philosophical or religious principles such as the Golden Rule and religious, governmental, and societal laws such as laws to protect human rights such as property rights, freedom of speech, etc.

Many basic principles seem to remain constant such as the need to satisfy biological needs, laws of the universe or laws of physics (even though their theoretical explanations may change over time) and moral values, though with the changes in society, moral tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences seem to change over time. The fact that technology (such as travel and communications

technology) is changing at such a rapid pace is a factor that is causing change in all areas of society and life. But life *is* change. As a Buddhist saying succinctly states: you can never put your foot in the same river twice.

Concerning human learning, *how* we learn is done through sensory perception and cognitive retention; *why* we learn, or the motive of all living organisms, stripped to the barest essentials, is (the drive for) survival. Prehistoric humans began to gradually realize, that in order for all to survive, it became essential to pass along skills and information, or, in other words, to educate the members of a society in order to transmit information from one generation to another.

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

An educational philosophy is a theory, thought, or belief as to what methods should be used in educational process as well as to what is the purpose and goal of education. A philosophy is necessary for the same reason that someone needs a plan to proceed in life or a map to find one's destination. The source of my educational philosophy is a combination of read and studied thoughts of others (rationalism and idealism) and personal experiences and read experiences of others (direct and indirect empiricism, realism and existentialism). Over time, the changes that have occurred are mostly in the area of technology and not in the essential core of my educational philosophy. Computer and Internet technology have made these online courses possible but much of the content remains the same over time.

Below are discussions of some topics related to the philosophy and methods of education:

Knowledge and Content:

As is stated in essentialism, knowledge and content are the essential elements of education though what that knowledge and content, or curricula, should entail is not always agreed on. Curriculum, or what should and should not be taught, varies with one's philosophical outlook. The subjects contained within the curricula of the arts and sciences can be approached from the various philosophies and methodologies (idealism, realism, theistic realism, naturalism, pragmatism, existentialism, philosophical analysis, nationalism, liberalism, conservatism, utopianism, Marxism, totalitarianism, essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, social reconstructionism, and critical theory). Regardless of the methodology of instruction, the essential core of information remains constant, or, that is, the eternal truths remain constant, although their interpretation, and the theoretical explanations for them, may vary. It is essential to engage the students in the dialogue of the philosophical minds throughout history and then, with each of them reflecting and commenting on the ideas expressed in those philosophies helping them to continue and maintaining that dialogue by their participation, through discussion, of the ideas contained within the philosophies.

Curriculum Content, Approach, and Development:

What is taught -- and how it is taught -- is the essence of education. Curricula usually include the arts, sciences and physical education and each of these are subdivided: the arts (literature, languages, art, music, social sciences and history, etc.), the sciences (mathematics, physics, biology, astronomy,

geology, geography, etc.), and physical education (sports, exercise, nutrition, sex education, etc.). Recently schools have been "pursuing a systematic approach to organizational restructuring. In such schools, principals are much more likely to report a recent introduction of writing across the curriculum, literature based reading, and efforts to introduce hands-on math and science." (Ravitch, 1997, 181). Concerning approach and development, currently the movement has been toward "small classes, longer classes and a wider range of school resources." (Ravitch, 1997, 53).

One qualm some people have had with western education in general is that there seems to be a dichotomy of thinking that divides the Eastern hemisphere from the Western hemisphere. Most text begins with Greek philosophy and go through European and American philosophical systems up to the present. Though they may be thorough in what they cover, there is usually not much mention of Eastern or Oriental philosophies of education. If the educational systems and students in Asian countries excel academically, particularly in mathematics and the physical sciences, then we of the west should examine the philosophical systems that allow this to occur. We are all part of one new world culture, united by new technology, with influences from all sides of the globe and from all eras of history; therefore, syllabi in the western world should include more Eastern philosophy including Confucianism, Buddhism, etc. The syllabi of Asian countries include western culture so the western cultures should include eastern culture in theirs. After all, with 60% of the world's population, Asian societies and cultures are the world's majority.

Teachers' Roles:

The role of teacher is that of a moderator or facilitator between the over 5000 year old body of knowledge of civilization and the learner to expose the student to that information and to help elicit latent abilities within the student. As there are many personality types, there are also many types of teaching styles, from the traditional lecturer in a authoritarian learning environment to the coordinator in a collaborative learning environment. Some would extend the teacher's role beyond the course or classroom making them a sort of role model to the student, such as a mentor or example to follow, but generally the

primary role is that of facilitator to offer the learner the knowledge and guidance within a particular academic discipline or subject.

Students' Roles:

The role of the student is to be an interactive participant in the educational process so that the other students (and perhaps even the teacher) learn from each other. The role or duty of the learner is to read the assigned texts, do the assignments, and ask appropriate questions that help him and all of the other students in the process of understanding.

Learning Styles:

Each of the educational philosophies (idealism, realism, theistic realism, naturalism, pragmatism, existentialism, philosophical analysis, nationalism, liberalism, conservatism, utopianism, Marxism, totalitarianism, essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, social reconstruction, and critical theory) described in the Gutek text require learning styles based on their particular principles. Realism and pragmatism require empirical experimentation of practical principles, essentialism states that education is meant to dispense the time-tested essential truths and skills that have endured throughout the course of human civilization, perennialism asserts that the important elements of education are reoccurring and unchanging, and progressivism was a reaction to the formalism and authoritarianism of traditional education and suggested child-centered, free-form, open, creative, expressive, and progressive classroom environments to encourage a child's unfettered development.

Learning styles (such as child-centered learning, student-centered learning, community-centered learning, problem-solving, self-awareness, self-directed learning, self-determined learning, self-discovery, discovery method, learning by doing, experimental inquiry, scientific inquiry, scientific method, open classrooms, open learning, open-ended questions, Socratic dialogue, service-based learning, traditional classrooms, online classrooms, and existential creativity) should be considered relative to the stages of development of the student. However, whichever learning style is actually used within a class or an institution should remain consistent through a particular course of study even though there can be combinations of styles and philosophies that are utilized within a given course of study.

The new structure of the educational system is becoming a 'democratic-cybernetic' model. "The cybernetic dimension suggests self-regulating processes which make it possible to adjust an organization to changing conditions or to move towards a better level of quantitative and qualitative functioning. The democratic idea implies that participation of those involved will be maximized." (Zygon, 1985)

Concerning school administration and learning styles the trends now seem to move:

From independence to interdependence

From competition to cooperation

From compulsive leadership to familistic leadership

From quantity (more) to quality (better)

From organizational convenience to aspiration of self-development

From authoritarianism and coercion to participation and integration

From uniformity to diversity (Zygon, 1985).

Instructional Methods:

Some instructional methods include principles contained within idealism (theory of forms, Socratic dialogue, and open-ended questions), realism (experimental and using the scientific method) ,Thomism or theistic realism (uniting idealism and realism with a creative deity, discovery method, community-centered), naturalism (learning by doing, self-awareness, stages of development, child-centered), pragmatism (problem-solving, learning by doing, scientific method, service-based learning), and existentialism (open learning and classrooms, student-centered, self-directed and determined, learning by doing, making one's own workable system).

Home Schooling:

The school where I am teaching now uses the curriculum of the Calvert program to teach the academic subjects as well as English as a second language. Calvert began as a private school in Baltimore, Maryland and then expanding its program to include a home schooling program. There are levels beginning with pre-school which go through the eighth grade. Each year the students receive a package that includes school supplies, textbooks (over twenty of them), and a lesson manual. The plan is for a parent, guardian, or tutor/teacher to assist the students with the lessons for each of the five school days of the week. For assessment, the lesson projects and tests are to sent in periodically to the Calvert home school administrators.

Two of my nephews were home schooled and they seem to have good communication and writing skills though I am not sure how their progress was assessed. One of them has continued on to a university. Concerning college admissions requirements for home schooled learners, "colleges that accept homeschoolers rely on various materials in place of high school grades, including, perhaps, portfolios of student work, the applicant's personal essay, SAT or ACT scores, grades from open admission community colleges, and personal recommendations. Extracurricular activities are generally important for nontraditional applicants, and are especially important for all applicants who hope to get scholarships. Admission criteria can vary quite widely. [Some colleges state] that applicants without a high school diploma are required to take a high school equivalency exam. "Some selective colleges will admit anyone with scores on the SAT or ACT above a certain level, and will consider other applicants based on portfolios of the applicants' academic work." (Bunday, 2000).

Also, some people could consider online and distance education as a variation and extension of home schooling processes.

Technology and Teaching and Learning:

In addition to social causes and change, nothing is changing the world faster than technology which is, itself, changing at an ever escalating and accelerating rate. Technology is changing all aspects of life and the rapid changes in travel and communications technology is bringing the world together physically and ideologically, though the ideological changes are occurring at a slower pace. Today, education, teaching, and learning can use technological tools that were previously nonexistent and this has radically altered the method, if not the content, of education. Now there are televisions, radios, telephones, compact disks, computers, audio and video recordings, lasers, electron microscopes, cameras, radio telescopes, and the list goes on. The new use of online courses is also radically changing educational methods. Traditionally, the classroom consisted of a physical room with desks, chairs, and blackboards; now the classroom can also be virtual cyberspace where the learners are connected within a global course room composed of computer monitors, keyboards, and Internet connections.

In E-topia (2000), William J. Mitchell refers to the future online meeting places where friends, co-workers, colleagues, and students will meet:

> "What sorts of meeting places, forums, and markets will emerge in the electronically mediated world? What will be the twenty-first century equivalents of the gathering at the well, the water cooler, the Greek agora, the Roman forum, the village green, the town square, Main Street, and the mall?" Many of the meeting places will be located in the virtual world of cyberspace and he adds that "they will make growing use of electronic mail systems, mailing lists, newsgroups, chat rooms, Web pages, directories and search engines, audio conferencing, video conferencing, increasingly elaborate, avatar-populated, online virtual worlds, and software- mediated environments that we cannot even imagine yet. Some of these virtual meeting places will be the private domains of well-defined special groups, some will be discreetly out of the public eye; others will be true public space open to all." (Mitchell, 2000, p. 85).

Distance, Online, or Other Alternative Delivery Methods of Education:

In today's world, technology is changing at a rapid pace and as a result society is changing at a rapid pace. The traditional classroom will probably always be around with its face to face interaction but the traditional classroom now has a new partner supplying the same information but which offers instead interface interaction. Cisco Systems president and CEO, John Chambers has reportedly said that "the next big killer application for the Internet is going to be education. Education over the Internet is going to be so big it is going to make e-mail look like a rounding error." (MacNamara, 2001).

Global Education:

The term global education, which is becoming a growing development as a result of rapid technological progress and international communication, can have several meanings or connotations such as:

1. Schools that are distributed or franchised worldwide giving the same informative and instructive technique
2. Globalization or the tendency to create one world culture through cultural exchange and global education
3. The capability to be able to receive an education from anywhere in the world through books, television or, more currently, online distance education.

Inclusion, Multicultural Education, and Diversity:

"Society is one word but many things. Men associate together in all kinds of ways and for all kinds of purposes. One man is concerned in a multitude of diverse groups, in which his associates may be quite different. It often seems as if they had nothing in common except that they are modes of associated life. Within every larger social organization there are numerous minor groups: not only

political subdivisions, but industrial, scientific, and religious associations. There are political parties with differing aims, social sets, cliques, gangs, corporations, partnerships, groups bound closely together by ties of blood, and so on, in endless variety. In many modern states and in some ancient, there is a great diversity of populations, of varying languages, religions, moral codes, and traditions. From this standpoint, many a minor political unit, one of our large cities, for example, is a congeries of loosely associated societies, rather than an inclusive and permeating community of action and thought." (Dewey, 1997, 82). "True individuality is a product of the relaxation of the grip of the authority of custom and traditions as standards of belief." (Dewey, 1997, 305).

World society is a collection of all people, philosophies, religions, and cultures which is now connected by new technology on a world wide scale with influences from all sides of the globe and all eras of history. Contributing members of society have come from all social groups so it is essential to include all factions of society within the educational system in order to achieve the democratization of society.

Relationship Between Schools and Community:

This is a synergistic and interdependent relationship where each benefits the other. The schools really exist to prepare and equip the students for society thereby creating citizens — not only of a local but — of a world community in this increasingly globalized world that we all live in. The democratic nature of the preparation of citizens is a concept espoused by John Dewey, among others, and is the basis of my action project to introduce, implement, and sustain, through the educational system's political science and social studies courses, the use of direct democracy in the United States of America.

Adult education is participatory and is a tool for social change, where educational progressivism is a new approach to educating the public (Heaney, 1996). " 'Adult education turns out to be the most reliable instrument for social actionists' since it assures that any action undertaken would be authentically democratic" (Brookfield, 1984). Eduard Lindeman, as influenced by John Dewey, considers adult education to be connected with democracy and social action. To Lindeman, adult education affects social change and is a method to create good and productive citizens for a

democratic society. The idea of using the educational system to implement and sustain a direct democracy is closely connected with the ideas expressed by writers such as Heaney, Miles Horton, Paulo Freire, and Jack Mezirow who believe it is necessary to equip the populace with knowledge through education in order to empower them to create a truly democratic society. John MacNamara and David O'Donnell, in "Developing e-Citizens and e-Consumers, an Irish e-Commerce Case Study" (2001), state the necessity for the educational system and society to produce "e-literate" citizens for the new society. The authors say in their abstracted introduction: "We present a very simple argument: e-business needs e-consumers and e-literate workers; e-government needs e-citizens". .

Besides incorporating new technology in order to educate the public to create a democratic society, schools should address human differences such as multiple intelligences, learning styles, gender, sexual orientation, exceptionalities, developmental stages, and cultural diversity.

Rather than being represented by one score, an intelligence score or map should resemble a three dimensional mountain range with peaks and valleys representing the areas of intellectual strengths and limitations. Some people might want to include additional categories, to describe the concept of multiple intelligences. Dr. Howard Gardner, education professor at Harvard University, in 1983 identified the categories of multiple intelligence as: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic (athletic), musical, interpersonal (social) , intrapersonal (self), and naturalistic (scientific).

Developmental stages should be addressed since part of growth is the passage through developmental stages from childhood through adulthood as is especially noted in the educational philosophies of naturalism and progressivism. Differences in sexual orientation should be addressed since sexuality is an essential part of human behavior and a part of human development and also since the great contributors to society and culture have been from all areas of the sexual orientation spectrum. Cultural diversity should be addressed since world culture is a collection of all people, philosophies, religions, and cultures which is now connected by new technology on a world wide scale with influences from all sides of the globe and all eras of history. Exceptionalities should also be addressed because there is the need for specialized areas of education for learners with special disabilities, abilities, talents, and gifts.

Concerning the question: are students intrinsically motivated to learn? A baby or an infant responding to environmental stimuli is reacting according to survival drives, almost as a sort of instinctual response, and perhaps out of curiosity. These reactions could be considered as intrinsically motivated behavior. However, a baby is not a student in a physical or cyber/virtual classroom. And even though some learning is done for personal satisfaction for reasons of self-efficacy and self-determination such as self-improvement or hobby related studies, once the student enters a classroom, then the motivations become extrinsic in nature. From my experiences of teaching children as well as adults, the rewards for children are not intrinsic otherwise they would not need the constant disciplining and rewards and punishments that are required to control them. As for adults, some may appear to be or say they are learning for intrinsic reasons, and some might be meeting personal goals or learning about personal hobbies and interests, but for the most part as students become adults they realize the importance of education in order to achieve external rewards such as respect, a higher salary, communication skills, new technical skills, success and material possessions. This line of thought would align with B.F. Skinner's theories of operant conditioning. American psychologist Abraham Maslow developed a hierarchy of needs that motivates human behavior. The needs in order of importance from most to least are: (1) physiological such as the need for food (2) security and safety such as the need for income and protection (3) love and belonging (4) self-efficacy including competence, prestige, and self-esteem (5) self-satisfaction and self-fulfillment (6) curiosity, inquisitiveness, the desire to understand and self-actualization. (Mazur, 2002). I think when we, as learners, read or study, for our own enjoyment or edification, subjects on our own that we are not required to take then we are involved in more intrisically motivated behavior. The contents of courses offered by universities could conceivably be studied by the learners themselves at their own structure and pace and that type of motivation could perhaps be considered intrinsic depending upon the ultimate intent of the learners. But the fact that courses are taken for credit and usually for a degree implies that the course participants are extrinsically motivated in taking these courses. Most students in school are extrinsically motivated toward achieving external rewards in addition to learning for internal satisfaction

Concerning improving one's practice: one improves one's practice by practicing ("practice makes perfect" as the saying goes or at least one gets nearer to the perfect ideal). By doing, drilling, and experience, and sometimes with the help of a coach or teacher, someone can improve their performance and skills. In addition to doing and practicing, reading, attending workshops and lectures,

and learning from others are ways of improving one's practice. There are both external (extrinsic) and internal (intrinsic) motivations to improve in educational settings. Concerning the philosophical, ideological, and theoretical assumptions associated with motivations to improve, this desire is a part of growth and of the survival drive since one is constantly equipping one's self with the skills and knowledge to survive and endure. Also, as is expressed in the philosophy of existentialism, humans are mostly in control of their own development and experience concerning issues of individual existence, freedom, choice and are responsible for creating the conditions of their own existence. Freedom of choice entails commitment and responsibility so the motivation to improve one's practice mostly originates within the individual.

Throughout history several individuals were known as great teachers. One was Socrates who questioned, or supplied questions to, the students so that he as a teacher would not necessary give them answers but would guide the students to a solution so Socrates could be considered a facilitator or a collaborative teacher of democratic principles who created a student/teacher interaction and who influenced Plato's philosophy of idealism. Another was Jesus who was able to get people to leave what they were doing to follow him and join his cause and this process requires charisma and persuasive abilities which are a factors in effective teaching. Aristotle was a great teacher (his most famous student was Alexander the Great), writer, and philosopher who based much of his philosophy of realism on principles of biology because he was probably influenced by the medical profession of his father who was a physician. The notion of causality, principles of biology, and logic were some of his most important contributions to knowledge. He wrote over 400 books on many branches of knowledge including logic, ethics, politics, metaphysics, biology, physics, psychology, poetry, and rhetoric. After the fall of the Roman empire, most of his works were lost but about 100 books, which had been translated into Arabic, were saved. Most of these books were not meant as books for the public but were notes to his students which demonstrates the importance he placed on preparation for teaching and communication with students.

One person in contemporary times who embodied these qualities was another scientist also known for being a great teacher, Dr. Richard P. Feyman (1918-1988). Also a Nobel Prize recipient, he considered his role as a teacher as important as his role a physicist since knowledge should not just stay within the mind of the thinkers but should be passed on, used, and understood by others. He also

thought that a good teacher should make his subject as interesting to others as it is to himself. Born in New York City, he received his bachelor's degree in physics at MIT and his PhD at Princeton. Beginning in 1950 he moved to the Calfornia Institute of Technology where he was known a gifted teacher, practical joker, and an overall colorful character in the field of physics. In order to keep his lectures lively, he was known to sometimes play bongo drums during the lecture and he was also a painter. In 1965 he received the Nobel Prize in physics for the theory of quantum electrodynamics. He explored concepts related to quarks and superfluidity and is known for mapping elementary particles with Feynman diagrams and, at Los Alamos where the nuclear weapons were developed, was in charge of computations involving the behavior of neutrons in nuclear explosions. He also worked on the weak interaction, the strong force, and the characteristics of neutrons and protons. He wrote a series of undergraduate lectures he gave at Caltech which became a standard reference for physics. He wrote 37 in-depth research papers and books for the layman. There have been numerous books written about him.

One important factor in effective teaching is to keep the students interested by not boring them with information that is too easy or too difficult. Another important aspect of a good class is classroom management and discipline but if the material is at the right level and presented in an interesting manner then effective classroom management naturally follows. In teaching very young children it is important to be supportive and appropriately affectionate like a parent whereas the older students require more discipline, structure, and guidance and the adult students will have varying instructional needs. But in all cases, as exemplified by Dr. Feynman and the other great teachers of the past, the most important factor of teaching is to not bore the students but hold their interest and stimulate their thought processes.

THEORIES

Some definitions of "theory" by the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2003): the analysis of a set of facts in their relation to one another **—-** abstract thought **: speculation** — a plausible or scientifically acceptable general principle or body of principles offered to explain phenomena.

A theory is an assumption, a guess, an hypothesis, explanation, and rationale for the explanation, of the cause(s) of a particular event, condition or occurrence. A theory is therefore a guiding philosophy and is necessary for teaching and learning, since there are many approaches to education, as it is necessary in all endeavors to have a guiding philosophy, even if that philosophy is tacit, unstated, or unformulated since, in order for a plan to proceed methodically, rationally, and effectively, it is necessary to have a plan or an idea map. This is true also with counseling, since there are a variety of counseling methods that counselors and schools should be versed in, and school administration procedures, since there are several approaches to management and the administration should have an established — though open to revision if necessary — set of rules and conditions in order for the educational processes to run smoothly, as it is with all areas of life.

All educational experiences today contain both rational/abstract (**idealism** or Plato's rationalism) and experiential/concrete (**realism** or Aristotle's empiricism) so would therefore be utilizing **Thomist** principles. Although we might not remember the exact first moment, we learn early on in life that if one touches fire or a hot stove one is likely to get burned (learning through experience or realism and empiricism). Later, we begin to also learn sounds and words by listening and repeating from others and then begin to learn other words and more complex concepts and abstract ideas (idealism and rationalism and Thomism).

Children seem to learn best by doing (realism), which are the principles espoused by Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget, among others. In the school where I have been teaching, where the Calvert system is the method used for educating the children from pre-kindergarten to eighth grade, the term TPR (Total Physical Response) is used to express the belief that knowledge that is actively and physically experienced is more readily retained than knowledge that is more passively received (idealism). I think I too have learned more through physical, sensorial experiences than through only abstract contemplation. For instance, traveling (realism and empiricism) and experiencing a foreign culture can offer experiences that can enable one to learn about the culture, language, geography, history, etc. of a society to complement what can be read (idealism and rationalism) about it in books. The combination of the two approaches could be considered a type of Thomism.

Naturalism states that people should study nature and cause-and-effect relationships, use the scientific method of observation, use the senses to learn (empiricism), interact with the natural environment and learn at a natural and unhurried pace. Naturalism, akin to humanism and romanticism, is most identified with Jean-Jacque Rousseau (1712-1778), the author of Confessions, Emile, and the Social Contract. Rousseau suggested learning at a natural and steady rate using "activity, exploration, and learning by doing", that humans should go through their natural phases and that childhood is "a necessary evil to be gotten through as quickly as possible." (Gutek, 1997). Pestalozzi referred to "Anschauug" or clear concepts from sense perception. Another naturalist was Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) who, though he had the metaphor of comparing human education and learning to human evolution correct, seemed to use the concept of social Darwinism or social Spencerism to justify, among other injustices, racism and oppression. With its utilitarian leanings, naturalism paved the way for pragmatism.

Pragmatism (with similarities to realism, empiricism, materialism, and positivism and the opposite of idealism) says that ideas and theories should be examined by experimentation (the scientific method) and that there are no absolute truths and values and stresses adaptability to changing conditions. It is, as the name implies, utilitarian, pragmatic, practical, and utilitarian and utilizes a minimum of abstraction. Education must be a problem solving activity with the purpose of creating a better society and a more informed public in order to create and maintain a democratic society. All areas of philosophy should be adapted to create useful and practical philosophical doctrines. Though useful for humans, pragmatism seems to be human-centered, but humans are just a fraction — though of course a very important fraction — of life on Earth (or perhaps in the universe). The most influential pragmatists are American philosophers Charles S. Peirce (formal principles, scientific method and mathematics), William James (relativism, systems of morality, religion, and faith, and the will to believe) and John Dewey (experience, intelligence, and communities as always changing and progressing, knowledge is tentative and not absolute). Pragmatism has many advantages in that it can adapt to a constantly changing world, use methods of social experimentation make society better, discard useless beliefs, and function in a pluralistic society though some might think of its philosophy as somewhat vague and undefined. Pragmatism basically states that truth is relative to the historical context in which a society exists and that changes need to be made when new discoveries are made and that all knowledge should have practical use.

Existentialism involves the philosophical explorations of Freedom to choose, responsibility, commitment, subjectivity, free will, individual personality, and the recognition of emotions (contentment, fulfillment, dread, anxiety, nausea, anguish, etc.) and their relation to human existence. Whereas Plato and most philosophers since him up until the point of existentialism believed that there are universal truths and that what is moral truth that is true for one person or society is true for all but the highly subjective existential philosophy suggests that truth can be relative to each individual who can construct their own philosophical system. The 19th-century Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, the first to call himself an existentialist, said "I must find a truth that is true for me . . . the idea for which I can live or die." (Dreyfus, 2002). Kierkegaard, who considered the founder of existentialism, reacted against the rational system of Hegel and recognized the absurdity of the human condition and advocated the "leap of faith" into Christianity. Pascal recognized human paradoxes and set the stage for existentialism. Nietzsche, who influenced existential philosophy and who, since he was an atheist, was on the other side of the religious coin from Kierkegaard claimed that "God is dead" and opposed Judeo-Christian doctrines in favor of heroic individualism and the nurturing of individual genius. Martin Heidegger thought that humans must learn to live in an incomprehensible, meaningless, and absurd world and yet must choose a goal and strive for it and accept the certainty of death and the meaninglessness of human existence which is a stance very similar to that held by the philosopher most identified with existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre ("existence precedes essence") who said that human life is "futile passion." This sentiment is represented in the existentialist themes of writers such as Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber, Paul Tillich, Edmund Husserl, John Holt, Franz Kafka, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and Albert Camus.

Concerning the concept of a *hidden curriculum*: The private language school where I am teaching uses the Calvert School program. The Calvert School was originally a private school in Maryland, then later also a program for home schooling, and now a curriculum used by many schools within the educational institutions, including the school where I am teaching, in San Chung City, Taipei Hsien, Taiwan. The program is a comprehensive system which includes a lesson manual accompanied by many supplementary books, all in colorful format and design to hold the interest of the young

students. The program also includes in the educational package/kit sent to the home student or schools as one package for each students containing the many books (more than 20) and supplies.. The students follow lessons, and if they spend one day on each lesson, each level lasts one school year. The program's curriculum, which begins with pre-kindergarten and advances up through the eighth grade, offers the traditional subjects (reading, writing, mathematics, science, geography, history, phonics, vocabulary building, language acquisition) but has the additional purpose (the *hidden curriculum*) of teaching English as a second language to young students, in this particular case, from Taiwan. It also has the effect (perhaps a hidden curriculum) of presenting this information from the perspective of the United States so that the children learn history and literature based on cultural and historical experiences in the USA, such as the origins and practices of Thanksgiving holiday or the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, so that the students can communicate with people from North America and English speaking countries and can perhaps someday live, work, or study in North America or other English speaking countries. The program covers not only grammar, spelling, and vocabulary but it also introduces these skills within the context of the above-mentioned subjects thus making the teaching, and hopefully the learning, of the information more enjoyable, fulfilling, useful, and effective.

I think the curriculum and the hidden curriculums mentioned each contain elements of **nationalism** (since they are presented from an American viewpoint), liberalism (emphasizing individuality, independence, and self-expression), and conservatism (transmitting an established curriculum and cultural information). Nationalism or "devotion to one's nation and its interests" (Gutek, 1997, p. 158) is found in every country is based on local culture, language, pride and self-defense. I have found that the smallest countries, such as South Korea and the Czech Republic, are the most nationalistic perhaps as a form of defensiveness or self preservation. Even Taiwan, which is not a country but is claimed by China to be a renegade province of China, has a type of nationalistic feeling. Taiwan could be compared to Hawaii when Hawaii became a state, if it becomes part of China, or it could resemble island nations like Sri Lanka or Costa Rica if it ever becomes an independent country. In China, the students there often referred to China as the "motherland" an idea which conveys a type of nationalistic or patriotic hidden curriculum. In the USA some people place the order of loyalty as, starting with the highest level, God, country, and then family, which implies the importance of nationalism or patriotism. **Liberalism**, as formulated by John Locke (1632-1704), states that "individuals are free, equal, and independent and no one can deprive them of property or subject them to another's political

power without their consent" (Gutek, 1997, p. 173). **Conservatism**, as explained by Edmund Burke (1729-1797), endeavors to "preserve established institutions and conditions" and was an institution to "transmit the cultural heritage to the young and preserve it through the generations." (Gutek, 1997, p. 198).

Postmodernism is a further development of the subjective and expressive philosophy of modernism which incorporated the utilization of new technologies and its international implications as part of its philosophy. **Deconstructionism** strives to deconstruct previous ideologies and examine them in a way similar to the methods of critical theory. Like Marxism, it examines history as a progression of forms of domination, usually of oppressed minorities and includes the factors of gender, race, economy, politics, personality, and culture. Like the realists and the pragmatists, it considers concrete experience preferable to abstraction, does not attempt to establish definite truths, accepts the varieties of human endeavors, and believes in a decentralized structure to education and society.

Critical Theory is a synthesis of the philosophies as developed by the Frankfort School (which began in 1923 as a reaction to Nazism) concerning the influences of domination of the populace through culture and ideology, Karl Marx who emphasized domination of the public relative to the economic structure of society , and Sigmund Freud's model of the human psyche and the attempts to liberate people from illusions of their own creation. Critical Theory also involves the democratization of society and one of the main proponents of critical theory was Jurgen Habermas, a German philosopher of democratic concepts. He refers to the public sphere which is a type of public forum which can be used to construct policies based on the principles of critical theory and which is now facilitated by the use of the Internet. "The Habermasian public sphere was originally used as an analytical tool to describe the environment that was created in bourgeois society between the private sphere and the state. It this environment, citizens reflected critically on themselves and the state. Consensual agreement was formed from rational arguments and judged solely on their merits not on the status of their creators." (Plaisted, 1996).

My educational philosophy is aligned with some combination of essentialism, constructivism and existentialism. Since the present is the accumulation of the past and all new philosophies are influenced by previous philosophies even if they are reactions in opposition to them, one could coin a new term for a conglomerate philosophy and call it eclecticism or unionism, which is selecting parts of each of the

previously mentioned philosophies (idealism, realism, Thomism, naturalism, pragmatism, and existentialism) and uniting them into one workable philosophy. I think of the ones studied, I identified with the rationality of idealism, the practicality and scientific nature of empiricism or realism and naturalism, the democratic nature of pragmatism and the creative force of existentialism combined with the time-tested principles of essentialism. I align myself with the philosophy of **essentialism** since we all learn useful skills and cultural knowledge that have been transmitted throughout the centuries and certain principles remain essentially constant. While learning today, people have access to a more than 5000 year old body of knowledge (or that which has been salvaged and maintained over time). Of course, in time there are changes in theoretical explanations and there are technological changes which occur constantly but the basic and structural essentials remain constant.

Constructivism states that we build upon previous knowledge and all of my personal learning experiences have supported this concept. That is perhaps one reason why learning a foreign language is as difficult as it is since all concepts, words, and definitions are based on vocabulary and concepts which are built on previously learned knowledge and vocabulary. One of the developers of constructivism, J. Bruner (1966) says that instructional theory should include: (1) a desire to affect learning, (2) lucidity and comprehensibility of the presented knowledge (3) sequential effectiveness in presenting material, and (4) reward and punishment.

Existentialism involves the philosophical explorations of the freedom to choose, individual responsibility, subjectivity, free will, individual personality, and the recognition of emotions and their relation to human existence. With my experiences in the visual arts and the teaching of English as a second language, many of my experiences have been existential in nature so I identify with that philosophy on a personal basis. I believe that human culture is basically a conglomeration and accumulation of ideas, thoughts, inventions, and culture that have been created by individuals whose creations, over time, have been added to society's body of knowledge.

CONCLUSION

My educational philosophy is practical, I believe, since it combines elements of realism, prag matism, essentialism, and existentialism. Pragmatism with its utilitarian purposes is practical by definition of the term. Realism is also practical as it is based on empiricism and the scientific method of hypothesis, experimentation, observation, and analysis. Essentialism also works because it is based on ideas that have been time-tested and established (but it needs to be able to add new information to the knowledge base as the information develops) to be the most effective subjects and methods to be taught. Existentialism is practical, even though it concerns individual freedom and expression and is a system where the learners can structure their own workable systems, but only in a free and democratic society as it would be squelched in a totalitarian system. Theory is the core of all curricula and educational philosophy. Essentialism states that education involves dispensing the time-tested essential truths and skills that have endured throughout the course of human civilization, perennialism asserts that the important elements of education are reoccurring and unchanging, and progressivism was a reaction to the formalism and authoritarianism of traditional education and suggested child-centered, free-form, open, creative, expressive, and progressive classroom environments to encourage a child's unfettered development.

The philosophies were chosen not only to fit my personality and style of teaching but also because they can be adapted to a variety of learner types and personality types. As the needs of human nature have remained essentially constant over time, the needs of the students, despite rapid changes in technology, also have remained constant so the educational philosophies mentioned continue to address the instructional needs of the students as well as the learning and teaching processes. All of the philosophies focus on human learning: existentialism places the emphasis on the needs of the students but pragmatism and essentialism also place great importance on the educational system's benefits to society so the combination of these systems balances the needs of society and the individual learners.

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