

Studies in the Education of Adults, Apr95, Vol. 27 Issue 1, p24, 12p *TEACHERS AND LEARNERS IN ADULT EDUCATION: TRANSACTION OR MORAL INTERACTION?* , By: Jarvis, Peter, Studies in the Education of Adults, 02660830, Apr95, Vol. 27, Issue 1.

Roby Kidd (1973), following Dewey, described teaching and learning as a transaction -- and to an extent this is true. There is a sense in which both the teacher and the taught bring something to the classroom and it is there that a transaction occurs. This appears to be a valid metaphor in contemporary society where education is viewed as a commodity to be marketed to potential learners, although it is intended to demonstrate in this paper that such a metaphor is most problematic when applied to the educational process. Additionally, the idea of the transaction hides something of even greater profundity, and yet much more basic. What occurs between teacher and taught is a human interaction -- a relationship is formed between the teacher and the learners. Of course this is obvious, but the fact that the potentiality of human relationship occurs in this situation means that it is necessarily a moral interaction, for there can be no relationship between people which is not essentially moral.

One way of analysing this interaction, which has been undertaken by some scholars such as Caffarella (1988) and Clark (1990), is to look at a number of case studies and seek to draw conclusions from the ensuing analysis. This is an excellent starting point but has certain limitations since it does not ask the fundamental questions about human interaction and human values. Indeed, there is a sense in which these have to be assumed in this form of analysis and there is a possibility that every case chosen for examination might reflect the contemporary immoralities of society, so that it is considered more appropriate to begin with an exploration of human values and then to assess the relevance of this investigation for education. Many philosophers have embarked upon the quest to understand values in human relationships and this paper cannot explore all of them -- indeed, such a study would constitute the basis of the study of moral philosophy as a whole -- and so it must be recognised that the approach adopted here has its own presuppositions, the fundamental one being that human value can only be realised in relationship. This assumption itself seems to be flying in the face of the individualism of contemporary Western society, and so it is, but this is because it is suggested here that Western society has placed too much emphasis on the individual and self-interest and lost its moral direction in the process.

The first part of this paper, therefore, examines a few of the possible outcomes for a world in which self-interest underlies the teacher-learner transaction; the second explores the moral philosophical foundations of interaction and relates these to the process of teaching

and learning; the third explores the implications of the conclusions reached for the autonomy, authenticity and personhood of those involved in the interaction. There is a brief conclusion in which a moral differentiation is highlighted between the education of children and that of adults and, finally, the values of education contrasted to those being emphasised in Western society'.

1. A Self-Interested Teacher-Learner Transaction

Underlying the morality of the modern world are the twin ideas of individualism and self-interest. These stem from the Enlightenment and from the morality implicit in the division of labour and, consequently, in the market place. Fundamental to the division of labour is the idea that human beings produce different commodities, which they then seek to offer in the market place in exchange for others that they also need. Clearly this is an efficient method of production and one which has been generally accepted in modern society. In 1759, Adam Smith, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* developed the idea of self-interest which was applied in a more narrow economic fashion in *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776 (Brown, 1992), where he recognised the moral significance of the division of labour and suggested that the exchange in the market is based upon the philosophy of self-interest, i.e. 'give me what I want and I will give you what you want'. This outworking of self-interest, it was claimed, functions for the social good, and society seems to function efficiently as a result -- as if an 'invisible hand' has guided its transactions.

As a consequence of this approach to social life, instrumental rationality has become widely equated with rationality itself, and it is regarded as quite natural for people to act in such a manner in order to further their own self-interest in a market situation. Imagine a transaction where two people are bartering over the sale and purchase of a commodity; it is regarded as quite natural that both should be concentrating on getting the best deal for themselves. The outcome of this might well be amicable agreement in which the social good results. But this market approach also means that if the actors are unable to reach agreement then the more powerful usually get their way and the less powerful become even more dominated, so that while there is social cohesion as a result of the power relationship it does not mean that the good of all the actors in the transaction has been achieved. (See Poole, 1990, for a full discussion of relationship between modernity and morality.) This power relation might also have immoral implications. Taylor (1991:17) states quite specifically that '*some forms of life are indeed higher than others, and the culture of tolerance for individual self-fulfilment shies away from these claims*' (italics in original).

If these approaches are applied to the teaching and learning transaction, the following two scenarios can be drawn. In the first, both students and teachers act in self-interest. Students might

approach the transaction with their needs and with the intention of satisfying these but by doing as little work as possible in order to gain the best qualification for themselves. The qualification is the sign of ownership of the commodity which has been provided by the teacher. Teachers are all aware of, and have often experienced, this instrumental approach to education by some students. Teachers, on the other hand, bring their own knowledge and skills to the transaction, but what if they were also to approach it in such a manner as to see how they can satisfy their needs and get the best out of the transaction for themselves while still trying to get the greater majority of students through their examinations? They might seek to do as little preparation as possible, provide as little of the necessary knowledge as possible, see the students as infrequently as possible, and so on. It might be argued that if the learners actually gain their qualifications then the conservation of energy and time to use on other activities is perfectly acceptable, both sets of actions are perfectly rational and that the actions of the role players are right. But what if, in the long term, the teachers have not really kept abreast with developments in their discipline and their students begin to fail examinations and courses? Then the students will not achieve their qualifications and they will become dissatisfied with the provision and might well look elsewhere for their education. The logic of this position, therefore, is false. It is not really possible for both teachers and learners to try to get the best deal for themselves all the time and to produce the instrumental outcomes that they seek from participating in the educational process. Indeed, this suggests that the high quality of education can only be maintained by less instrumental orientations by the participants.

It will be noted that in this instance the language of needs has been used and this is because some of the philosophy underlying ideas commonly used in the education of adults is problematic. Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs, for instance, places self-actualisation at the apex of human development, but this is an individualistic perspective which can easily be used to justify individuals striving to self-fulfil or to actualise their own self-interest at the expense of others. It can easily become a legitimating ideology for this bartering transaction, so that Maslow's position apparently reflects something of the same set of values as the market discourse.

In the second scenario, teachers might use their position to dominate the learners and get the best out of the situation for themselves. One way in which this occurs is when teachers impose their will on the class and use the teaching and learning situation as an opportunity for self-aggrandisement, while their students are forced to be the recipients of the tutors' performance, eloquence, wit, etc. When education is so teacher-centred that the teaching and learning transaction is a process which the teachers control for their own personal or psychological benefit, then the students are given no encouragement to grow or develop. Teaching, or the teachers' performance, is the end-product of the process and the students'

learning is almost incidental. The teachers might come away from such a class claiming that it has been a 'good session' and untrained observers might also regard it as an excellent lesson. The students, also, might have enjoyed the performance, but the outcome of the session might be that they have learned very little. Indeed, this approach to education is in accord with the thesis of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977: 5) that all 'pedagogic action ... is objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power'. In this instance, teachers use their dominant position for their own self-interest; a form of teaching has occurred but educators might question whether education has actually happened. Indeed, Buber (1947: 120) suggested that the educator is not "The man [sic] with the will to power", but he was the bearer of assured values'.

Neither of these approaches have what most people would regard as the underlying philosophy of teaching and learning in adult education or, in other words, the morality underlying much of contemporary society is flawed for the education of adults, since teaching and learning is more than a transaction. It might well be argued that this morality is also suspect for many other aspects of daily life, since being flawed for education demonstrates quite clearly that it is not applicable to other aspects of contemporary society either. It is necessary, therefore, to examine a philosophy of human interaction, as an ethical basis of teaching and learning.

2. Teachers and Learners in Relationship

Perhaps the crucial idea in teaching and learning lies in the word 'relationship'. Teaching and learning in the classroom situation, although not in all forms of distance education, involves a relationship between the teacher and the learner, and, consequently, it is with the work of some philosophers who have concentrated their analyses on 'relationship' that this part of the discussion begins. Of these, perhaps the most well known in adult education is Martin Buber, after whom the adult education institute of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem is named, although there are many other eminent philosophers whose work is important to this discussion.

Buber, in a number of major works, explored the idea of relationship, especially in *I and Thou* and *Between Man and Man*. In *I and Thou* he (1959) explored the idea of personal relationship, as opposed to I-It relationships. He might also have, but did not, postulate a third form of relationship, I-Group relationship, since there are many occasions, especially in education, where individuals are confronted with a group, or an agglomeration of individuals. While such interaction might be regarded as impersonal, it is not the same as trying to interact with a tree, so that it must be seen as a form of personal relationship.

For Buber, the personal relationship is conducted at three levels -- with living beings, with individual persons and with spiritual beings;

each of which could be expanded upon here but only the second of these is relevant to the present discussion. People enter personal relationships through direct experience, usually because they share the same space at the same time and through so doing they have opportunity to interact with each other during which time they share a mutual bond. Before a relationship is formed, I exist in my world and the Other is a stranger, a significant idea since the stranger is free (Levinas, 1991: 39) over whom I have no power. When I enter relationship with the Other it is usually through the medium of language in the first instance, although relationship is more than an exchange of words. When I and the Other are face to face, the distance between the Stranger and me recedes and some form of bond begins to be created, but the very formation of that bond impinges upon the freedom which is the prerogative of the Other. At the same time, my own freedom in respect to the Other is curtailed. The bond's existence, however weak, signifies that I am prepared to forego some of my freedom in order to enter a relationship. This relationship may be only for a brief period of time, although there is potentiality for it to continue beyond the first interaction.

I am able to enter such a relationship with the Other for whatever period of time it exists because of our common humanity. Where there is no humanity, the relationship is of necessity an I-It one. Relationships with a group, because all its members are human beings, share many of the same characteristics as with the Other but they tend to develop the bonds of community rather than those of the more exclusive personal relationship. (The exclusive personal relationship always puts at risk the community since it has the power to fragment the group.) The potentiality of individual personal relationships always exists in the educational situation. Herein lies a fundamental truth, when the I-Thou relationship is formed the Stranger, Or the group member, becomes a person with whom I, as a person, can share a human bond. My personhood can only be realised in relationship with another person -- or as Buber (1959: 18) put it, 'In the beginning is relationship', and MacMurray (1961: 17) suggested 'the Self is constituted by its relation to the Other'. Elsewhere, MacMurray (1961: 24) claimed that 'the idea of an isolated Agent is self-contradictory. Any Agent is necessarily in relation to Other. Apart from this essential relationship he [sic] does not exist'.

As the relationship becomes established, certain patterns of interaction begin to appear and it is these which curtail freedom. Sociologists call these norms and mores and some scholars, such as Heller (1988), wrongly regard these as the foundation of ethics, although it must be recognised that values, both moral and immoral, are manifest within norms and mores. Like the case studies, norms may not reflect the morality of the interaction for a number of reasons, including the fact that the norms of modernity were shown above to be morally flawed in certain situations. Additionally, if there is an unequal power between the actors the patterns of interaction may reflect the selfish desires of the more powerful actor even though they

may not be presented to the less powerful or even to the general public, in this manner. Hence, it appears that the actual location of morality lies with the intention of the actors rather than with the behaviour itself. One of the problems with this is that individuals can claim that they had good intentions, even though their actions had unfortunate outcomes and, in other situations, bad intentions can produce a good outcome -- but in these latter situations the morality underlying the action has to be questioned. Consequently, ethics is not an empirical science! It is grounded in human intention, wherein the morality of action lies.

It is in a common humanity that the foundations of arguments for ethics lies and in the formation of the relationship in which personhood may be realised rests the practicalities of ethics. Indeed, Levinas (1991: 43) argues that ethics arise when an individual's spontaneity is inhibited by the presence of Other, and if this position is accepted then teaching must always be seen to be an occupation grounded in the moral debate. (He actually regards the bond that is established between the Self and the Other, the I-Thou relationship, as religion and MacMurray develops his discussion in a similar manner with a discussion of the celebration of communion, although this point will not be developed further here.) However, it is clear that in the potentiality of personal relationship itself lies the basis of any discussion of the nature of ethical value. MacMurray (1961:116) would agree with this analysis and he claimed that the 'moral rightness of an action ... has its grounds in the relation of persons'.

It is significant that whatever the relationship, whoever the people and whatever the historical time, this argument still applies. It is for these reasons that it can be claimed that the basis of moral value is that it is universalisable. It may thus be seen why Kant claimed that values had to be generalisable in this manner, which is implicit in MacMurray's (1961: 122) claim that:

To act rightly is ... to act for the sake of the Other and not of oneself The Other... always remains fully personal; consequently its objectives must be the maintaining of positive personal relations between all agents as the bond of community.

The underlying point here is that the intention behind the action is some form of care, or concern, for the Other. It is maintained that such an intention is never wrong in itself except when the desire to care for one Other may put many others at risk, and this illustrates the distinction between the I-Thou and the I-Group relationship. Clearly in this instance, there is a major ethical debate about putting one's loved ones before unknown Others, or the teacher devoting more effort to favoured learners than to the class as a whole. Teachers must be concerned for all those with whom they work and act for their own sake rather than the teachers' own self-interest. At the same time teachers interact with all the class individually, so that there is both an I-Group interaction and a potential I-Thou relationship with each individual member of the class. Since these are both personal in nature, the I-Thou relationship will constitute the basis of the

following analysis and its significance for the I-Group relationship will be discussed in the conclusion.

3. Ethical Implications of Teachers and Learners in Relationship

It is clear from the above discussion that underlying the teaching and learning relationship should be an intention to care for the Other and that care is demonstrated through the educational process. In the first instance in this analysis, the I will be the teacher in relationship with both the Thou and the Group, but this does not exclude the individuals in the Group seeking to play the same role in relationship with the teacher and, indeed, with each other since the group itself constitutes a moral community. Part of the intention of the teacher should be in trying to establish the climate where such relationships are encouraged. However, for the purpose of this analysis the I is the teacher and the Thou, or Other, a student.

The potentiality of the teacher-learners relationship is created by the fact that the interaction occurs at the same time and in the same space -- the classroom or lecture theatre, for instance. There is a sense with a new class that a lot of strangers come together in a common space, so that there are potentially many I-Thou relationships, but they must be made freely. It may be seen, therefore, that the class is not only potentially a group, by virtue of its becoming a group it becomes a moral community.

Underlying both the moral community and the teacher-learners relationship are elements of the personal and it is upon these that the conclusions of the preceding argument must focus. Three such issues constitute the heart of the remainder of this enquiry. They are constituent issues in any understanding of human interaction -- the students' autonomy, authenticity and personhood, and each will be discussed separately.

Autonomy

It was pointed out in the above discussion that the essence of the process of forming relationships means that I am prepared to curtail my freedom and the Other is prepared to do likewise. The I has to reach out to the Thou, with concern for the Other being the only intention underlying the action. Paradoxically, it is the teachers who control the space of the classroom but the teachers do not and cannot control the learners, and if they try to do the latter they are likely to fall into the trap of seeking to exercise power for their own self-interest rather than out of concern for the learners. If the relationship is to be created, it must be a free process and it is only through the exercise of that freedom that the autonomy of the participants can be retained. I and Thou have both freely to be prepared to forego a degree of freedom so that care can be exercised.

Language lies at the heart of relationship for being open to the Other is to be open to conversation with the Other (Levinas, 1991: 51) or as Buber writes it is about a dialogical relationship. Such a conversation

is itself the sign of an ethical interaction and Levinas (1991:51) regards the conversation as itself a process of teaching. He goes on: Teaching is not reducible to maieutics (maieutics is the Socratic mode of teaching by drawing out knowledge from within an individual -- author); it comes from the exterior and brings me more than I contain. In its non-violent transitivity the very epiphany of the face is produced.

Teaching, then, occurs through any open conversation in a relationship of caring during which ideas are shared freely and it is within a similar context that the teaching and learning relationship in education should be created. Teachers should share their knowledge, skills and ideas through conversation, or in a style that enables conversation to begin in the process of sharing, but in the conversation learners also share their knowledge, skills and ideas with the teachers and with each other. To stifle the learners, through a teacher monologue, is to prevent the I from gaining what the Other can bring to the relationship, and this can destroy the educative relationship in which care and concern for persons is manifest face to face.

Only through recognising that the actors in the I-Thou relationship have freely chosen to forego some of their autonomy for the period of the relationship can such a conversation occur and, paradoxically, it is then that both I and Thou retain freedom. I's control of the space of the classroom is such that I do not seek to control the Other, only to reach out to the Other in this space that I control out of concern for the Other.

Authenticity

There is no agreement among philosophers as to what is an authentic person: three different approaches can be detected (see *Jarvis*, 1992): the Polonian, the Dadist and the interactionist. Polonius said to his son 'To thine own self be true' whilst the Dadist claims that the only requirement for authenticity is that an individual's action and commitments should 'issue from spontaneous choices, unconstrained by convention, opinion or his own past' (Cooper, 1983: 10). Before discussing the third position, it must be noted that both of these positions revolve around self-concern. They are both individualistic and take individual freedom to its limits, so that they provide no opportunity for the Other to enter into relationship with the I and there can be no manifestation of concern for the Other. They are, therefore, immoral positions reflecting the morality of the age but should not be adopted in the teaching and learning relationship.

It is important for educators of adults to recognise this since both 'strong' persons who know their own minds and those 'whose behavior is not easily predictable' (Rogers, 1969: 225) fall into this category. For Carl Rogers, the end of life is to be the self that one truly is, and as such his position is a statement of self interest and in respect to teaching and learning it is fatally flawed. Both of these arguments for authenticity reflect a position which does not enable the highest moral values to be manifest.

Contained within the above critiques lie some of the problems in defining authenticity: individuals have to be true to themselves and free to act or else they become subservient to others but this freedom and emphasis on the self excludes the Other from I's immediate ambit of significance. Too much emphasis on the Other and I's justifiable concern for selfhood disappears under the demands of the Other. There is an ambivalence about authenticity that is captured in Taylor's (1991:66-67) endeavours to define it: on the one hand it is about being free to be creative, constructive, original and free to question the power that others impose upon the self but, on the other hand, being open to others and dialogical. The authentic person must both be free to enter relationships and to terminate them if it is necessary, but the decision to do the latter must also be made in the light of concern for the Other and it is here that some of the ambiguity of authenticity lies. That I should act out of concern for the Other is not doubted but at what point does I act out of concern for self and to the detriment of the Other is the question. Perhaps the concern for the Other should never die and so the I should always be concerned for the Thou. For so long as the relationship is vibrant it will be a teaching and learning relationship and both I and Thou will find satisfaction within it. In these cases I should not wish to terminate such a relationship but when that dynamism disappears then individuals might wish to dissociate themselves from each other, although in such sad situations the concern for the Other should never die.

Following Taylor, the teacher should encourage learners to be authentic -- that is to encourage creative, constructive and original thought, and to question the established rules and principles but the teacher has also to encourage learners to be open and dialogical. In a sense, the teacher should endeavour to provide a situation in which learners can realise themselves as different and as individuals in relationship, rather than to mould learners to be either like themselves or like some other idealised picture of the learners that they wish to produce. Kidd (1973: 306-307) has captured this philosophy in his decalogue for teachers:

1. Thou shalt never try to make another human being exactly like thyself; one is enough.
2. Thou shalt never judge a person's need, or refuse your consideration, solely because of the trouble he causes.
3. Thou shalt not blame heredity nor the environment in general people can surmount their environments.
4. Thou shalt never give a person up as hopeless or cast him out.
5. Thou shalt try to help everyone become, on the one hand, sensitive and compassionate, and also tough minded.
6. Thou shalt not steal from anyone his rights or responsibilities for determining his own conduct and the consequences thereof.

7. Thou shalt honour anyone engaged in the pursuit of learning and serve well and extend the discipline of knowledge and skill about learning which is our common heritage.
8. Thou shalt have no universal remedies nor expect miracles.
9. Thou shalt cherish a sense of humor which may save you from becoming shocked, depressed, or complacent.
10. Thou shalt remember the sacredness and dignity of thy calling and, at the same time, 'thou shalt not take thyself too damned seriously'.

To do less than encouraging the learners to establish their own authenticity is to fall short of the high ideals of teaching, but the danger lies in adopting an understanding of authenticity that enables the self to grow and develop at the expense of the Other.

Personhood

Teaching and learning is a dialogue in which the teacher is concerned for the learner -- the I is concerned for the Thou. But as Buber (1959: 34) makes clear 'he who lives with it alone is not a man'. It is only in relationship that the Thou becomes a person -- an I, and then the possibility of inter-subjective dialogue becomes possible. It is the person with whom the teachers interact and the purpose for their interaction lies in the dialogue -- the teaching and learning. Clearly in that dialogue teachers have a duty to ensure that in as much as they are able that which is considered to be correct knowledge, skills, attitudes, and so on constitute the subject of the dialogue. But the person is also being developed through this interaction -- a development that continues until the end of life -- for persons are centres of consciousness. Persons develop by having a greater variety of experiences and richer interaction with others, and this must be one of the fundamental aims of education. Indeed, Paterson (1979: 17) claimed that 'education is the development of persons as independent centres of value whose development is seen to be an intrinsically worthwhile undertaking'. While it would not be claimed here that the undertaking is intrinsically worthwhile, it is maintained here that it is worthwhile because it emerges from a concern for the Other that can only be realised through relationship. The person is, therefore, more important than the content of the dialogue and personhood more important than correct knowledge, although this rather stark dichotomy does not do justice to a reality where both are possible!

Conclusions

It may be seen from this discussion that the manner through which teachers interact with learners is probably more important than the actual teaching methods employed. This does not relegate method to the sidelines but it does point to the fact that underlying the 'correct' teaching technique to be employed is the value of the interaction which is something of even more significance. However, concern with

issues of human relationships in teaching and learning has not constituted a major factor in the preparation of educators of adults.

While this discussion has assumed 'I' to be the teachers and 'Thou' the taught, the fact that the learners are adults means that the learners can be the 'I' and the teachers the 'Thou'. In this sense there is a possibility of mutual relationship which becomes the moral responsibility of both parties to achieve, something which is impossible with children's education because children are still in the early processes of their development. The education of adults should, therefore, epitomise these moral values, while children's education should endeavour to develop them in the learners.

From this analysis it may be seen that the teaching and learning relationship should also embrace moral values which are contrary to those which are dominant in contemporary Western society. But it is significant at this time that there are considerable pressures being exerted by governments to make education conform to market values - - the values of transaction -- while the values underlying education are those of interaction. Education must endeavour to resist the pressure being exerted upon it at the present time in Western society, since its interactive processes are more profound than those of a transaction in a market place.

I and Thou interact out of concern for each other and through which both are developed as human persons. Such an interaction can only occur if teachers use the space that they control to facilitate the human interaction. Teaching adults is, therefore, an invitation to explore human relationships and education is itself a humanistic process. Above all, being a teacher provides an opportunity to facilitate human becoming, and so teaching and teachers must be prepared to respond to the current social pressures and retain the ethic of concern for persons that forms the very essence of education itself.

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