

The work involved in preparing this book must have been enormous, yet the text is both brief and clear. Rather than providing firm answers or giving directives to those concerned with literacy, *Voices of Readers* asks its own reader to look with fresh eyes at familiar assumptions. It also offers an even more precious encouragement to hard-working teachers and librarians by reaffirming the central importance of positive role-models. It presents a chorus of voices expressing appreciation for the enthusiasm, insight, and knowledge that have helped new readers to develop.

Ann Beer
McGill University

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Eamon Callan.

AUTONOMY AND SCHOOLING

McGill-Queen's Press, 1988.

172 pp. \$24.95.

Autonomy and Schooling is a difficult but excellent book in philosophy of education. The author offers a clarification and a thorough philosophical defence of a moderate version of a child-centered perspective in education. It goes beyond the superficiality of popular discussions on the topic which, unfortunately, is at times found in the writings of educationists associated with child-centered education. *Autonomy and Schooling* offers the most philosophically refined and acceptable work in contemporary philosophy of education that deals with child-centered education.

The book, which consists of an introduction and five chapters, can be divided into two parts. The first part, including Chapters 1 and 2, as the author himself notes, may require some patience from those who are not interested in ethics or social philosophy. (But, then, would one be really interested in education?). This part deals with an examination and justification of freedom and autonomy, and the connection between the two.

This serves as a basis for the second part which deals with interests and schooling (Chapter 3), freedom and schooling (Chapter 4), and the government of schooling (Chapter 5).

In the first part Callan argues that freedom has a constitutive value in contrast to a purely instrumental or intrinsic value – freedom is "partly constitutive of a larger complex which is valuable for its own sake" (p. 23). The constitutive value of freedom arises because "it bears a certain connection to the ideal of personal autonomy or self-rule" (p. 23). Some kinds of freedom are more closely connected to "the good of autonomy" and therefore have "an extremely weighty constitutive value" (p. 23). One of the major conclusions in this part is that while freedom is not a necessary quality of the autonomous character, it is necessary for autonomy to flourish; if we value autonomy, then, we must also value that which leads to its flourishing. This conclusion leads Callan to examine and justify the ideal of autonomy (Chapter 2).

Autonomous persons, according to Callan, must possess "a high degree of realism and independence of mind in the way they regulate their wills" (p. 26). The first quality is explained in terms of "a level of rationality" (p. 30) or reasonableness and being able to control the self in a "spirit of truthfulness" (p. 30). "Independence of mind" is explained in terms of having a mind of one's own, as "a process of finding intrinsic value in one's world beyond the satisfaction of social desire" (p. 61).

How do we justify autonomy? Callan's major justification rests on the direct connection between autonomy, moral virtue, and self-respect. "Whatever conception of the virtuous character one espouses . . . there is good reason to believe that it is connected with the notion of autonomy" (p. 45). If we value moral virtue, and self-respect, then, we also have to value autonomy.

Having clarified and justified freedom and autonomy, Callan further elaborates on the relationship between the two. In this regard, one of the major points that he defends, and which has a lot of bearing on the views elaborated and defended in the second part, amounts to the following: while the ideal of autonomy may at times call for "protective measures" (p. 50), this is **not** incompatible with "always having a reason to favour liberty" (p. 50). The connection between autonomy and freedom is such that "we should strive to maximize freedom and only settle for less than we might have when a reason of sufficient weight defeats the presumption in favour of maximizing freedom" (p. 50).

Given this background with regard to freedom and autonomy Callan then deals with specific educational issues that arise from schooling.

In Chapter 3, Callan defends the view that schools can help in achieving autonomy in education by offering a curriculum which **develops** students' interests. He offers a very fair and thorough rebuttal of criticisms of this position, as well as a positive argument which rests on the connection between individual interests, autonomy, and freedom. One of the strongest and most positive qualities of the book is that the discussion and defence of Callan's position clarifies some very dangerous but common misinterpretations of a defence of students' interests held by both popular (but naive) views of child-centered education as well as "conservative" criticisms of child-centered education. Callan's rebuttal emphasizes that : (a) it is important to distinguish between **pursuing** and **developing** interests, (b) interests are not identical to needs, purposes, or desires, and (c) arguments for students' interests do not necessarily commit one to holding that "children are naturally good" (p. 68), and that "personal discovery is the high road to understanding" (p. 68). Callan's position on students' interests avoids both the popular but empty sloganeering about child-centered education, as well as the deceptive view that students' interests are only relevant when it comes to choosing a method. In the latter instance, although Callan himself is critical of Dewey, Callan's view seems to amount to Dewey's view that there is "no more demoralizing doctrine . . . than the assertion that **after** subject matter has been selected **then** the teacher should make it interesting" (Dewey, 1913).

Chapter 4 deals with the justification of compulsory schooling and the arguments of "deschoolers." The latter is very relevant to Callan's position on autonomy since, according to Callan, the deschoolers' arguments rest on the claim that there exist negative effects of schooling that are detrimental to achieving and enhancing personal autonomy. The first part of the chapter discusses and rejects the arguments for deschooling and disestablishing schools as presented primarily by Ivan Illich. In the second part Callan offers his own defence of compulsory schooling. Callan's serious objections to Illich are: (a) that the evils (including coercion) ascribed to schools are only contingent, and (b) that Illich's arguments rest on conceptual confusions. While I agree with Callan's two criticisms, and, while of course, it is imperative that we do not base our practice on conceptual confusions and *non sequiturs*, it is unfortunate that Callan does not deal with the empirical evidence that several contemporary sociologists of education have provided in relation to the ill practices of schooling. I realize that these observations in themselves will not decrease the force of Callan's criticism directed towards conceptual confusion. But the recent work of sociologists of education should definitely make one less optimistic about the possibility of changing the "contingent evils."

With regard to Illich's argument based on coercion, Callan concludes that "if compulsory schooling had to be as relentlessly coercive as prisons,

then Illich's demand that we disestablish school would be reasonable" (p. 100). But, once again, although I agree with Callan that the argument from coercion does not warrant the disestablishing of all schools, one needs to seriously ask whether all forms of coercion ought to be compared to the one we find in prisons. Surely, coercion is not only found in prisons. Once the conceptual confusions are cleared and agreed upon, Callan's argument against disestablishing schools rests ultimately on empirical grounds, namely, that not all schools are permeated with coercion. But, of course, this is difficult to prove.

Callan's position is that compulsory schooling is only justifiable if overall it increases rather than diminishes the possibility of freedom, and that the maximization of freedom of those compelled is not secured by voluntary schooling. One might get the impression that Callan is simply defending the *status quo*. This is not the case. His justification of compulsory schooling rests on the assumption that the current practice will be "combined with a genuinely beneficial curriculum" (p. 118), that is, one that develops the interests of the students. It is also assumed that schools really value and hence seek to achieve the ideal of autonomy as defined and defended by Callan. He also argues for a reduced compulsion as age increases because "the more educational success, the less reason we have to suppose that compulsion can be defended on the ground that it maximizes freedom" (p. 117). This proposal, he insists, should be implemented even if it "would probably run foul of public perceptions of what is reasonable" (p. 122). Public perception with regard to the limits of paternalism need to be changed!

Given his assumptions and proposed changes, his argument for compulsory schooling becomes very plausible. But as Callan himself would agree, the present situation does not mirror his recommendations which are necessary for justifying compulsory schooling. Is the **current** form of compulsory schooling then justifiable? Even if one were to assume that schools do formally offer a "genuinely beneficial curriculum" and that they state that autonomy *à la* Callan is one of their aims, one would still need to investigate whether the stated curriculum is **actually** being implemented. It would be naive to judge whether or not "genuinely beneficial curricula" were combined to the current practice simply by seeing what is formally offered.

The main thesis defended in Chapter 5 is that given certain conditions, it becomes reasonable to promote "extensive student participation in the government of schooling, and perhaps even full-blown democratic schooling..." (p. 123). Callan states that some of his premises in this regard lack empirical evidence although they are "at least highly plausible" (p. 124). In fact his premises are more than merely highly plausible. Arnstine and Arnstine (1987) report that "empirical evidence now

available radically undermines the view that children will suffer, now and in the future, if adults do not make all the curriculum decisions in schools" (p. 379). They specifically refer to the work by Gray and Chanoff (1986) who present and discuss the extremely positive results of a school run on "democratic principles." Indeed, students even at the elementary level are not "so egregiously immature that they are not even fit to be consulted about their own curriculum" (p. 124).

There are two points that need to be made to avoid misinterpreting Callan's position. First, Callan's assumption that "in a democratic institution authoritative decisions are determined, or at least closely regulated, by procedures in which the voice of each *insider* carries equal weight and other voices are excluded" (p. 124). In this regard, Callan is rightly increasing the contribution of both teachers and students to the running of the schools than is currently the case. Second, his argument is primarily addressed to cases where students have reached "a substantial capacity to run one's own life" (p. 128).

Having considered arguments against students' participation, Callan then provides his own argument for students' participation which may be stated thus: (a) coming to appreciate what is in one's educational interest is necessary for becoming educated; any plausible conception of education accepts this; (b) students in their later years of schooling should be expected to have come close to this appreciation; and (c) therefore these students should be entrusted to make decisions related to their own education. Given this conclusion, "why can they not be trusted to perform competently within the government of schooling" (p. 138)? Callan discusses further possible objections and once again convincingly rejects them. In his rebuttal, following Aristotle's theory that the development of virtues depends on their exercise, Callan argues that if schools really value the cultivation of autonomy, then, they should ensure "ample scope for its exercise" (p. 146). And this implies that "we should favour authority structures which give students maximum scope for the exercise of autonomy" (p. 146).

In response to Callan's conclusions, one may retort that the conditions in schools required for Callan's position to hold do not really exist. That may be the case but then, as Callan rightly concludes, "the justification of contemporary schooling on educational grounds would be in grave doubt" (p. 149). In other words, from the educational perspective, if conditions in our schools are such that they do not warrant students' participation, then we would be admitting the failure of our schools and lack of proper justification of their very existence!

I have outlined Callan's major thesis and raised some questions about parts of it. Nonetheless, *Autonomy and Schooling* should be

necessary reading for anyone – including teachers – who is seriously concerned about a "child-centered perspective." One may ask: Why should teachers read difficult books? Giroux (1988), commenting on the development of the new sociology of curriculum and the serious challenges it has raised to long held beliefs and assumptions, writes: "The new sociology of curriculum speaks a language that might seem strange when compared to the input-output language of the traditional curriculum model. The new language may be difficult, but it is necessary, because it enables its users to develop new kinds of relationships in the curriculum field and to raise different kinds of questions" (p. 16). Indeed! And the same applies to some readings in philosophy of education. *Autonomy and Schooling* is one of them.

John P. Portelli

Mount Saint Vincent University

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Kieran Egan and Dan Nodaner, Editors.

IMAGINATION AND EDUCATION.

New York: Teachers College Press, 1988.

pp.283. \$US31.95; paper US\$17.95.

This collection of fourteen articles is, in the words of the editors, "about the roles and values of imagination in education and about the dangers of ignoring or depreciating them" (p. ix). The book explores a variety of conceptions of imagination and examines ways in which education can develop imagination to the benefit of individuals and society. It also clarifies the way in which imaginative thinking skills serve as an underpinning to learning across the curriculum.

The first section of the book, "In Search of the Imagination," focuses on the variety of conceptions of imagination which provides the conceptual basis for the rest of the book. The opening chapter by Brian Sutton-Smith presents an excellent survey of the historical conceptions of