

Humility As A Virtue In Teaching

Humility is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve;
nothing dies harder than the desire to think well of
oneself

T. S. Eliot - "Shakespeare and the stoicism of Seneca"

In his book *Government and the Mind*, Joseph Tussman has given voice to a doubt which others have surely felt even if, in the end, they decided in favour of discretion. Put bluntly, it is the fear that in the context of teaching, eagerness for the role is more likely to be a sign of unfitness than of fitness.¹ In view of the pious declarations of generations of applicants to teacher education programmes to the effect that they have always and only wanted to teach, Tussman rightly notes that his observation is heretical. Heresy or not, however, the underlying concern is that very different motives can attract people to the teaching profession, and at one end of the spectrum there is "a dangerous disposition to impose oneself upon others, an eagerness to shape the malleable, a confident egoism, far removed from the spiritual condition of the true teacher."² As if to drive home the point, my writing of this very paragraph was rudely interrupted by two doorstep preachers who wanted to "share a message" with me. Canadian society as a whole had a rude awakening in the 1980s, with the Keegstra scandal³ revealing not only that preachers and pitchmen were busy in our classrooms but that many were quite incapable of distinguishing their activities from those of genuine teachers. Painful as it may be, we need to remind ourselves that Keegstra was widely heralded as a good teacher, despite the blatant anti-semitism which pervaded his teaching for more than a decade, and which led to his dismissal in 1983 and to a subsequent criminal conviction which was upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada in December 1990.

In speaking here of genuine teaching or, as Tussman does, of true teaching, a certain ideal of teaching is being implied. There are many aspects to such an ideal characterization, but our focus at this point is on the virtue of humility. There is a danger that reference to

such a quality will appear platitudinous, and yet it is not difficult to see that reflection on the idea of teaching suggests a certain puzzle concerning the alleged need for humility. The problem is that in order to have something to teach, the teacher must be something of an authority on the subject or topic in question. The teacher's superior knowledge has led some to deny that a teacher should manifest humility towards his or her students.⁴ The authority in question, of course, is a relative one. In another context, the same person might find that he or she is a relative novice with respect to the same subject matter. Nevertheless, with respect to his or her own students, the teacher will generally be more familiar with the material than the students, a familiarity which enables the teacher to introduce others intelligently to the subject.

It was the unavoidable element of authority in education which prompted Russell to formulate the problem in the following way for the teacher who wants to treat the child with reverence:

"In the presence of a child (the teacher) feels an unaccountable humility - a humility not easily defensible on any rational ground, and yet somehow nearer to wisdom than the easy self-confidence of many parents and teachers."⁵

Given the teacher's superior command of the subject matter, it is all too easy to think so well of oneself that one expects uncritical deference from the student. All of my own children have heard a teacher ask with a mixture of threat and derision: Are you trying to teach me something? There is little humility in that question, and some who ask it invite humiliation. I think of the elementary teacher who was adamant that division by zero was a viable operation. And of another who obstinately maintained that there are 52 states in the American union: "Class, how many of us think there are only 50?" These teachers had forgotten Dewey's point that a teacher, although learned, should still be a learner. This contrast, he urged, is relative, not absolute and perhaps Dewey himself erred in adding that in the earlier stages of education the contrast is practically all-important.⁶

Notice that it is not confidence itself which Russell and Tussman are warning against. Russell speaks of *easy* self-confidence, and we can understand him to mean slipping into that comfortable delusion that our position is perfectly secure, overlooking the fact that teachers of an earlier generation had the very same attitude towards beliefs which now provoke in us only a condescending smile.⁷ The point in question was also made memorably by Russell's colleague, Alfred North Whitehead, who observed in the mid-1930s that every single generalization about mathematical physics he had learned as an undergraduate fifty years earlier had now been abandoned in the sense in which it was then held.⁸ Notice also that it is confident *egoism* which Tussman warns against - the attitude that our own views are so clearly important and right that they can and must be impressed on others.

None of this is a general argument for diffidence and hesitancy in the classroom. It would be equally misleading to suggest to students that we have grounds for being uncertain, other than the general ground of human fallibility, when we do not. Teachers cannot hope to convey Whitehead's cautionary advice by simply deleting, as some have urged, words such as "proof" from their vocabulary. This is a cosmetic approach which seems more likely to foster scepticism than a critical tentativeness. This distinction itself, however, is one which causes many to stumble. Jean Ruddock quotes with emphatic approval a commentator in *New Statesman* who remarks that school should give students scepticism so that they leave with the ability to doubt rather than the inclination to believe.⁹ The over-simplified contrast invoked here cannot but remind one of Dewey's perceptive observation about the human tendency to think in terms of hard-and-fast alternatives.¹⁰ It is ironic that, a few paragraphs on, Ruddock bemoans the difficulty students experience in moving away from "dualistic reasoning" where they assume that an answer must be right or wrong.¹¹

The particular dualism of ability to doubt versus inclination to believe tends to blind us to Hume's insight that belief can be proportioned to the evidence.¹² Being proportioned

to the evidence, belief can be readjusted as appropriate. Students and teachers need to recognize the *vulnerability* of their beliefs to counter-evidence and counter-argument. Such recognition means that although we are inclined to believe something, we can also preserve our ability to come to doubt it should the weight of evidence shift. This is not to say, of course, that we can regard beliefs which are incompatible with our present views as equally acceptable, but our present belief does not mean that we must hold that incompatible beliefs could never turn out to be true. Belief and doubt *are* at odds with each other, though we may, of course, believe something *to some extent*. The *ability* to doubt, however, remains if we are able to entertain criticisms of our beliefs. Objections which we consider may in time become doubts of our own.

One strategy which has been much employed in recent years to counteract a tendency to assume that there is one correct answer is to ask students so-called *divergent* questions which invite a multiplicity of responses. The questions are sufficiently open-ended that they preclude the possibility of the one, predetermined, correct response. The teacher who heeds Russell's advice will certainly want to raise some such questions and to listen carefully and with respect to the students' responses. Two lessons about humility might be taught in this way: one, that it is not assumed that all the answers are in; two, that it is not suggested that the teacher's own answers are obviously the best. Some commentators, however, have seen the need for the following rule in this situation, namely that if the teacher elicits diverse responses from the students, *the teacher has the professional obligation to accept the students' responses*.¹³

Once again, however, either-or reasoning is leading us astray. That there is no single, correct response does not mean that any and every answer is acceptable. Criticism of answers offered does not mean, as suggested in the text, that the teacher engages in "put down" tactics. There is a third lesson about humility, applicable to teacher and student alike, which this strategy is not likely to teach, namely a willingness to submit to *standards of assessment* in the consideration of suggested answers. Relevance, plausibility and truth are

standards which can be applied to student responses. Even if a variety of responses is acceptable, some may be irrelevant, implausible or simply mistaken. These lines of criticism do not mean that the students are not being shown respect, for this turns on how the criticisms are made. (Incidentally, it is far from clear to me that one advantage claimed for the acceptance strategy, that disadvantaged students get to become "stars" in the classroom, is either plausible or compatible with real respect.) These confusions take on an added urgency when we learn from a recent survey of some 100 classrooms in the United States that in two-thirds of these teachers *never* clearly indicated that a student answer was incorrect, and in the other classrooms criticism only amounted to about 5% of teacher/student interactions.¹⁴

If the policy of blanket acceptance represents one extreme, it is not difficult to find an example of a very different attitude towards teaching. Here, for example, is a philosopher reflecting on classroom teaching:

"What I present in the classroom is a compendium of my work on a problem, not the work itself. To initiate them into the activity of philosophizing about a problem, I give a mock performance of the way in which I pursue the truth concerning it.

When I present material in the classroom, I am never surprised to find what I find."¹⁵

The contrast at work here is between teaching and research, and it is only in the context of research that the writer encounters surprise. Yet the subject is philosophy and the students undergraduates! Has the philosophical research reported to the students been so successful that the teacher *never* encounters an objection he has not anticipated and dealt with? It sounds too as if this teacher never *expects* to be surprised, that it is in the nature of teaching to be a straightforward transmission of results. We need not, of course, deny that there is a difference between the context of research and the context of teaching. It would be foolish to maintain that every class can be a cooperative pursuit of pure philosophical truth. Nor need we get too excited about the reference to a "mock performance", despite the

connotation of pretence. After all, the students may be in on the act. I take this in much the same spirit as Jay Rosenberg's description of his own philosophy classes as elementary dancing lessons.¹⁶ It is never being surprised which is both surprising and disturbing, for this turns the performance into a *mere rehearsal* of ideas. What is missing in the account of teaching free of surprises is any sense of intellectual humility which would suggest an acknowledgement that one's well thought out compendium of ideas might not be as clear or compelling to one's students as it is to oneself. If philosophy teachers can hold this attitude towards undergraduate teaching, how confident can we be that elementary school teachers will feel that they might have something to learn from their students?

Some teachers, then, seem so assured of their own authority that humility is completely absent from their perspective on teaching, while others seem to have translated humility into a denial of their right to critically assess a student's response. Some, however, manage to hit the mark exactly and capture the delicate balance between authority and humility which teachers must strive to attain. Dennis Gunning puts it this way in his admirable discussion concerning the teaching of history:

"However often it is pointed out, though, it is hard for a teacher not to feel uneasy when faced with a fourteen-year-old giving an unorthodox interpretation of a piece of source material. We really have to school ourselves not to 'put him right', not to sweep his interpretation aside (or, equally bad, apparently accept it, but in such a way that everybody knows that we are just humouring the student)."¹⁷

Here, Gunning recognizes the temptation Russell called attention to, that of allowing the student's relative inferiority to justify a heavy-handed approach which would pronounce with finality on the question at hand. Faced with this temptation, it is useful for teachers to recall the *pedagogical fallacy*, the belief that this is our Last Chance to correct what we take to be an error. We forget that the discussion can continue, and that the students have not said their final word on the subject.¹⁸ Gunning associates his recommendation with two

central aims, first, to observe the tentativeness of knowledge, and second, to respect the student's own interpretation.

In the context of teaching, the ideas which we present to students as true are capable of revision, the point made dramatically by Whitehead reflecting on his own education. Claims to knowledge, theories, interpretations and arguments may be revised and rejected as we advance our understanding. Not only is our own personal grasp tentative, but what is universally regarded by all the experts as established truth is itself open to revision and falsification. Fallibilism recognizes that our claims to knowledge rest on reasons and evidence, and our awareness and understanding of the latter can change. This view, then, is incompatible with the kind of scepticism which regards all claims and interpretations as equally dubious. If, however, those who advocate scepticism as an aim of education really mean to emphasize the point that the last word has never been said, that our assessment of reasons and evidence may in time lead us to a new view, then this is in fact a way of making the point that knowledge *is* tentative. Clearly this interpretation of scepticism leaves intact the legitimacy of appeals to reasons and evidence, since it is in terms of the latter that a new view will be framed. Teachers who embrace fallibilism recognize the possibility of improving their present knowledge and understanding. Their humility takes the form, not of despair with respect to knowledge, but of deference to reason and evidence. It is not the view that they have nothing worth offering their students, but rather the Deweyan view that the learned can still learn.

Such deference to reasons and evidence helps to explain why respect for the student's interpretation is also an ideal the teacher needs to strive towards. The teacher can demonstrate his or her commitment to the principle of a reasoned and evidential basis for beliefs, theories and so on by taking *seriously* reasons and evidence which students bring forward. Respect will be shown by trying to decide if such and such is a good reason, or a relevant and accurate piece of evidence, not by "accepting" whatever the student presents. In this way, despite the fact that the teacher may well have claimed that something is true, the

teacher will demonstrate that his or her primary allegiance is to reason and evidence, not to some particular truth which is exempted from further critical scrutiny. Russell's maxim, that "education ought to foster the wish for truth, not the conviction that some particular creed is the truth",¹⁹ is relevant here, though we should not interpret this as meaning that conviction as such is undesirable. The question is not whether or not the teacher should take a stand on issues, but rather how the teacher can communicate the point that the stand is tentative though based on reason and evidence. In fostering the student's own orientation to a reasoned and evidential approach, we show that what we value is the student's attempt to provide good reasons not simply the correctness of the position taken.²⁰

These thoughts suggest a connection between humility and *ideals* which was first brought out clearly in the work of Henry Sidgwick. If a person's merits are comparatively high, Sidgwick noted, it seems strange that humility would prescribe that one have a low opinion of oneself.²¹ Is it not just as irrational to underrate ourselves as to have an exaggerated estimate of our abilities? Should we not simply aim for an accurate self-appraisal? Now, we might say, if one deserves to be called a teacher at all, a person must have some merits such as possession of knowledge and ability to bring others to share it. A certain self-esteem, then, is appropriate and, as others have pointed out, essential if teachers are to avoid apathy and a sense of powerlessness.²⁴ Sidgwick suggested that the value of humility lay in its ability to temper the emotion of self-admiration, and to prevent appropriate self-esteem - what he called self-approbation - from turning into self-complacency. Contemporary writers are following Sidgwick when they point out that humility does not require a *false* low opinion of oneself nor an absence of self-esteem.²³ It serves rather to offset the kind of self-satisfaction which interferes with a recognition of the possibility of, and need for, *improvement*. The absence of humility, Sidgwick thought, would impede progress.

The notion of ideals, however, might be thought to introduce a paradox if associated with humility. Is there not something pretentious and arrogant involved in setting for oneself

goals which, by their nature, cannot be completely achieved? Ideals would seem to demand saints and heroes, and might seem, therefore, to involve a certain self-conceit.²⁴ Humility itself is also an ideal and its pursuit may seem inconsistent with the idea of humility. Certainly, humility would destroy itself if a person were to become proud of his or her humility. We can admit this danger but there is no contradiction involved in associating humility and ideals. The objection would be valid if the recognition and pursuit of ideals entailed the presumption that we ourselves possessed the extraordinary and superhuman abilities required to achieve them. But this is not so. To believe that something is worth striving for is not to believe that one can attain it. We may believe that we can go on indefinitely approaching the ideal, and that its pursuit will bring various benefits which otherwise would not arise. One can have appropriate humility about one's chances of success. As for humility itself, it need not be worn on one's sleeve. An ideal can serve to give our actions direction and to remind us that present achievements remain inadequate. Teachers who agree with Gunning that the tentativeness of ideas and respect for the student's interpretation are worthy principles in education need not assume that they themselves will invariably resist the temptation to violate these norms in practice.

There are echoes of Socratic thought in what has been said thus far, and it is time to bring the connection into the open. Socrates reacted sharply against what he viewed as the arrogance of Protagoras' boast: "Young man, if you come to me, your gain will be this. The very day you join me, you will go home a better man, and the same the next day. Each day you will make progress towards a better state."²⁵ Although teachers do see their efforts directed at improving the student's condition in some way, what was lacking here was a proper sense of one's limitations, and a recognition of the many difficult and vexed questions about virtue and value. In the *Apology*, Socrates presents his own view of the nature of wisdom as an appreciation of our own extensive ignorance.²⁶ He did not think he knew what he did not know. When in the *Apology* Socrates reports having asked Callias to tell him who is an expert in perfecting the human and social qualities, he is driving home the

point that many who set themselves up as teachers pretend to a wisdom which they do not possess, or are self-deceived. In particular, they do not have final and authoritative answers on the question of what constitutes the good life. Not surprisingly, then, Socrates calls attention to the importance of the individual trying to decide whether or not advice offered by friends ought to be followed.²⁷

These ideas are closely related to Russell's remark quoted earlier about that unaccountable humility which is somehow closer to wisdom. A teacher ought to be struck by the momentous and incalculable consequences of his or her influence on the student, a matter which makes the concept of trust so appropriate in characterizing the teacher's position.²⁸ Lacking such humility, and devoid of reverence for the child, the teacher "thinks it his duty to 'mould' the child; in imagination he is the potter with the clay."²⁹ The teacher, of course, need not think that the student is presently his or her equal, but does need to see the student as potentially an equal. Humility in teaching involves admitting that the student can grow into an adult capable of critically and independently assessing what he or she has been taught, and education needs to keep this option open. The child's right, in Feinberg's words, is to have "future options kept open until he is a fully formed self-determining adult capable of deciding among them."³⁰ R. M. Hare captured the appropriate attitude very well when he spoke of the teacher working himself or herself out of a job, being ready to retire gracefully.³¹

Some who grasp the Socratic insight manage, nevertheless, to misrepresent it so badly that the central point is virtually lost. Neil Postman, for example, contributing a "professional viewpoint" to a recent text for teachers, echoes Socrates in saying that "a learned person knows how ignorant he is and, in teaching, simply gives more prominence and emphasis to what he does not know than to what he does."³² Even this errs to some extent in making the point in terms of more and less rather than, following Sidgwick, in terms of an appropriate balance between what we do and do not know. Moreover, Postman could not resist expressing the Socratic idea in the kind of mindless slogan which seems de

rigueur in texts for teachers: The dumber the teacher, the better the student. Although Postman goes on immediately to point out that he is not, in fact, arguing that teachers should be ignorant, one wonders if the damage has not been done and why such an inane slogan needed to appear at all. Will the retraction be remembered or the misleading slogan, when the latter has the dubious distinction of being just the kind of trite catch-phrase which tends to stick in the mind? I am bound to say that it strikes me as a patronising simplification. It is not the teacher's knowledge as such which is an obstacle to the students becoming independent and critical learners. It is the teacher's *attitude* towards knowledge, especially the view that claims to knowledge are beyond criticism. A good teacher recognizes that there is much that he or she does not know, but it is a fallacy to think that one will be a better teacher if one knows less!

Some remarks attributed to Socrates, of course, do suggest a more far-reaching view than simply the idea that our ignorance is *extensive*. In the *Apology*, for example, Socrates comments that "the wisest of you is he who has realized, like Socrates, that in respect of wisdom he is really worthless."³³ And Diogenes Laertius is responsible for associating Socrates' name with the aphorism, "I know nothing except the fact of my own ignorance."³⁴ This is the view that our ignorance is *complete*, except for our own awareness of that fact, and popularly this epitomizes the Socratic outlook. It is by no means clear, however, that Socrates himself really subscribed to this extreme view. There are passages, for example, where he urges his friends to go on searching for knowledge as if the search were not in vain.³⁵ Humility does not require that we adopt the extreme view; and if the extreme view is false, as I think it is, then we slip into a false humility in asserting it. We only need to recognize our extensive ignorance and general fallibility. Socrates, I suppose, presents the extreme view to *balance* the equally extreme, and readily misunderstood, view that he is the wisest of all people. Other things being equal, humility calls for an accurate appraisal of one's merits. But faced with praise couched in such superlatives, the humble person will not want to be seen as being attracted by these flattering descriptions. Socrates also has the task

of undermining the facile thinking which leads to false assessments and misunderstandings of human wisdom, and exaggeration can play a role in this deflationary process.

A second strand to the Socratic ideal of recognizing one's limited knowledge involves knowing where one's expertise lies and when one is getting out of one's depth. Socrates discovered that those who possessed knowledge in one area tended to assume that they were *generally* knowledgeable, and were happy to pronounce on matters far removed from their own special area. The poets and craftsmen came in for particularly severe criticism in this respect. In our own day, scientists have often been singled out for criticism along these same lines. Perhaps the spectacular achievements of science have encouraged the belief that a scientific training can be brought to bear successfully on any question. Robert Gilpin, for example, has suggested that "the scientist believes that he carries with him into the political arena certain unique habits of mind which lend him advantage in understanding politics."³⁶ When the scientist is called in, however, as expert adviser to policy-makers, the advice tendered is seldom purely technical in nature, and the scientist is not an expert with respect to the non-technical assumptions, moral, political or otherwise, which enter in. The point is not that the habits of mind associated with the scientific attitude - impartiality, open-mindedness, respect for evidence and so on - are unimportant in the context of moral and political questions. There is, in Scheffler's words, "a strong analogy between the moral and the scientific points of view, and it is no accident that we speak of reasons in both cases. We can be reasonable in matters of practice as well as in theory."³⁷ Being able to meet these standards in one area, however, is no assurance that one will succeed in some other. Often, a person will have no idea of the traps which lie waiting in areas beyond his or her expertise. Everyone knows by now how distinguished scientists have made fools of themselves pronouncing the deceptions of pseudoscience merchants authentic, falling for tricks which trained magicians easily detect.³⁸

These have been sobering lessons. The question is how to apply them to the teaching context. School teachers, in particular, are often required to teach outside their own

area of expertise. This can lead to desperate efforts to stay one step, or one chapter, ahead of the students, hoping that the moment of humiliation will not arrive too soon.³⁹ In many jurisdictions, moreover, specialist teaching licences have all but disappeared with the result, and to some extent reflecting the view, that a teacher is a teacher. (No doubt, tired slogans about teaching students not subjects are implicated in this error.) This is the educational equivalent of, and no more plausible than, the view that there are "ball-handling" skills, therefore someone good at soccer will be good at tennis. Faced with the unenviable task of "teaching" an unfamiliar subject, and prior to gaining the necessary level of competency, a teacher should surely advise the students in all honesty that in these circumstances he or she can only be a co-inquirer. It may be, of course, that the teacher will prove to be a faster learner and will be able to draw on general teaching skills to help others master the material. But these fortunate outcomes should not deceive us into thinking, like the poets and the craftsmen, that our abilities know no bounds.

We should not be side-tracked here by whatever our views might be on the desirability of a curriculum differentiated along subject lines versus a more holistic, theme-oriented approach. If we favour the latter, there will presumably be topics, issues and materials with which we are less familiar and less comfortable. We still need a sense of our limitations. If, on the other hand, we are teaching a clearly defined subject, our discussions will almost certainly stray into other fields. The appropriate conclusion, however, is not necessarily for teachers to resolve to abstain from comment on the grounds that they are outside their speciality. The tendency of analytical philosophers in the recent past to avoid being drawn on questions of practical ethics ultimately led to the charge of sterility.⁴⁰ In the context of teaching, the constant retreat to one's area of expertise can be simply boring. Students expect their teachers to be able and willing to join an intelligent general discussion even if it lies beyond the teacher's special expertise. An opinion can surely be offered "for what it is worth". Humility does not translate into a *rule* prescribing a policy of "no comment", but has to be captured in the spirit in which the comment is made. No doubt,

Carl Sagan is wise not to be drawn out whenever the popular press asks him for his "gut feeling" on an issue where he has no compelling evidence - "I try not to think with my gut."⁴¹ Equally important for the teacher, however, is the reminder that tentativeness comes in degrees, and there will be times when we want our students to understand that our remarks are very tentative indeed.

A complication with respect to humility in the context of teaching arises simply because the teacher is not just personally striving to exemplify this virtue but is also trying to encourage others in the same direction. As Oakeshott has pointed out, however, the teacher cannot promote the intellectual virtues explicitly without appearing priggish, and this would obviously run counter to any attempt to set an example of humility. The intellectual virtues are "implanted unobtrusively in the manner in which information is conveyed, in a tone of voice, in the gesture which accompanies instruction, in asides and oblique utterances, and by example."⁴² Kant stressed the latter in the context of humility, and suggested that one could not help but respect the humble person because such an example serves to undermine our own self-conceit.⁴³

At times in teaching, however, the teacher may need to show the student that the position the student has taken is untenable, and the student has the direct, sometimes uncomfortable, experience of being challenged to accept criticism and concede that his or her position is mistaken. Ideally, the aim would be to have the student appreciate the lesson taught by Epicurus, that to be defeated in argument is better in that one learns more.⁴⁴ But to show that the student is wrong, must not the teacher be claiming a more secure position for himself or herself? How is this compatible with setting an example of humility?

There is no ready rule to offer teachers here, hence Oakeshott's emphasis on manner, tone of voice and gesture. The teacher cannot just proclaim that he or she remains humble about the position he or she is defending. Students may feel that the teacher is simply imposing a view deemed to be correct and which the teacher is not prepared to think critically about. This impression will not necessarily be corrected just because the teacher, in

rejecting the student's view, has no positive answer to propose. We can, of course, be confident at times that such and such is wrong without knowing what is right. This will help to play down the suspicion that the teacher is infallible, but the teacher is still taking the *objections* to the student's position as decisive, and the student may see this assumption as unwarranted. The teacher's task is to find a way of conveying the point that the objections themselves are not beyond the bounds of critical challenge *while defending them*. Success here will depend upon a number of factors including: previous evidence that the teacher is the sort of person who is prepared to concede positions he or she had once defended; a sense among the students that the teacher is more concerned with finding out what is true than with scoring a point; and an indication that the teacher's objections rest on reason and evidence and remain open to discussion.

¹ Joseph Tussman, *Government and the Mind* New York: Oxford University Press, 1977: 165.

² *op. cit.*, p. 166.

³ David Bercuson and Douglas Wertheimer, *A Trust Betrayed: The Keegstra Affair* Toronto: Doubleday, 1985.

⁴ See Gilbert Highet, *The Immortal Profession* New York: Weybright and Talley, 1976: 69

⁵ Bertrand Russell, *Principles of Social Reconstruction* London: Allen and Unwin, 1916: 147.

⁶ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* New York: The Free Press, 1966: 184. (Originally published, 1916.)

⁷ Bertrand Russell, "Education for democracy", *Addresses and Proceedings of the National Education Association* 77 (2-6 July) 1939: 152.

⁸ Alfred North Whitehead, "Harvard: The future", in H. H. Johnson (ed.) *Whitehead's American Essays in Social Philosophy* Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1959: 160.

⁹ Jean Ruddock, "A strategy for handling controversial issues in the classroom", in J. J. Wellington (ed.), *Controversial Issues in the Curriculum* Oxford; Basil Blackwell, 1986: 6. There is an echo here of Russell's reaction to William James' "will to believe". See Bertrand Russell, "Free thought and official propaganda", in *Sceptical Essays* London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960: 151. Russell proposed the "will to doubt".

¹⁰ John Dewey, *Experience and Education* New York: Collier Books, 1963. Originally published 1938. See the famous opening lines.

¹¹ Ruddock, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹² David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955, section 10, part one. (Originally published 1748.)

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- ¹³ Donald C. Orlich et al., *Teaching Strategies: A Guide to Better Instruction* 2nd edition Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1985: 171. Emphasis in original.
- ¹⁴ David Sadker and Myra Sadker, "Is the o. k. classroom o. k.?", *Phi Delta Kappan* Jan. 1985: 358-361.
- ¹⁵ Robert Hoffman, "The irrelevance of relevance", in Sidney Hook, Paul Kurtz and Miro Todorovich (eds.), *The Idea of a Modern University* Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1974: 107-118.
- ¹⁶ Jay F. Rosenberg, *The Practice of Philosophy: A Handbook for Beginners* 2nd edition Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984.
- ¹⁷ Dennis Gunning, *The Teaching of History* London: Croom Helm, 1978: 51.
- ¹⁸ Jerome A. Popp, "Teaching the ways of inquiry", *Illinois Schools Journal* 57, 3, 1977: 54-59.
- ¹⁹ Russell, *Principles of Social Reconstruction* op. cit., p. 154.
- ²⁰ Harvey Siegel, "Epistemology, critical thinking, and critical thinking pedagogy", *Argumentation* 3, 1989: 127-140.
- ²¹ Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics* London: MacMillan, 1962: 334. Originally published 1874.
- ²² Patricia White, "Self-respect, self-esteem and the 'management' of schools and colleges", *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 21, 1, 1987: 85-92.
- ²³ Helen Oppenheimer, "Humility", in James F. Childress and John MacQuarrie (eds.) *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986: 284. Hume cautioned, however, that if people were to openly *proclaim* the merits they properly *believe* themselves to possess, "a flood of impertinence would break in upon us." See David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* Section 8, in Alasdair MacIntyre, *Hume's Ethical Writings* op. cit., p. 106. (Originally published 1751.)
- ²⁴ cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (trans. T. K. Abbot) London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954: 178. (Originally published 1788.)
- ²⁵ Plato, *Protagoras* 318A, in W. K. C. Guthrie (trans.), *Protagoras and Meno* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975.
- ²⁶ Plato, *Apology* 21E, in Hugh Tredennick (trans.), *The Last Days of Socrates* op. cit. See also my discussion in "Reading the *Apology* in school", *The Classical World* 80, 1, 1986: 25-9.
- ²⁷ Plato, *Crito* 46B, in Tredennick, *The Last Days of Socrates*, op. cit.
- ²⁸ Notice how naturally the word "trust" came into the title of the book on the Keegstra affair cited in fn. 3 above.
- ²⁹ Russell, *Principles of Social Reconstruction* op. cit., p. 147
- ³⁰ Joel Feinberg, "The child's right to an open future", in William Aiken and Hugh LaFollette (eds.), *Whose Child? Children's Rights, Parental Authority, and State Power* Totowa: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1980: 140-51.
- ³¹ R. M. Hare, "Adolescents into adults", in T. H. B. Hollins (ed.) *Aims in Education: The Philosophic Approach* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964: 47-70.
- ³² Neil Postman, "The teacher with wisdom", in Allan C. Ornstein, *Strategies for Effective Teaching* New York: Harper and Row, 1990: 546.
- ³³ Plato, *Apology* 23A, in Tredennick, *The Last Days of Socrates*, op. cit.
- ³⁴ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (Loeb edition, trans. R. D. Hicks) London: Heinemann, 1972. Vol. 1, pp. 160-1. Gregory Vlastos suggests that when Socrates disclaims knowledge, he is in effect saying that "any conviction he has stands ready to be re-examined in the company of any sincere person who will raise the question and join him in the investigation." See his "The paradox of Socrates", in Vlastos (ed.), *The Philosophy of Socrates*

New York: Doubleday, 1971: 10.

³⁵ Plato, *Meno* 86C, in Guthrie (trans.), *Protagoras and Meno*, op. cit.

³⁶ Robert Gilpin, *American Scientists and Nuclear Weapons Policy* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962: 4.

³⁷ Israel Scheffler, "Moral education and the democratic ideal", in *Reason and Teaching* Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973: 142.

³⁸ See James Randi, *Flim-Flam!* New York: Lippincott and Crowell, 1980. cf. John Dewey, *How We Think* Boston: D. C. Heath, 1933: "It is a matter of common notice that men who are expert thinkers in their own special fields adopt views on other matters without doing the inquiring that they know to be necessary for substantiating simpler facts that fall within their own specialities." See p. 29.

³⁹ See Theodore R.Sizer, *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984: 187.

⁴⁰ D. C. Phillips, "Philosophy of education: *In extremis?*" *Educational Studies* 14, 1, 1983: 1-30.

⁴¹ Carl Sagan, "The burden of skepticism", *The Skeptical Inquirer* 12, 1, 1987: 45.

⁴² Michael Oakshott, "Learning and teaching", in R. S. Peters (ed.), *The Concept of Education* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967: 176.

⁴³ Kant, op. cit., p. 169.

⁴⁴ Epicurus, *Fragments* 74. cf. Socrates' attitude in Plato, *Gorgias* 458, Walter Hamilton (trans.), Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973.