

The study of philosophy can develop critical rationality—by which I mean a critical approach toward all that human beings have created: toward all theories, all institutions, and all social, political, and economic arrangements. Critical rationalists hold that man can never create perfect social arrangements, but they insist that man can rationally improve whatever he has created through criticizing it and uncovering its inadequacies. This kind of critical rationality should, I think, inform all work in the social studies in high school.

Next, the study of philosophy can help make would-be reformers less dogmatic by encouraging them to look for improvement through dialogue—through the give and take of argument. Such citizens will be less tempted to pursue change through confrontation and imposition of their solutions on others.

Further, the study of philosophy can reduce the degree of fanaticism among reformers, encouraging them to regard all reforms as trials we can criticize, as experiments we can learn from. The study of philosophy can engender a disinterested, critical concern with all answers—all existing and proposed social policies, practices, and procedures.

Finally, I think that the study of philosophy can help develop a social consciousness—an awareness that we are responsible for the arrangements in our society. We have created them; it is up to us to renew and improve them.

HENRY J. PERKINSON

New York University

A JUSTIFICATION FOR TEACHING PHILOSOPHY IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

Various vehicles can be used to carry the teaching of philosophy into the high school. (1) Philosophy could be offered as a full or half course, either for credit or general interest, and at various grade levels; (2) philosophy could be included in the actual content of courses already being taught in secondary schools (e.g., section in a mathematics course, a philosophy of history section in a history course, an aesthetics section in an art course etc.); (3) philosophy could be applied to clarifying value issues integral to the discipline. There are numerous instances of such value issues occurring in high school subjects. Some examples are: the defensibility of Trudeau's declaration of the War Measures Act; the soundness of Euclid's proof of the Pythagorean theorem; the relevance of an experiment involving the observations of scintillations on a luminous surface to a theory about the existence and nature of electrons. I wish to argue that the inclusion of philosophy in a high school curriculum as indicated in item (3) above is not only desirable but inseparable from

achieving the ends of education. I maintain, further, that the best, most obvious, and most economical way of assuring that philosophy is included in sense (3) is by overtly teaching it in senses (1) and (2).

The need for some philosophical know-how hinges on the pervasiveness of value issues in high school subjects, and the consequent need for arguments to defend the resulting value judgments. No high school subject should (or could) be restricted to an agglomeration of facts. Even if one attempted to impose such a restriction, some sifting process would be required for selecting those facts to be studied, and this sifting would itself reflect a value judgment as to which facts were most worth studying, or most in need of study, not to mention the value judgment as to what constitutes a fact. Value judgments are an indissoluble element in high school subjects; consequently, the examination of arguments supporting specific value judgments is similarly indispensable. This implies, at the very least, the need for some general philosophical knowledge concerning the nature of arguments, acquaintance with some valid argument forms, and familiarity with some of the ways in which arguments can go wrong.

One might argue that this discussion has little to do with introducing philosophy into the high school, although it does strengthen the claim that philosophy should be taught at universities generally and at faculties of education in particular. In other words, one might argue for the necessity of the high school teacher's rather than the high school student's being at least minimally versed in the principles of philosophy. It is the teacher who must, after all, make decisions about course content, text books, supplementary readings, and class assignments, and the teacher who is held accountable to the principal, school board, and community for the content and nature of his/her course; consequently, it is the teacher's value judgments that must be correct, or at least defensible.

To argue in this fashion is to assume that in any particular high school course, only the teacher *makes* value judgments—the role of the student is limited to learning and remembering what particular judgments have been sanctioned by the teacher and other acceptable authorities. To make this kind of claim is to miss the whole point of education; it is to confuse education with training, or, worse, with indoctrination.

While it is true that the teacher must take some kind of philosophical stance in teaching his/her subject, it is no less true that the student must also take such a stance. The question is not *whether* the student will adopt some philosophical view of the subject matter, but *what* view he/she will adopt. High school graduates who have learned to memorize rather than think, to recapitulate rather than criticize, have not opted out of selecting some philosophical view—they have rather opted for an inadequate view, such as authoritarianism. In a very real sense, a student's knowledge in any particular subject area must be

seen as less than education unless it is buttressed by a background of critical attitudes and awareness of alternatives that is ultimately philosophical in nature.

If this is the case, then as educators we are faced with deciding upon the best means of teaching philosophical skills in the high school setting. We could follow an *ad hoc* method of addressing ourselves to particular philosophical issues as they arise in class to analysing arguments as instances of them actually occur in the subject matter. This method has three serious drawbacks. First, it is uneconomical and if pursued conscientiously, would result in an immense duplication of effort by all teachers. Second, such a method would not be at all conducive to a systematic presentation of philosophical issues—it would result in a disjointed smattering of philosophical tid-bits which would be virtually useless to the student. Third, this method would of necessity place the teaching of philosophy at the doorstep of teachers whose expertise lies in other areas.

The most obvious means of avoiding these difficulties is to introduce the teaching of philosophy into the high school by methods (1) and (2) discussed above. Offered in this way, philosophy should be directly conducive to the recognition and clarification of value issues in other disciplines; in addition, it should play a crucial role in enabling the student to analyse and evaluate his/her own decisions in a world that has never been in greater need of critical rethinking in such matters.

MARYANN AYIM

Teaching Philosophy



VOLUME ONE

Summer 1975

NUMBER ONE

WILLIAM K. GOSENS	What Philosophy Tries to Teach
WILLIAM B. GRIFFITH	Symbolic Logic and Appraisal of Argument
GODFREY VESEY	Teaching Philosophy in Britain's Open University
ROBINSON A. GROVER	Philosophy and the University/Two-Year College Conflict
RONALD REED	The Advocacy Method
CRAIG CHANNELL	The Advocacy Method: A Reply
P. ALLAN CARLSSON	Self-Paced Instruction in Logic
SPENCER SCHEIN	An Induction Game
B. C. POSTOW	Independent Discussion Groups for Introductory Philosophy
ANTONY FLEW	Issues in Teaching Contemporary Ethics

BOOK REVIEWS

FILM REVIEWS

NOTES AND NEWS

Edited by Arnold Wilson and William Todd, Location 47, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH 45221, USA.

Subscriptions: \$12 to individuals, \$20 to all others, for two years (4 issues). Add \$1 for postage outside North America.