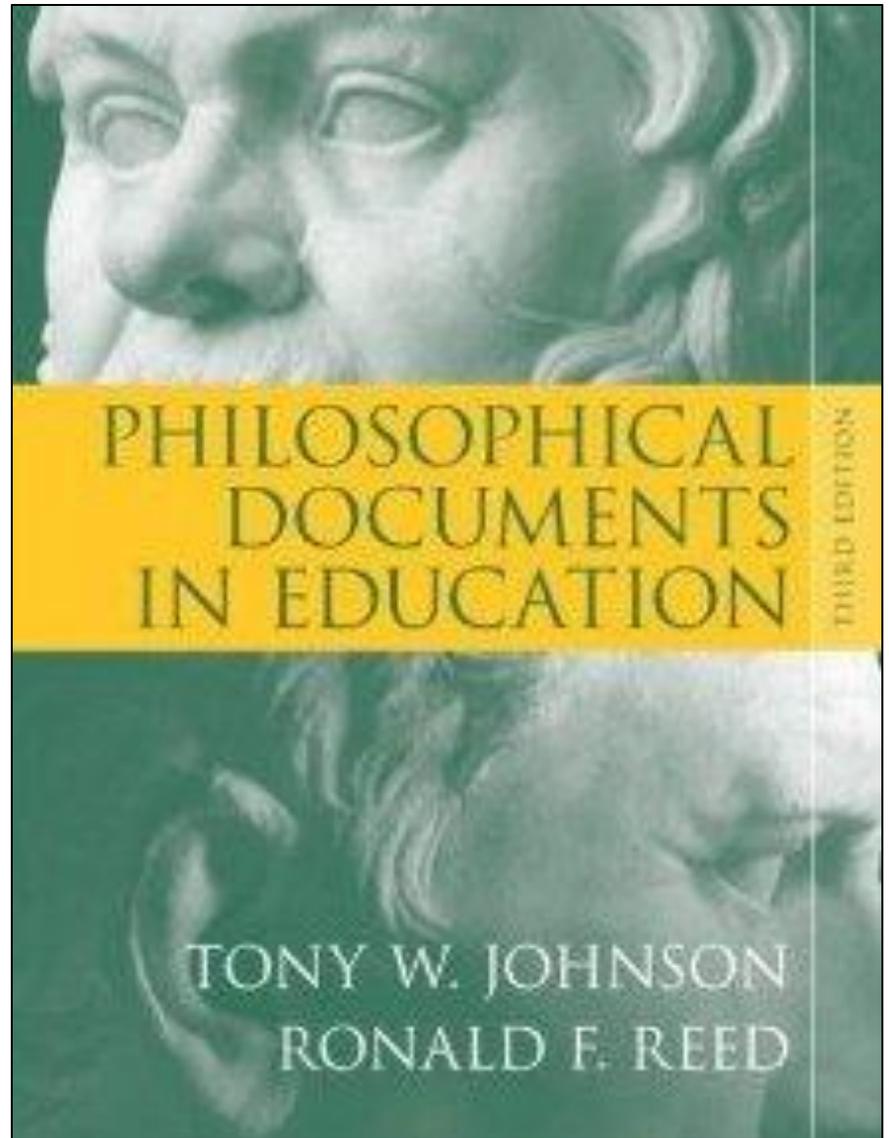


Introduction

EDA 617



Philosophical Documents in Education rests on a very basic assumption that students of education, and potential and practicing educational professionals, can learn something of significance in terms of both theory and practice from reading, thinking about, and discussing the great philosophic tradition in education

Formulate your own vision of the ideally educated person and how to foster it.

Selections from 18 philosophers—ranging from such classical thinkers as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Dewey

Contemporary theorists as Maxine Greene, Nel Noddings, Cornel West, and Parker Palmer—comprise this text

Exposes the class to the views of women and minorities

Each selection responds in a unique way to the question of what does it mean to be an educated individual.

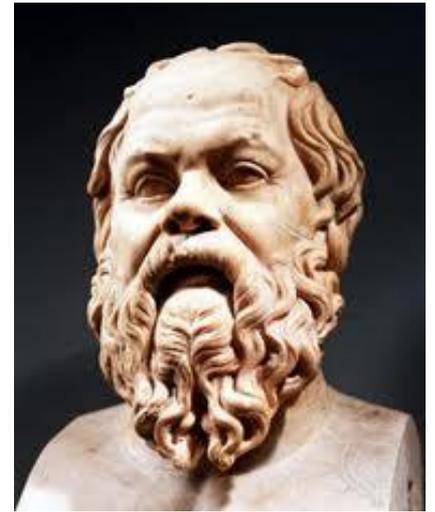
Only an introduction to philosophy

Differing Perspectives on the Ideally Educated Individual - The Fallible Human Being

Characterizing himself as a teacher unlike any that the Athenians had ever known, Socrates refused to tell his students what to think.

Instead, he helped them improve their thinking by identifying problems and/or weaknesses in their reasoning.

According to Socrates, it is only through recognizing and learning from our mistakes that we can improve our souls



The Critic or Gadfly

The Spartans had defeated the Athenians in the Peloponnesian War

Athenians longed for a return to normalcy and abandoned the critical inquiry of Socrates.

By allowing his fellow citizens to kill him, Socrates demonstrates for his and future societies the injustices involved in silencing critics.



The Guardian

Plato advocated for the intellectual as a wise, all-knowing philosopher king

According to Plato, there is a world of ideas that transcends the material or physical world. Unlike the material world that is accessible to us through our senses, the “real” world or world of ideas is accessible to us only through the intellect.

Plato argues that all people benefit when the truly wise is in charge. His ideal society is one governed by an omniscient and all-powerful philosopher king.

For Plato, the goal of education is to identify and guide a gifted few to the truth and to sort and socialize those less intellectually gifted into lesser roles in life

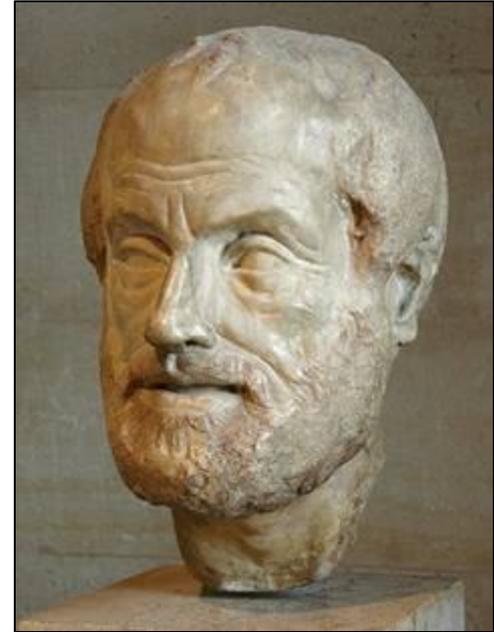
The Rational Animal

Aristotle joined with his mentor in providing the intellectual foundations for a rather conservative worldview that—in many ways—continues to dominate much of the world

Aristotle joined Plato in believing in an absolute reality

Aristotle's process for reaching these ultimate generalizations differed dramatically from that of Plato

Believing that the world could be understood at its most fundamental level through the careful and detailed observation and cataloging of phenomena, Aristotle employed this approach in developing major treatises on virtually all fields of knowledge



For Aristotle, education's role is to create an environment that nurtures the individual's rational potential

Plato is often associated with the origins of idealism and Aristotle with the origins of realism

Idealists versus Realists

Platonists or idealists thought of education as a birthing process, a movement from the inside out.

As a result of this inward focus, idealists tend to focus on the affective, the spiritual, the artistic, the intuitive, even the mystical in the pursuit of the ultimate, more abstract realities

Aristotelians or realists look outside the individual in their pursuit of truth and knowledge.

Realists focus on informing the mind using data derived from the world around them.

Happiness: The Life of the Mind

Greeks and especially the Romans were largely concerned with the education of leaders or rulers and secondarily with the education of citizens

Graeco-Roman education emphasized the life of the mind through the study of the liberal arts and the humanities

By studying and embracing this Graeco-Roman culture, one became a Roman and—by embracing the life of the mind—Romans experienced, in varying degrees, happiness in this world

Happiness was the ultimate goal

Happiness as Otherworldly Salvation

While the Graeco-Romans sought happiness in this world, the Christians sought salvation in the next

Christians wanted to be Romans also

In reality, their only real choice was either to be a civilized Roman or an ignorant barbarian.

At this point, the question became: Can there be a synthesis of Christian and classical cultures?

Is it possible to be both a Christian and a Roman? It is at this point that Augustine enters the picture

Romans and/or Christians

Like many of his contemporaries, Augustine converted to Christianity as an adult (in his thirties). Prior to this conversion he experienced the worldly materialism associated with well-educated, affluent Romans of the day

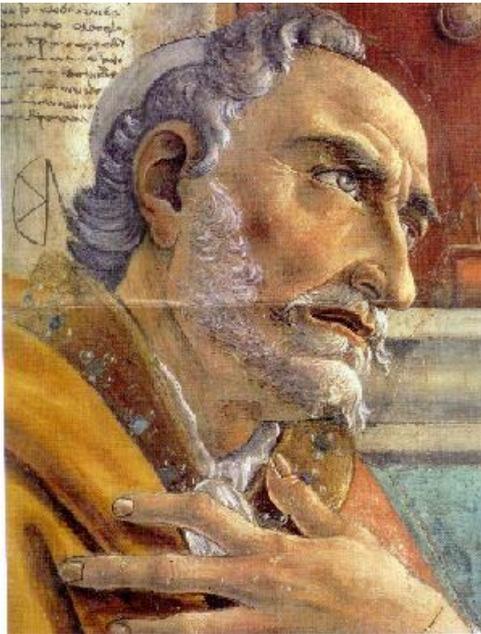
Augustine championed a pragmatic compromise, rejecting the questionable morality that filled the pages of classical literature while embracing their literary skills as a tool for preaching the gospel

Becoming the Bishop of Hippo in AD 395, Augustine contributed to a growing body of Christian literature focused on church doctrine and on describing the saintly exploits of religious leaders worthy of emulation.

Augustine explained how the answer to each of the basic philosophical questions is god.

True happiness can only be realized through God

The goal of mankind is happiness



Through god's grace in the form of Jesus Christ, humans can achieve genuine happiness by choosing a loving union with god

Augustine suggests that there are two kinds of human communities.

One (the city of man) is the secular world consisting of those pursuing the pleasure of the flesh.

The other comprises those pursuing a spiritual life (the city of god).

Augustine's emphasis on acquiring truth and understanding through direct experience

Similar positions articulated by John Dewey in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

Dewey's naturalism is antithetical to Augustine's spiritual and religious absolutes, but they are alike in their aversion to thinking of the teacher as the transmitter of all that is true and just.

This emphasis on learning through experience further demonstrates the difficulty in pigeonholing Augustine as either a traditional or a progressive thinker.

Greek and Roman literature was lost during the Dark Ages

Later these ideas were revived by Muslims who had preserved the writings of the Greeks and Romans

Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Renaissance

Established Christian doctrine, church leaders—most notably Thomas Aquinas—embraced Aristotelian thought and used it to buttress faith in Christianity.

Aquinas and the scholastic method he embraced considered Aristotelian thought to be more compatible with Christian doctrine than were the ideas of Plato.

In part as a result of their intellectual power and skill, St. Thomas Aquinas and other scholastics established the Catholic or universal Church as the dominant institution in the Western world

Changes that began to appear in Europe during the latter part of the fifteenth century.

Often referred to as the Renaissance, intellectual commotion characterized this period of Western civilization

In emulation of Greeks of the fourth and fifth centuries, the leaders of the Renaissance offered relief from the suffocating ascetics of medieval Scholasticism and from a mindless acceptance of Church doctrine

.

Scholasticism is a method of critical thought which dominated teaching by the academics (*scholastics*, or *schoolmen*) of medieval universities in Europe from about 1100–1500,

A program of employing that method in articulating and defending orthodoxy in an increasingly pluralistic context. It originated as an outgrowth of, and a departure from, Christian monastic schools

Scholasticism places a strong emphasis on dialectical reasoning to extend knowledge by inference, and to resolve contradictions

The Renaissance Humanist Desiderius Erasmus

Erasmus believed that faith and reason could be reconciled through Christian piety and classical scholarship

Like Martin Luther, Erasmus was critical of the Catholic Church and its abuse of power.

They ground Christianity in the truths found in its classical sources

Like More, Erasmus did not slavishly follow convention but employed good common sense in virtually all situations.

Erasmus and the Renaissance humanists shared the ancients' belief in the natural goodness of human beings

The humanist or Renaissance had interest in a revival of the classics

Challenging the religious authority of the scholastics received reinforcement in the form of an inductive, investigative mode of thinking often referred to as “scientific inquiry.”

Relying more and more on natural rather than supernatural explanations of observable events, this growing confidence in the scientific way of thinking enveloped all aspects of life

Locke's Gentleman

John Locke is representative of this new, more scientific approach, applying this new way of thinking to both politics and education.

An enlightenment thinker, Locke looked to his traditional, aristocratic roots in tapping the landed gentry as his ideally educated individual

Largely accepting the established class structure of his day, Locke's social vision of a society governed by a landed gentleman continues the humanist or Renaissance legacy of a hierarchical social order dominated by the educated elite disagree

Locke's educated gentleman is no Platonic philosopher king.

Rather than an omniscient and omnipotent ruler, Locke envisioned rule by a contractual arrangement between the governors and the governed.

Grounded in the natural law, this contract guaranteed the governed certain natural rights (life, liberty, property, etc.), and the governors usurped these natural rights at their own peril.

Locke asserts in the preface to his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, once gentlemen were “by their Education once set right, they will quickly bring all the rest into Order.”

For Locke, wisdom was a virtue acquired through commonsense experience.

This view of wisdom as an active virtue, naturally acquired, has its roots in both the Renaissance thought and in the emerging new empiricism.

Locke—in spite of his class and gender prejudices—deserves Bertrand Russell's characterization of him as the most influential if not the most profound of modern philosophers.



Rousseau's Émile and Sophie

in *The Praise of Folly*, Jean Jacques Rousseau lambasted virtually all civil institutions of his time for denying and destroying humankind's natural freedom and goodness.

Like the ancients but in obvious conflict with Christian beliefs, Rousseau considered humans to be naturally good. The debasement of this natural goodness—so evident in the Europe of the eighteenth century—is, Rousseau suggests, the product of so-called advances in the arts and sciences.

Rousseau called for creating an education environment that allows—indeed requires—that humans develop in accord with their nature

Suggesting that contemporary human beings had been corrupted by modern civilization,

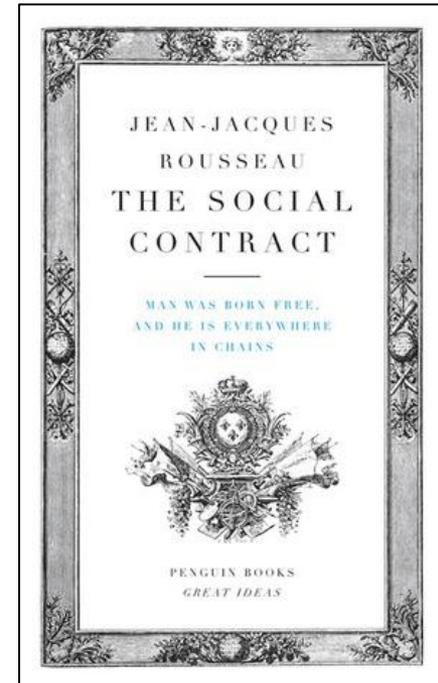
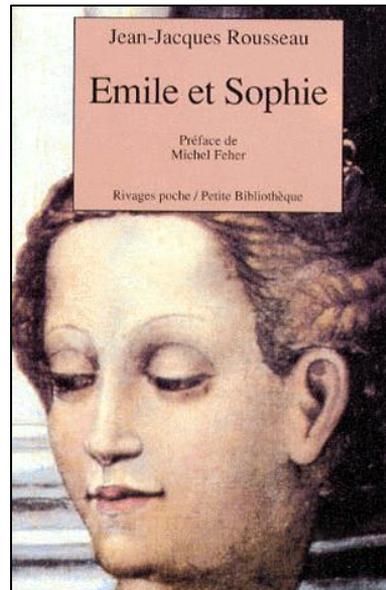
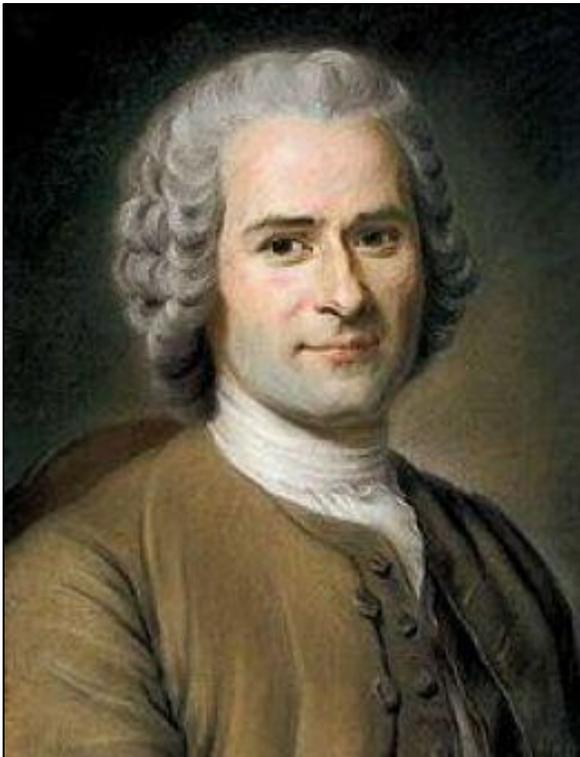
Rousseau sought to create a new, more natural human being who was both a good person and a good citizen.

These new humans, Émile and Sophie, were to be isolated from the corrupting institutions of modern civilization and free from the artificial conventions of society.

By creating such an ideal, natural environment, Émile and Sophie, learned that with freedoms came responsibilities, for actions freely chosen had consequences

Rousseau believed that—by properly educating future generations—it was possible to create a society where individual desires and societal demands were joined

Rousseau believed that it was possible to develop boys and girls into good men and good women, and into good citizens



Macaulay's Benevolent Being

In *Letters on Education with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects*, Catharine Macaulay offered a counterpoint to Rousseau's commonly accepted view that there are essential differences between men and women and that these differences are complementary

Macaulay's educational ideas were largely ignored in her own time, and her quarrel with the educational ideas of Rousseau, Locke, and Plato have not been included in the study of educational thought through the ages

Women's responses to such questions as what constitutes an educated individual have been excluded from the philosophical canon and their contributions to the field marginalized

Macaulay's *Letters on Education* published in 1790 effectively refutes the more conventional views on gender and education represented in Rousseau's work.

Arguing that there is a single human essence composed of what has been labeled as feminine and masculine attributes,

Macaulay suggests that both boys and girls need to be reeducated to overcome the false gender images fostered by society

Macaulay was—in many ways—ahead of her time as similar ideas appear in more contemporary forms in the works of Paulo Freire, Jane Roland Martin, and Nel Noddings.



Enter Darwin and Huxley: The Challenge of Modern Science

Stressing inductive, experimental methods of investigation, these new scientists increasingly sought natural rather than supernatural explanations for the mysteries of life.

Religious and/or absolutist worldview

With its emphasis on technology and industrialization—ushered in what came to be known as the scientific age

By championing Darwin's theory of evolution and the scientific thinking that produced it, Thomas Henry Huxley assumed the mantra of "Darwin's bulldog" and became the first spokesperson for this scientific age.

Huxley we encounter a vision of the ideally educated individual as a scientific humanist, that is, one who is fascinated by the natural order of things and committed to discovering and understanding the natural laws that govern such phenomena

Darwins Bulldog

Very little formal education

From Absolutism to Experimentalism

Dewey had begun to distance himself from metaphysical absolutists. Keenly aware of the intellectual ferment created by Darwin's challenge to an absolutist worldview,

Dewey gradually developed a philosophy of experience that utilized the new scientific way of thinking in support of his commitment to social justice and democracy

Dewey spent the remainder of his life working out the implications of this philosophical shift for his social, political, and educational ideas.

Would naturally lead to democracy

The views of Plato and Aristotle imply absolutism

Dewey proposed a “new education” grounded in experience.

In distinguishing good or educative experiences from bad or miseducative experiences, Dewey suggests that an educative experience is characterized by both interaction and continuity

Like Socrates, Dewey suggests that for humans to grow or improve, they must encounter problematic situations

With the possible exception of the influence of Plato and Aristotle, Dewey’s influence on the educational thought of the modern world is unprecedented

Traditional versus Progressive –

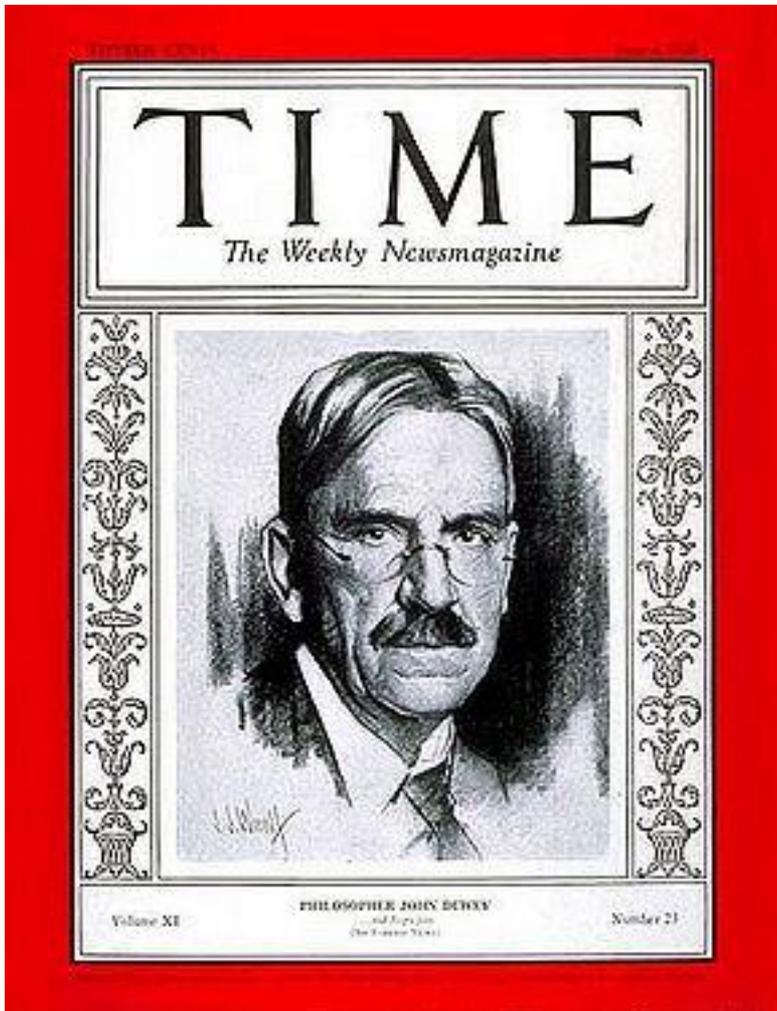
“classicists versus the experimentalists,”

John Dewey and Robert M. Hutchins—agreed that children need to read, to understand the past, and to experience literature, but they disagreed over the appropriate means to achieve these ends

Hutchins favored a great books curriculum with students’ reading and engaging the great minds of the Western world as they struggled with the perennial philosophical questions of humankind.

Dewey countered that the “attempt to re-establish linguistic skills and materials as the center of education and to do in the guise of ‘education for freedom’ is directly opposed to all that democratic countries cherish as freedom.”

He saw the major fallacy of classicism as its supposition “that the subject matter of liberal education is fixed in itself.”



Bestor and others called for a return to a classical curriculum that fostered intellectual discipline in the individual and that sought to transmit the essential—if not eternal—truths and values to each new generation of students.

Whether the critic is Robert M. Hutchins, Mortimer Adler, Arthur Bestor, or—more recently—Allan Bloom or E. D. Hirsch, the culprit is often John Dewey and a version of progressive education that only sometimes is derived from Dewey's thought

A Reluctant Conservative

One notable exception is Hannah Arendt. In her essay “The Crisis in Education,” first published in 1950,

Arendt is especially critical of the hold that pragmatism has on America. Though she does not refer to him directly, Arendt’s attack focuses on the thought of John Dewey

Though there are different conservative perspectives, the common denominator that most conservatives share is a desire to preserve the best that the past has to offer.

Most conservative thinkers, including Arendt, believe that human culture is dependent upon the continuity of established institutions.

Arendt suggests that the modern world is in crisis largely because of an erosion of authority that has historically been grounded in religion and tradition.

In the United States this erosion of authority manifests itself as a crisis in education.

For Arendt, authority is a positive and constructive element that establishes legitimate societal boundaries, enabling each person born into such a world the freedom to develop within these parameters and to eventually go beyond them.

It is the role of education to bridge the gap between the old and the new, helping each new child initiate a new beginning first within the established traditions but always with the possibility of moving beyond it

Arendt favors an education that initiates students into the cultural traditions of the past—not to glorify and/or imitate them—but to encourage children to use the great works from the past in creating something new.

For children to be creative and revolutionary, they must, suggests Arendt, be immersed into the values and ideas of the past.

Arendt's conservatism manifests itself through her advocacy of mining the past for pearls of wisdom to be used in connecting that past to future possibilities and to reestablishing the teacher as the ultimate authority in the teacher/child relationship

Existentialism in Ascendancy

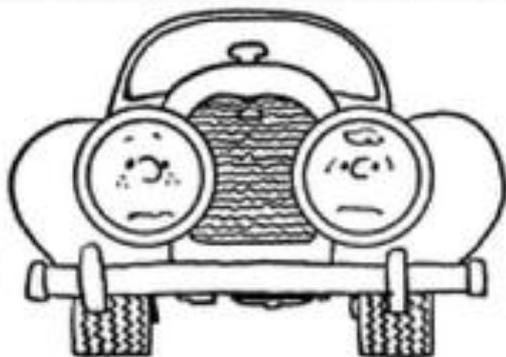
Existentialists are perhaps best associated with the phrase, *existence precedes essence*.

At its core, the phrase suggests that there is no common or universal characteristic that prescribes and describes human nature.

From the existentialist point of view, each individual human being is alone in a world without meaning and defines oneself through the choices that the individual freely makes.

PEANUTS

featuring
"Good ol'
Charlie Brown"
by SCHULZ



Humans are often in a state of despair and experience significant anguish since there is no one or no thing to guide or direct them. They are here, alone, and—as Sartre says—
“condemned to be free.”



Maxine Greene is one of the preeminent American educational philosophers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For almost half a century, Greene has invited students and colleagues to “do philosophy in their own voices, to become more aware of their situations, to resist what they find unacceptable.”

Pragmatism and/or Existentialism

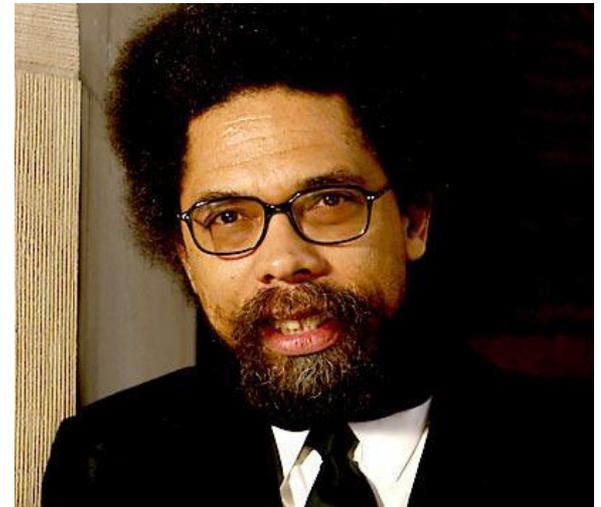
in developing their visions of the ideally educated person—
been significantly influenced by the thought of both
pragmatists and existentialists. Among these thinkers are
Jane Roland Martin, Cornel West, Paulo Freire, Nel
Noddings, and Kieran Egan

In countering the male
chauvinism that has dominated
the field of educational
philosophy for much of its
history, Jane Roland Martin
calls for a gender-sensitive
approach to developing the
ideally educated person



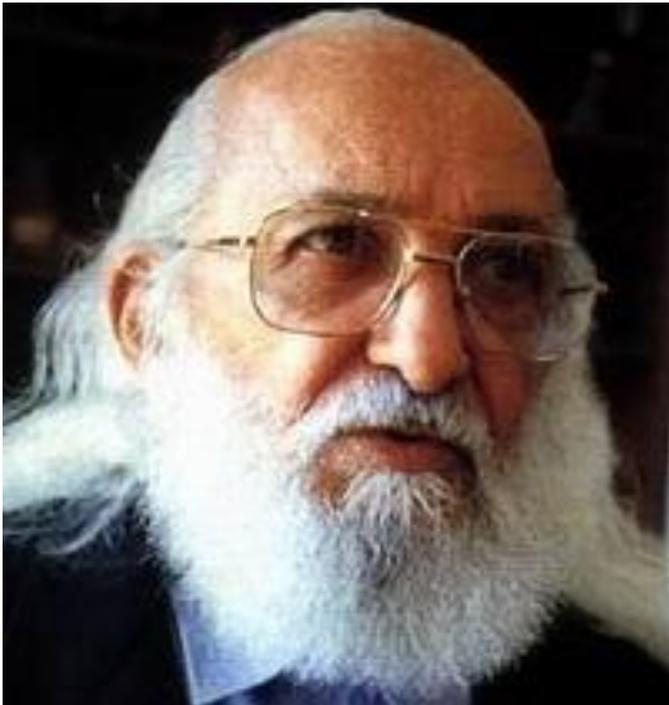
Cornel West is Professor of Religion and African American Studies at Princeton University. He is recognized as one of America's most gifted, provocative, and important public intellectuals.

He characterizes his ideally educated individual as a prophetic thinker who lives in and understands multiple realities and employs such understandings in building bridges between and among these varied worlds



Paulo Freire—the Brazilian philosopher and educator—is known for his advocacy of dialogue as a key component of the pedagogy of the oppressed.

Freire—much like Dewey—favors a problem-posing approach to education. Known for his work in helping Brazilian illiterates to read



Nel Noddings a prominent contemporary educational theorist—asserts that had the disciplines been developed by women rather than men, the fields of study would have been organized around the stages of life

For example, philosophy—a male-dominated field—focuses on questions of death and an afterlife.

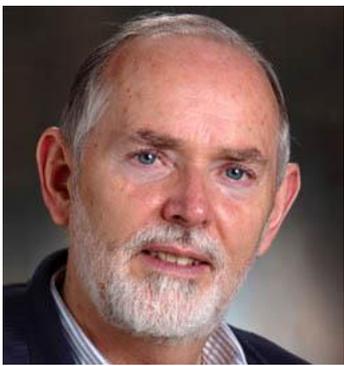
In the tradition of Catharine Macaulay and in tune with the thought of Jane Roland Martin, Professor Noddings suggests that questions of birth would be more prominent in a feminist-oriented philosophy of education.



Noddings reminds us that a rigorous and academically challenging curriculum could be developed around the question, What does it mean to make a home?

By focusing on caring as an educational goal, Noddings shines a spotlight on the ethical and moral foundations of education





Kieran Egan suggests that the role of the imagination in the educational process is minimized in today's world

Rather than imagination, the modern world has embraced such educational dictums as proceeding from the concrete to the conceptual, from the simple to the complex, and from the known to the unknown.

The uncritical acceptance of these ad hoc educational principles assumes that knowledge is a static entity and minimizes the role that the imagination can or should play in the educational process

The Critical Thinker: The Fallible Human Being Revisited

there is a “battle for the mind” between competing visions of the ideally educated human being.

Modern-day proponents of critical thinking as an educational ideal—Lipman, Matthews, Noddings, and others—embrace the Socratic notion that the arguments favoring traditional values should be given the fullest expression by one capable of presenting the best possible case for them.

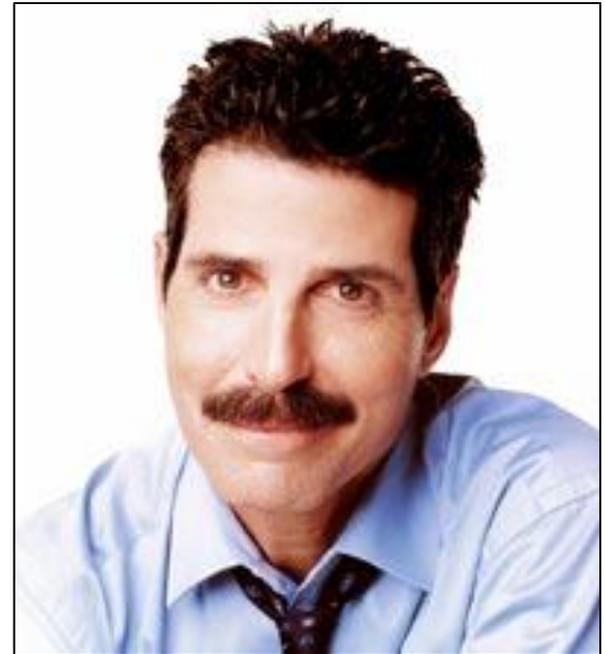
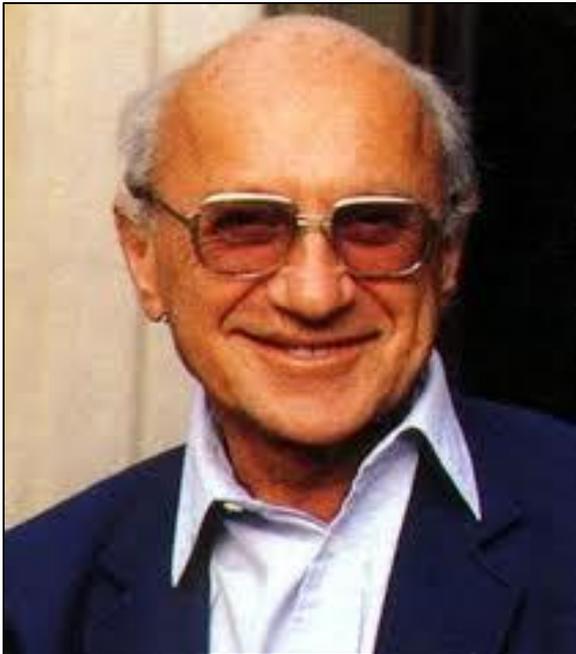
Such thinkers favor providing all points of view a fair and equitable hearing. Those championing the critical thinker as the ideally educated individual have faith in both human nature and the power of education to assist each individual in identifying the strongest argument and in making the right choices

Libertarianism

Freedom in all social institutions

Economic freedom and private property rights

Capitalism



As suggested in this brief historical overview, humankind continues to struggle to improve ourselves and our worlds through education. These struggles are often influenced by differing and—at times—competing responses to the question of what does it mean to be an educated individual. While the definitive answer to that question is not forthcoming, the quest is and should be never-ending. Perhaps it is this quest—this journey to Ithaca and not the arrival—that is the essence of education. It is our hope that this brief cultural discussion of the thinkers included in this volume and their struggle to answer these fundamental educational and philosophical questions will entice you—as prospective and practicing educators—to join in this never-ending quest for what it means to be educated and how to foster it