

Paul Nash, *Authority and Freedom in Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966, x, 342 pp.

Whether eliciting praise or adverse criticism, this book will undoubtedly challenge its reader. For the past five years Paul Nash has been a professor of Education at Boston University's School of Education. Prior to 1962, in the Institute of Education of McGill University, he acquired a reputation for stimulating students to probe to the roots of contemporary educational issues. Quite possibly the major structure and much of the content for this treatise were decided upon in conjunction with his weekly McGill seminar on "Freedom and Discipline." Indeed, the same broad canvas and provocative style employed by Dr. Nash as lecturer, seminar leader, and colleague are amply evident in this work.

Depicting the book as "an introduction to the study of philosophy of education," Professor Nash succinctly enunciates his two purposes in the opening sentence as "*clarity and commitment.*" Regarding the former, he endorses the contribution made recently by such linguistic philosophers as Israel Scheffler in clarifying educational concepts; but he insists upon "the further goal of commitment" to some moral position as co-essential to an

adequate educational philosophy. Nash feels that "a frankly pedagogical purpose" is served and that students can "sharpen their own minds" only if moral arguments are based on "*some* commitment, whatever it may be." We are then alerted to the following fundamental premise: a philosopher, if he so chooses, may assume a neutral or detached attitude, but a philosopher of education, being *de facto* involved with the "making of recommendations, value judgments, and prescriptions for educational practice," necessarily functions according to some commitment or ethical principle(s). Meta-ethics is therefore inadequate for the latter.

Although the book is not intended as a "comprehensive treatment of the whole field," authority and freedom is regarded "as the most important single theme in the philosophy of education," the study of which will hopefully occasion the following consequences:

1. Stimulation "to react to the position here presented"
2. Clarification of one's "own thinking on the subject"
3. Formulation of "a justifiable position of personal commitment"
4. Provision of a model for other educational problems.

Professor Nash, it would seem to this reviewer, has once again re-discovered the child and recognized simultaneously that commitment is an essential

need of human beings. Many will doubtless agree with him that faith and love and passion freely chosen and authoritatively enacted are integral aspects of what he has been describing as "commitment," though many will probably question some of the means outlined in his model. Even the latter, however, will have difficulty in faulting his appeal to an atmosphere of calm, which is nothing more than what the Greeks called *ethos* and from which our whole concern about ethics developed. Again some may react adversely to his somewhat casual and eclectic manner of equating element, force, spirit and God, but few will surely oppose his general views on love.

In his insistence upon commitment containing intellectual and emotional constituents, Nash takes his stand with those who consider the speculative and ontological as relevant concerns of the philosopher. However, I must admit that the idea of "autonomous" commitment, where man himself arranges everything, is apt to be misleading; but the author counters this implication by stressing, in another section, the

notion of being controlled by one's ultimate commitment. And so it goes. First one polar position is stated and/or taken, and then the opposite. In this respect, Nash does succeed in stimulating one to react to his position.

The full impact of the dialectic approach employed can scarcely be appreciated from the foregoing remarks. However, after reading two or three chapters, one becomes almost unconsciously aware that he is an auditor to a contemporary symphony as the variations on a common theme are performed. Here one senses the breadth of methodology, from imagination and feeling, paradox, through to philosophic analysis.

In conclusion it can be stated with conviction that, whether we summarize Nash's theme in the words of Martin Luther King ("We're going to love the hell out of them") or the Anglican collect ("Whose service is perfect freedom"), *Authority and Freedom in Education* provides students with a challenging introduction to the philosophy of education.

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