18. THE NATURE OF AIMS AND ENDS IN EDUCATION

GREGORY MELLEMA
CALVIN COLLEGE

ABSTRACT. In this paper it is argued that educational aims be approached as states of affairs susceptible of analysis in terms of means and ends. An educator's various aims, in this way, can be classified according to the means-end relationship they bear to one another. This approach, which stands squarely in the tradition of Aristotle and enjoys little support among contemporary educational theorists, is defended from objections by R.S. Peters, a popular and influential proponent of an alternative approach.

In this paper I propose to outline an approach to thinking about educational aims. It will be my concern to argue that educational aims be approached as states of affairs which human agents set out to accomplish in a deliberate and purposeful manner and that they are to be thought of as arranged in various coherent structures. In large part my proposals are intended to constitute a reaffirmation of certain traditional emphases and to challenge some ideas which have gained acceptance among educational theorists in recent years. In what follows I will set out to explain some of the central features of the approach I am proposing, to argue that the failure to take this approach seriously has some potentially dangerous consequences, and to defend this type of approach from a number of criticisms offered by R.S. Peters, a popular and influential proponent of an alternative approach.

To get clear about the position I shall be advocating, suppose that Jones is a sixth grade teacher whose ultimate educational objective is that his students become informed and responsible citizens in the life of the community. In order to realize this ultimate aim or objective, Jones has adopted several subordinate aims, one of which is that his students become more informed during the course of the academic year. In order to realize this aim, Jones has adopted several aims subordinate to it, one of which is that his students become more learned in the area of social studies. This aim, in turn, Jones proposes to realize by means of adopting aims subordinate to it, and so on.

What emerges from all of this is a tree-like structure of educational aims. Beginning with his ultimate educational aim, Jones has chosen strategies which he believes will promote its realization. These
states of affairs themselves become aims for whose realization it is necessary to identify further strategies. These states of affairs, in the same manner, themselves become aims requiring still further states of affairs to promote their realization. And the process continues until Jones reaches "ground level" states of affairs which are achievable without employing further states of affairs as strategies.

The hierarchical character of this structure can be seen by observing the following list of Jones's aims:

That his students become learned and responsible citizens in the life of the community.

That his students become more learned during the academic year.

That his students become more learned in the area of social studies during the academic year.

That his students become more learned in the area of geography during the academic year.

That his students complete the geography workbook during the academic year.

That his students complete lesson 14 in the geography workbook by tomorrow.

That Jones introduce the concepts in lesson 14 today.

That Jones illustrate the concept of a peninsula on the chalkboard right now.

That Jones reach for the chalk right now.

This list comprises only one strand from Jones's hierarchy of educational aims, for typically there will be a number of strategies employed for each aim, but it makes clear the manner in which each aim in the structure is chosen in order to promote the realization of the aim to which it is subordinate. (The last state of affairs is, strictly speaking, not an aim; it is something Jones brings about without having to employ a strategy).

It is customary to describe aimful behavior of this sort in terms of means and ends, and it was Aristotle's belief that all human behavior which is purposeful can be characterized in similar fashion. Each state of affairs (except the topmost) is a means to bringing about the state of affairs immediately above it. Thus, Jones's hierarchy of aims can also be thought of as a hierarchy of means and ends. And, although Jones may not have consciously thought of his various aims as related to one another in this structured manner, it is nonetheless an accurate model of the various strategies he has devised for the realization of his ultimate educational aim. So motivated, he reaches for the chalk and begins illustrating the concept of a peninsula.
Jones's overall strategy for realizing his ultimate aim, then, can be depicted as a hierarchy of states of affairs which stand to one another as means to ends. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that the hierarchy is not necessarily a ranking of aims in order of importance, for it is conceivable that an agent will regard the realization of a certain aim as more important in and of itself than that of a less specific aim closer to the top of the hierarchy. Rather, it is a ranking which reflects how an agent like Jones intends to proceed in his efforts to realize his various aims. By illustrating the concept of a peninsula Jones is working toward a complete introduction of the concepts in lesson 14, which will make it possible to complete lesson 14 by tomorrow, thus making it possible to complete the workbook by year's end, and so on.

Let us, for the purposes of convenience, refer to the states of affairs in an agent's hierarchy of aims which are closest to the agent's ultimate aim as 'upper level aims', those closest to the ground level aims as 'lower level aims', and those occupying the middle region of the hierarchy as 'intermediate level aims'. Jones's ultimate aim is that his students become learned and responsible citizens in the life of the community, but because this aim is an integral component in Jones's hierarchy of aims, Jones is capable of doing something right now—illustrating the concept of a peninsula—which he believes, in some small way, contributes to its realization. In such manner as this Jones is working to bring about upper level aims through working to bring about lower level aims.

His day-to-day routine will occupy him for the most part with lower level aims, but these efforts are by no means disconnected from his higher educational aims. Jones's educational aims, therefore, are not chosen in a loose and random fashion. The specific aims which occupy much of Jones's attention in the day-to-day routine stand in a clearly defined relationship to those lofty aims near the top of the hierarchy. In this way the entire tree-like complex will comprise Jones's master strategy for bringing it about that his students become learned and responsible citizens in the life of the community.2

It is, however, a complex which is capable of alteration from one moment to the next. Revision of aims can become an almost ongoing process at the lower levels. For example, Jones's remarks about the concepts in lesson 14 may turn out to elicit blank stares, and so Jones must instantaneously revise his strategy regarding the introduction of these concepts (supplementing the chalk illustration, perhaps, with other types of illustrations). Nor is revision confined to the lower levels. On occasion even the higher level aims may be modified or replaced as the need arises. In addition, there is a dynamic interaction between means and ends in such a way that one's choice of a particular means may at times lead one to alter or refine the corresponding end. The Aristotelian approach, then, does not commit one to a fossilized structure of aims which is incapable of responding to changing circumstances.

Nor does the Aristotelian approach commit one to imagine hierarchies of educational aims as constructed by individual educators, each of whom is laboring in solitary Cartesian fashion to construct a hierarchy of aims for his or her private use. There are clearly a variety of factors which influence Jones in his choice of aims, and prominent among these are beliefs and attitudes he acquires in the course of his involvement with fellow teachers, parents, administrators, and board members.
By attending teacher conventions, reading articles, and conversing with others he acquires new insights and perspectives, many of which influence his decisions to either adopt new aims or discard old ones. Thus, there is normally an important communal dimension to the selection of educational aims, and it would consequently be misleading to think of an educator's hierarchy of aims as highly individualized.

***************

Much has been written on the subject of aims in education, and much debate has taken place over the question, "What is the ultimate aim of education?". Some have argued that the ultimate aim of education is the Good Life, and others that it is the development of the intellect, the discovery of one's authentic self, or a preparation for life. Still others, following Dewey, have resisted the idea that anything should be set up as one's ultimate aim in education.

Since a person's ultimate educational aim holds a place of ultimate importance among his various educational aims, there is good reason to devote considerable time and attention to discussions of this kind. However, what is often missing from these discussions is an indication of how the ultimate aim in question might relate to the multitude of specific aims or objectives which an educator chooses. To properly set this ultimate aim in the context of aimful human behavior, it needs to be perceived not as a glorious star set in the firmament but as the top rung of a ladder which can be reached by satisfying, one at a time, the lower and intermediate level aims.

A theorist who does nothing more than to argue that all of my teaching should be continually directed toward each child's discovery of his authentic self leaves me with little more than a prescription which has the appearance of deep significance. The implication is that if I truly keep this aim before my mind there is no need to bother with a complicated set of intermediate level aims. I must simply let it be my guiding star as I move through my day-to-day activities with a group of children.

There are, I believe, two fundamental reasons why it is dangerous to overlook the fact that one's ultimate educational aim lies at the top of a hierarchy of aims. First, the formulation of these ultimate aims is typically vague. Most teachers in the classroom would find it difficult to become clear on the meaning of "the discovery of one's authentic self". Less puzzling, perhaps, are "the Good Life" or "the development of the intellect", but it is far from evident what exactly these come to in the actual practice of teaching. There is considerable room for clarification. When a person is forced to sit down and formulate a workable strategy for bringing about an ultimate educational aim, on the other hand, then he or she is forced at the same time to make some clear sense out of these lofty phrases. They become translated into the language of specific objectives, and their meaning takes on a focus not attainable by way of a guiding-star philosophy.

There is another basic reason for seeing aims in the context of a hierarchy. It is perfectly possible to grasp the meaning of the words describing an ultimate educational aim and still have no clear idea how to bring it about. Knowing how to set out to realize an ultimate educational aim is something like knowing how to solve a puzzle. For most of
us it is a poor strategy to sit and stare at the puzzle, hoping that the solution will eventually flash upon us. It is almost always more profitable to break the puzzle down into parts of more manageable size and attempt to solve them.

In a similar fashion knowing how to bring about an ultimate educational aim in a classroom filled with children will not come by lengthy contemplation and by awaiting a flash of insight. Rather, it comes by designing workable strategies and by arranging these strategies into a hierarchy. It would have made little sense for Jones to sit and ponder his goal of fashioning his students into learned and responsible citizens, trying to determine how to attain it. Like most of us, it was necessary for Jones to take this giant puzzle and break it down into workable segments. Knowing how to attain his ultimate goal is not in and of itself a task of manageable dimensions; knowing how to illustrate the concept of a peninsula is.

What becomes of those who elect not to follow Jones's example? One likely outcome is that such a person, like one who has grown weary of a giant puzzle, becomes frustrated and disillusioned with respect to the "ideals" in education. Imagine Smith to be such a person. Since he must continue to face students on a day-to-day basis, he is forced to adopt an extensive set of practical aims. He may continue to pay lip service to the ultimate aim, but in reality Smith, unlike Jones, is teaching without the benefit of a vision to guide his activities in the classroom. Those lofty ideals he admired in his teacher training courses turned out to be elusive, and so he decides henceforth to leave it to the theorists to worry about them.

In this section I shall consider a number of objections raised by R.S. Peters to the type of approach I have outlined. Although several of his writings are of relevant interest to us in this connection, these objections are given expression particularly in his well-known essays, 'Aims of Education--A Conceptual Inquiry' and 'Must an Educator Have an Aim?', hereafter 'AECI' and 'MEHA'.

In the latter essay Peters begins by observing the common tendency among people to employ a "means-end model" in thinking about education.

It is only too easy to think of the whole business of education in terms of models like that of building a bridge or going on a journey. The commendable state of mind is thought of as an end to be aimed at, and the experiences which lead up to it are regarded as means to its attainment. For this model of adopting means to premeditated ends is one that haunts all our thinking about the promotion of what is valuable. In the educational sphere we therefore tend to look round for the equivalent of bridges to be built or ports to be steered to... It is my conviction that this model misleads us in the sphere of education. ('MEHA', 85).

To understand why this model misleads us in the sphere of education, Peters describes two contexts where this model is appropriate.
First, the means-end model is appropriate in the context of doing things, "in order to put ourselves in the way of other things". For example, we get on a bus in order to get to work, and we fill up a form in order to get some spectacles ('MEHA', 85). Second, the means-end model is appropriate in the context of making or producing things. For example, we mix flour in order to make a cake or weld steel in order to make a bridge ('MEHA', 86).

The context of education, Peters wishes to suggest, differs significantly from both of these contexts.

In both these contexts we might well ask a person what he was aiming at, what his objective was. But in both cases the answer would usually be in terms of something pretty concrete . . . Similarly if a teacher was asked what he was aiming at, he might state a limited objective like "getting at least six children through the eleven plus". But he might as it were, lift his eyes a bit from the scene of battle and commit himself to one of the more general aims of education—elusive things like "the self-realization of the individual", "character", "wisdom", or "citizenship". But here the trouble starts; for going to school is not a means to these in the way in which getting on a bus is a means of getting to work; and they are not made or produced out of the material of the mind in the way in which a penny is produced out of copper ('MEHA', 86).

Thus, while a limited educational objective might be appropriately analyzed according to the means-end model, the same does not hold true for the "more general aims" of education. Perhaps, then, the model is appropriate for talking about lower level aims but not for upper level aims.

What, exactly, is the trouble with the more general aims of education? Suppose Jones is asked what he is aiming at, and suppose his answer is that his students ultimately become learned and responsible citizens in the life of the community. Peters's point is that Jones has failed to answer "in terms of something pretty concrete." Elsewhere Peters states that "The concept of 'aim' suggests concentration of attention and the specification of some precise objective" ('AECI', 2). These he contrasts with 'ideals' which "pick out objectives which, by definition, cannot be realized in practice. If they become more practicable . . . they become aims" ('AECI', 2). Therefore, what we have called Jones's ultimate educational aim does not for Peters qualify as an aim; unlike getting on a bus or producing a penny out of copper, it fails to be concrete and to specify a precise objective.

The failure to specify a precise objective is also described by Peters in terms of lacking a "commonly accepted end-product" ('MEHA', 86). In the practice of medicine there is a commonly accepted end-product, physical health. However, there are "no agreed criteria" for defining what such an end-product might be in education ('MEHA', 87), and so we have a second reason for regarding the means-end model as inappropriate for education.

For in education there is as much debate about the ends of education as there is about the methods to be adopted to
promote these ends. The same is not true of medicine. There is much more consensus about what constitutes being 'cured' than there is about what constitutes being 'educated'.

Thus, while the practice of medicine can be appropriately talked about in terms of aims, the same does not hold true of educational enterprise.

A third reason for the conclusion that the means-end model is inappropriate for what goes on in education concerns the role of values in education.

Values are involved in education not so much as goals or end-products, but as principles implicit in different manners of proceeding or producing ('MEHA', 87).

What I have called principles of procedure can also be regarded very much as a matter of content. This is one of those features of 'education' which makes any attempts to conceive it as taking a means to an end quite inappropriate ('AECI', 12).

An example of how values are involved in education as principles of procedure can be found in learning science. Learning science goes beyond the mere learning of facts. Rather, to become educated scientifically, a person must "absorb these principles of procedure by means of which the content of scientific thought has been accumulated and is criticised and developed" and learn to "participate in a public form of life governed by such principles of procedure" ('AECI', 12).

Such principles of procedure, Peters believes, are not properly analyzable by speaking of means and ends. A gifted science teacher through whom students are able to absorb these principles of procedure is inspiring the students in a manner which goes beyond what can be described in the means-end model.

My guess is that most of the important things in education are passed on in this manner—by example and explanation. An attitude, a skill, is caught; sensitivity, a critical mind, respect for people and facts develop where an articulate and intelligent exponent is on the job. Yet the model of means to ends is not remotely applicable to the transition that is taking place ('MEHA', 92).

There is a wide variety of ways in which what is valuable is passed on in the educational enterprise, and the means-end model is far too limited to do them justice.

These, then, are Peters's remarks concerning the means-end model. We might summarize them as follows:

(i) The means-end model is appropriate in contexts such as getting on a bus in order to get to work or producing a penny out of copper. In these contexts there is the specification of a concrete or precise objective. The same is not true in the context of education, although it may be true of limited educational objectives.
The means-end model is appropriate in the context of practicing medicine in which there is a commonly accepted end-product and agreed criteria for defining this end-product. The same is not true of education.

Much of what is passed on by a teacher consists of values implicit in certain principles of procedure. Unlike the teaching of specific facts, the means-end model is not appropriate for describing this activity.

In response to Peters, I shall begin by considering principle (i). Here we are encouraged to observe that the specification of a precise objective, which Peters takes to be a pre-requisite for applying the means-end model, is not a characteristic feature of what goes on in education. While certain limited educational objects might be specified in terms of something precise or concrete (lesson 14 in the geography workbook is assigned today toward the end that the workbook be completed during the academic year), the same is not true of upper level educational aims. Without stopping to determine exactly what Peters means by 'concrete', we can, I think, acknowledge that there are relevant differences between getting on a bus in order to get to work and doing something in order that one's students become intelligent and responsible citizens in the life of the community. There is certainly a sense in which the former is more concrete than the latter, and certainly the former specifies a more precise objective than the latter.

But the question is whether the failure of upper level educational aims to be concrete in the relevant manner implies that they cannot qualify as genuine ends or aims toward which educators might aspire. It is clear that Peter's position—that they cannot qualify—stands in opposition to the tradition of mainstream Western Philosophy. Philosophers from the time of Aristotle to the present have not hesitated to speak of ends in terms of such generalities as happiness, wisdom and piety. One fails to detect any serious objection to counting these as ends prior to the writings of Peters and other educational philosophers since 1900.

Nevertheless, Peters appears unimpressed by this weight of tradition. He speaks of the means-end model as one which has come to "haunt" all our thinking, and he appears to be calling for a fresh approach. But what is mistaken about the traditional approach? Why does Peters believe that it is important to throw off this weight of tradition? Why must our thinking about means and ends be radically revised?

Although Peters nowhere seems to offer any kind of argument to establish that the means-end model is appropriate only in situations in which there is the specification of a concrete objective, the way he discusses this issue in a number of his writings suggests the following line of thinking. Educators who are asked to state their pedagogical aims commonly respond with statements so general, lofty, and sweeping in scope that one can scarcely know what they mean or how they can be put into practice in the classroom. Such statements do not deserve to be regarded as statements of genuine educational aims, for there is no clear indication of what is being aimed for or of what would constitute a strategy for bringing it about. To be the statement of a genuine educational aim, therefore, there must be the specification of a precise objective; otherwise one will be at a loss to make clear sense of it.
AIMS AND ENDS IN EDUCATION

To picture the kind of situation suggested by this line of thinking, one need only call to mind the 'guiding star approach' referred to earlier. On this approach a teacher is continually aiming for some distant, ill-defined objective, hoping that the day-to-day activities in the classroom will contribute in some way or other to its realization. Such a teacher lacks a clear idea both of the objective and of the precise means for its realization, and it is understandable that Peters wishes to propose an alternative approach. Surely an educator's objectives should not be the lofty and remote aims which the guiding star analogy suggests.

But why must we suppose that the only alternative to the guiding star approach is an outright rejection of aims which fail to be concrete in the relevant sense? Earlier I showed that the Aristotelian approach allows for the possibility of imbedding upper level aims in a hierarchical structure in such a way that, relative to the intermediate and lower level aims within the structure, they take on a clear meaning. By virtue of the structure one can possess a clear indication of what is being aimed for and a clear apprehension of a strategy for bringing it about. From the perspective of the individual teacher these upper level aims become genuinely attainable. They become the topmost rungs on a ladder, not remote stars set in the firmament.

At the same time, of course, they fail to resemble unattainable ideals, and here we come face to face with Peters's own approach. For what we have called upper level aims Peters appears to classify as ideals, and on his view ideals "pick out objectives which, by definition, cannot be realized in practice." Thus, we seem to be driven to the conclusion that these upper level aims are in some sense unattainable by definition. Presumably, then, there is no point in a teacher's attempting to attain them; they are not ends to be sought, and by definition they are not states of affairs to be aimed at. The traditional means-end model does not apply to them.

If this is the upshot of Peters's fresh approach to thinking about means and ends, there seems to be no room for speaking, as we did earlier, of a teacher like Jones as having a vision in the form of an ultimate goal which inspires him in all of his routine teaching activities. The most that we can say is that he holds forth in his mind an ideal, and there seems to be no clear sense in which he can be said to aim or strive or work toward this ideal without lapsing into the error of regarding it as an end. In the realm of education one can aim or strive only for states of affairs for which there is the specification of a precise objective. The basic point of contention between Peters and the tradition, therefore, seems to revolve around the role of what Peters calls ideals. For the tradition they function as ends which rational agents attempt to realize, and for Peters they cannot function as objects of aimful behavior. Aimful behavior in education is restricted to realizing certain limited objectives.

This restriction, I believe, forces one to embrace a model of the teaching process which is seriously impoverished. There is no possibility of having an ultimate aim or goal in education, and there is no possibility that ideals in education become in any way the objects of aimful behavior. At most they can function as objects of contemplation. Peters has severed all connection between the source of an educator's in-
piration and that which an educator strives to realize. By removing them from the realm of the achievable, they are stripped of their ability to motivate behavior. As far as making any type of impact upon strategies for the classroom, they are useless.

So far I have suggested that (a) Peters's insistence that a genuine aim or end contain the specification of a precise objective appears to be motivated by a fear that educators will be driven to embrace something along the lines of the guiding star approach, (b) In fact a rejection of the guiding star approach is compatible with the Aristotelian approach, and (c) Peters's own approach seems to leave no room for speaking of an ultimate goal which inspires an educator in his or her teaching. In principle (ii), however, Peters launches a second challenge to defenders of the traditional means-end model in the form of an additional requirement for something's qualifying as a genuine end or aim: It must contain a commonly accepted end-product defined according to agreed criteria. Here Peters contrasts the educational enterprise, which lacks a commonly accepted end-product, with medicine, whose commonly accepted end-product is physical health. For the sake of argument let us assume that the contrast he draws is accurate. Must we then conclude that, since the educational enterprise lacks a commonly accepted end-product as well as agreed criteria for defining this end-product, the means-end model is inappropriate to the practice of teaching?

As was the case with principle (i), Peters does not appear concerned anywhere to offer reasons why one should suppose that a genuine aim or end must contain a commonly accepted end-product defined according to agreed criteria. Yet, based upon his various remarks on the subject, what he has in mind, I believe, can be illustrated as follows. Suppose Jones "aims" for his students to become intelligent. There is then no precise point at which he can say with assurance that his so-called aim has been achieved; there are no agreed criteria for defining the exact point at which a person becomes intelligent. Neither he nor anyone else is in a position to know when each of his students has crossed the threshold from non-intelligence to intelligence, for no such accepted threshold exists.

What one ought to realize, Peters suggests, is that alleged aims such as this one are not genuine aims at all. They are pseudo educational aims, for there is no way to identify when they have been achieved. An educator who attempts to operate a classroom by utilizing such pseudo educational aims will be continually frustrated by the inability to gauge when and if they have been realized or accomplished. Such an educator will in large measure be operating in a blind and groping manner.

The contrast between medicine and education might now be illustrated by imagining a mysterious disease whose symptoms invariably vanish when a certain treatment is applied. But imagine that in about fifty per cent of the patients to whom the treatment is administered the disease subsequently remains in a state of dormancy, and there are no known indications for detecting whether a given patient who has been treated is among the lucky half who has been cured. In such a case the cure does not on Peters's criterion qualify as an end, and if all diseases were of this kind Peters would be forced to conclude that the means-end model is inappropriate to the practice of medicine. Similarly, the means-end model would be inappropriate to my getting on a bus in
order to get to work if I failed to possess criteria for deciding at which point I had arrived at work.

In the case of education, then, we should speak of states of affairs as ends only when there are discernible end-points. Jones might aim that Dirk score at least in the 50th percentile on a specific standardized test which measures intelligence, but he ought not adopt as one of his objectives simply that Dirk becomes more intelligent. Presumably, therefore, Jones ought not direct his energies to bring about this state of affairs, even if he has discovered what he believes to be reasonable strategies for contributing to its realization. It is not a genuine aim, and hence it cannot be something to be aimed for. One can only conclude that, at the very least, it is a waste of time and energy to become absorbed in it. It is not a fitting object of his design for operating a classroom.

In response to Peters, one might well agree that it is often counter-productive to become absorbed in bringing about states of affairs when neither the teacher nor anyone else possesses criteria for recognizing their exemplification. Surely one can understand here the basis for Peters's concern. But the question is whether it is necessary to resort to the radical type of solution Peters advocates, namely, an across-the-board rejection of aims and ends which lack these built-in criteria.

Imagine for the moment that Jones firmly believes that Dirk has a great deal of undeveloped potential in the area of intelligence. Based upon his experience with similar students in the past, he is convinced that there are a variety of ways to motivate Dirk in such a way that, in the course of the academic year, he will achieve considerable growth in realizing this potential. (These strategies are components of Jones's hierarchy of aims.) Jones, admittedly, has no familiarity with formal or standardized criteria for measuring intelligence. But during the course of the year he is able to observe that Dirk is indeed growing in intelligence, and it is clear to Jones that this growth has been promoted by the strategies he has employed. Is it necessary to say here that Jones's efforts have been directed toward something which is not a legitimate educational aim?

Perhaps it would be difficult to construct an argument which would demonstrate conclusively that Jones's strategies qualify as bona fide educational aims. But, on the other hand, it is difficult to see exactly why one should regard what Jones has set out to accomplish as something which fails to qualify as a genuine aim. In the practice of education there are certain areas of competency, it seems evident, which possess the following characteristics: (i) Teachers attempt to promote them in students, (ii) There are no commonly defined criteria for recognizing when they have been acquired by a student in toto, (iii) Teachers know perfectly well how to promote growth in acquiring them, and (iv) Teachers know perfectly well how to recognize signs that growth in acquiring them is taking place. A significant part of one's education, it would seem, consists in the gradual acquisition of such competencies; examples might include anything from civic pride to aesthetic appreciation. Is Peters now saying that there is something illegitimate on the part of the teacher in promoting them?

No doubt Peters would respond by distinguishing between what is being promoted and the manner in which it is being promoted. There is
nothing illegitimate about promoting aesthetic appreciation, but an educator who desires to promote it ought to do so not by way of employing pseudo aims. Presumably, then, one ought to promote it by way of designing genuine educational aims. By dividing the acquisition process into a series of defined aims or objectives, one will be able to promote the growth in question in a systematic manner. At each step there will be clearly defined aims, and hence there will be clear criteria at each step for knowing when they have been achieved.

But here we are back to the issue which arose in the context of evaluating principle (i). As has already been noted, Peters has no problem with what we have called lower level educational aims. By their very nature they contain the specification of a precise objective, and presumably there are recognized criteria for knowing when they have been achieved (whether, for example, the student can really tell the difference between a peninsula and an island). However, once again it must be recognized that such objectives are components of a person's hierarchy of aims. By choosing specific aims with built-in criteria specifying end points one can design strategies for realizing what we have called intermediate and upper level aims.

The latter will typically lack commonly accepted end-points of the sort found in the practice of medicine. However, when they are integrated into a hierarchy of educational aims, it is hard to see why their failure to possess a commonly accepted end-product should be a cause for concern. It is true that there may be no specific point at which their achievement can be identified, but from this observation it hardly follows that an educator attempting to promote them is operating in a blind or groping fashion. In a wide variety of contexts an educator can know perfectly well which lower level aims promote the appropriate type of growth. And once these strategies have been implemented, an educator can know perfectly well whether or not growth is indeed taking place.

Such states of affairs can be recognized in this way as components of a person's hierarchy of aims. One devises strategies for promoting them, strategies which either themselves have discernible end points or which are brought about by further strategies with discernible end points, and so on. At some stage on one's hierarchy every state of affairs will qualify as a genuine aim on Peters's view. But to flatly insist that all of one's aims must have discernible end points seems arbitrary, and I conclude that we have been given no good reason to suppose that this must be the case. Once again, it is far from evident from Peters's discussion that the traditional means-end model is appropriate only in the description of limited educational objectives.

Principle (iii) concerns the manner in which values are transmitted in education. Here Peters appeals to the wide variety of ways in which principles of procedure in a discipline are assimilated by students. He emphasizes that this assimilation frequently takes place in situations where the teacher has not designed any specific strategies for bringing it about. For example, Jones's zeal may be so great and his enthusiasm so infectious that students may be inspired merely by his presence in the classroom. By a hundred gestures this is accomplished. Many of these gestures may be unplanned and spontaneous; they are not deliberate strategies toward an end (or at least they are not intended to convey any particular values). In short, the unintended consequences
of a person's actions and movements may often be educationally benefi-
cial, and values may be transmitted accordingly.

All of this seems plainly true. What conclusion might one draw
from it? Certainly we ought not conclude that values are never trans-
mitted as the result of a teacher's deliberately aiming at a particular
end or that there is never any room for purposeful activity in this
process. The truth appears to be that this process consists of a com-
bination of both planned and unplanned elements. Sometimes values are
transmitted as a result of planned objectives, and sometimes they are
not. In the former cases we can identify means and ends, and in the
latter cases there are none to identify.

With this in mind, Peters's assertion that the means-end model is
not even "remotely applicable to the transition that is taking place" seems totally unwarranted. Whether or not the model is applicable
seems to depend on the case at hand. Of course, the means-end model
is not applicable to those particular circumstances in which there are no
means or ends, but this observation is hardly one which is illuminating.
Clearly Peters is claiming something stronger, and what he appears to
be claiming is that the means-end model is not applicable to situations
in which values are transmitted in a proper or suitable manner.

On the face of things this is a claim which, I believe, few people
would find acceptable. In any given society there are certain principles
which are regarded to be of fundamental value, and while indoctrination
is often perceived as an unsuitable process by which these principles
might be transmitted, I believe there are few who would be content to
rely entirely upon the unintended consequences of each teacher's exam-
ple, attitude, and sensitivity. To some minimal degree educators must
rely upon deliberately designed strategies, and to the extent that they
do so they will be employing means toward an end. It may be tempting
to suppose that indoctrination is the only alternative to Peters's ap-
proach, but it should be clear by now that teaching values in a manner
which involves means and ends need not be anything of the sort. For
example, one of Jones's aims might be that his students discover for
themselves whether being concerned for the poor and oppressed is
something they are inclined to value. To repeat, the process of trans-
mitting values consists of a combination of both the planned and the
unplanned, and consequently one cannot entirely rule out principles of
procedure which are deliberate or purposeful.

It is possible, however, that I have misconstrued the meaning of
Peters's assertion, for in his essay 'Education as Initiation' he too seems
clearly to regard intentionality as a part of the process.

'Education' involves essentially processes which intentionally
transmit what is valuable in an intelligible and voluntary
manner and which create in the learner a desire to achieve
it, this being seen to have its place along with other things
in life (p. 102).

From this passage and others it would appear that Peters stands in
agreement with those who do not wish to rely on the unintended conse-
quences of a teacher's actions to transmit values. But how shall one
reconcile this statement with his earlier statement that the means-end
model is not remotely applicable? When a person performs an action
with the intention of bringing about a certain state of affairs, is this not a paradigm example of a situation in which an action is performed as a means towards an end?

Evidently Peters envisions the possibility of a person acting with certain intentions but without any end in view. If so, then it would be possible for an educator to intentionally transmit what is valuable without there being any end toward which his or her actions are directed. But there is something exceedingly puzzling about this possibility. How might a person form an intention without there being at the same time a state of affairs which the person intends to be realized or actualized? If it is my intention that my student value honesty, is there not a state of affairs— their valuing honesty—which is the object of my intention? Perhaps on certain rare occasions people form intentions strictly for their own sake, i.e., they form intentions for the sake of forming intentions. But even here there is a state of affairs— forming an intention—which one intends to bring about. It is hard to see, therefore, how Peters proposes to understand intentions in a way which is not perfectly compatible with the Aristotelian model.

One might attempt interpreting Peters simply to mean that when one acts intentionally the state of affairs one intends to be brought about need not qualify as a genuine end or aim. It may be my intention that my students come to value honesty, but since there are no agreed criteria for determining the precise point at which this intention is brought about, it follows that there is no end or aim which I am intending to bring about. However, this interpretation would, considering the position Peters has defended in principles (i) and (ii), put him in the position of saying that one can legitimately intend to bring about a state of affairs which is not itself a legitimate aim or end. But surely this is not what Peters wishes to argue. It would be ludicrous for Peters at this point to allow pseudo educational aims to qualify as states of affairs which are the object of one's intentions for what goes on in one's classroom. The job of transmitting values cannot reasonably turn out to be performed by pseudo educational aims.

It is very difficult, therefore, to make clear sense out of Peters's assertion that the means-end model is not even remotely applicable to the process of transmitting values in education. No doubt the matter deserves further consideration, and no doubt Peters has not voiced the full range of his reasons for holding this position. But given what Peters says about intentions, there seems to be every reason for finding the means-end model perfectly suited to the process of transmitting values. There appears, then, to be no escaping from the observation noted above: Sometimes values are transmitted as a result of planned objectives, and sometimes they are not. When they are the result of planned objectives, the means-end model is operative; and when they are not the result of planned objectives, the means-end model is not operable.

In conclusion, an examination of Peters's three principles fails to reveal any convincing reason for finding the venerable means-end model in any way unsuitable for describing what goes on in education. In addition, the fresh approach he himself appears to suggest leaves no room for the idea that a teacher's day-to-day activities might be inspired by an ultimate educational goal; only limited educational objectives count as ends toward which one might aspire. I believe this is a deficiency in
his approach, and I hope to have shown that it is not a deficiency in the Aristotelian approach.

ENDNOTES

1 For a fuller treatment of this point, see my paper, "An Aristotelian Approach to Thinking about Educational Aims."

2 I do not propose to rule out the possibility of two or more ultimate educational goals, but for purposes of simplicity I will speak in terms of a single ultimate goal. Nor do I rule out the possibility that Jones's ultimate educational goal or goals are themselves strategies for bringing about still a higher non-educational goal which lies at the top of a more comprehensive hierarchy of aims. I shall likewise acknowledge the possibility that aims be states of affairs whose occurrence is brought about by avoiding other states of affairs (such as aiming that students not develop unwholesome attitudes toward sex).

3 For Dewey the educational process has no end beyond itself (Democracy and Education, 50). Furthermore, the very act of distinguishing between means and ends is a serious error (346).

4 The failure of an educator to attempt to connect upper level aims with lower level aims is not the only possible cause of problems affecting one's hierarchy of aims. A person might set a certain goal and subsequently be unable to discover strategies for bringing it about; this goal then becomes a branch leading to a dead end in the hierarchical tree. Another breakdown might occur when a teacher is forced to employ a strategy which he or she believes to serve no worthwhile purpose. Finally, such factors as laziness, neglect, and deficiencies of organization are all capable of playing a part in the breakdown of a perfectly integrated hierarchy.

5 Peters distinguishes between aims of different levels in Ethics and Education, 28.

6 "The term 'aim' has its natural home in the context of limited and circumscribed activities like shooting and throwing," Ethics and Education, 27; "Education as Initiation," 92. See also The Logic of Education, 26; 'AECI', 6; and Reason and Compassion, 88.

7 The Logic of Education, 27.

8 Ethics and Education, 25, 27, 283; "Education as Initiation," 91.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


