Virtue Ethics and Moral Education
David Carr & Jan Steutel (Eds), 1999
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xvii + 263 pp.
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This is an important book for philosophy of education and for moral education. If philosophers of education have expressed an interest in virtue ethics 'it is not entirely clear that current interest in the virtue approach to moral education has been attended by widespread appreciation of the philosophical status and logical character of the associated philosophical perspective of virtue ethics' (Carr & Steutel, p. 4). The editors' intentions in producing this book are twofold: to become clearer about the philosophical claims of virtue ethics; and to try and distinguish different ways in which moral education may be held to be implicated in the development of virtues. To assist them in these aims they have assembled 17 papers from themselves and a group of 13 other distinguished philosophers and educators.

In their introduction the editors provide an account of virtue ethics designed to distinguish it from de-ontological and utilitarian approaches to ethics. They regard virtue ethics as theoretically basic to a conception of moral education and attempt to provide a coherent and systematic account of virtues as a condition of any virtues approach. This is done by a narrowing down of an initial definition of a virtue approach 'that it takes moral education to be concerned simply with the promotion of virtues' (p. 4) to preclude covering too much moral ground. They define virtue ethics so as to exclude Kantian and utilitarian accounts of the virtues, seeing virtue ethics as aretaic rather than deontic. 'Aretaic' is derived from the Greek word for excellence, 'arete'. Aretaic predicates such as 'good' and 'bad', 'admirable' and 'deplorable' are said to differ from deontic predicates such as 'right' and 'wrong', 'obligatory', 'deplorable', etc. They point out, following Nicholas Dent (ch. 2), that deontic appraisals 'incline to a quasi-legal construal of moral imperatives as externally imposed demands or unwelcome constraints' (p. 8). Aretaic judgements are treated as basic or primary in relation to deontic judgements and deontic judgements and predicates at best are seen as derivative or reducible to aretaic ones. There is said to be a strong logical version and a weaker ethical version of such priorities. Finally they say that virtue ethics may take the form of agent ethics where aretaic judgements about agents are basic, act ethics, where actions are basic and, finally, hybrid ethics where agents and actions are basic (p. 11). Eamon Callon (ch. 13), however, appears to offer a deontic account of virtues in that the role he accords to virtues seems grounded in a deontic ethics of obligation.

Following the editors' introduction the next three chapters, Part 2—Nicholas
Dent, Nancy Sherman and Joseph Dunne—explore general issues. Dent looks at virtues and teleological accounts of ethics, Sherman at character development in relation to Aristotelian virtue, and Dunne at virtue and learning.

The next three chapters in the book are devoted to exploring types of virtues. James Wallace (ch. 6) explores the virtues of benevolence and justice, Michael Slote considers self and other regarding virtues (ch. 7) and Randall Curren discusses moral and intellectual virtues.

In Part 4 Bonnie Kent explores an Aristotelian thesis on the unity of the virtues (ch. 8). Jan Steutel, starting from what R.S. Peters had called the ‘virtues of a higher order’, characterised by such traits as perseverance, determination, consistency and courage, talks of the virtues of will-power with core traits of persistence, endurance and resoluteness (ch. 9). David Carr’s paper on weakness of the will, that ‘most intractable of philosophical problems’, completes the section (ch. 10).

John Haldane (ch. 11) explores again the relative priority of intention, act and purpose from what he calls a third way (p. 156) from the position of virtue ethics, character. Paul Crittenden (ch. 12) returns again to Kohlberg’s theory of moral development and, in particular, his ‘discrediting’ of Aristotle’s bag of virtues or Boy Scout approach to morality (p. 170). Eamon Callan discusses liberal virtue claiming that it ‘is the genuine article’ (p. 184).

In the final section the papers become more explicitly educational. Joel Kupperman argues that even if Kant and the utilitarians were offering something like computer software what is still needed is good character and that which gives value and reliability to an entire life. Ben Spiecker concerns himself with early moral education and whether allegedly non-rational training and habituation are important to the formation of the virtues. In Chapter 16 Kenneth Strike raises questions about the effect of liberalism’s privatising of human flourishing because of its insistence on a plurality of traditions and the reluctance in public schools to focus on other than moral content that has public standing.

In the final chapter the editors turn to the virtue approach to moral education and identify some areas of pedagogical importance (pp. 252–253). They are concerned by a failure in philosophical ‘virtue-theoretical dispatches’ that education and moral education in particular have been ignored. This in spite of the attention given to it by ‘all great moral philosophers’ (p. 241). They attribute this to a ‘a surprising dearth of contemporary educational philosophical work on virtue theory’ and the failure of such theoretical philosophical work to impact on processes of moral development (loc. cit.). They lament the fact that twentieth-century research and enquiry into moral development has been left to the psychologists and their competing theories.

There are two points here and they should not be run together. The first is that psychologists have dominated in research and theoretical work, with no great consensus, on the processes of moral education. With the exceptions of such as John Wilson and R.S. Peters this is probably correct. But this does not imply that a virtues approach is what is needed, though it does suggest that educational philosophers should take more interest in those theoretical matters. At a time when values education seems to be high on educational agendas world-wide (for whatever
reason) it is important that educational philosophers should become more active in moral education. Whether virtues education is to be the chosen path is, however, another matter.

This is an important book for educational philosophy and moral education. It is, however, quite theoretical philosophically and might have profited from more attention to the educational aspects of a virtues education. No doubt the philosophical aspects must be dealt with and that the book does well.

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The Aims of Education
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This book, edited by Roger Marples, is a new collection of essays on the aims of education (with the possible exception of Marples’ own paper, a draft of an earlier published paper). The authors comprise a group of well-known, if not distinguished, philosophers of education from Europe (including Britain), North America, Australia and South Africa. Many of the essays, within the liberal tradition, are concerned with the promotion of autonomy as an educational aim. This in spite of Kevin Harris’ opening essay which notes that ‘education’ ‘is a changing, contested and often highly personalised, historically and politically contested concept’. Nevertheless Robin Barrow, Peter Gilroy, Roger Marples, Richard Pring, Ken Strike, James Walker, John White and Christopher Winch, in particular, pursue the topic of autonomy as an educational aim.

But autonomy takes different forms within the volume and is not the sole preoccupation of the contributors. David Carr is concerned with curriculum, Penny Enslin with national identity, Morwenna Griffiths with social justice, William Hare, and Jan Steutel and Ben Spiecker, with critical thinking, Paul Hirst with social practices, and Richard Pring with the teaching of values. John White is quite critical of the ways in which autonomy is tracked out in the volume, Kevin Harris asks whose aims of education should be realised and Paul Standish explores the possibility of education without aims.

Robin Barrow, for example, is surely correct in pointing out that the question of what our educational aims should be is of critical importance, yet is widely disparaged (p. 15). In these days of neoliberal performativity (Lyotard, 1984) he is surely correct. In these days of performativity, of rational planning invaded by technicism (Standish, p. 41), there may be fixed aims imposed from without, or there may even be no such aims of education at all. Either way there may only be schools with technical problems to be solved by an emphasis on skills, competencies, efficiency
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and accountability. Ultimately this is to replace ends talk with means talk. Barrow would disagree then with Harris in attempting to elucidate aims of education as an ideal, as an account of the perfectly educated person. I agree with Barrow and the writers in this volume that philosophers of education must return to the topic of aims, but without fixing or stifling education and its freeing activity (Dewey, 1916). But how that is to be done philosophically is another matter.

John White occupies a privileged position in the volume because he was allotted the brief of commentating freely on the chapters of the other contributors. White, starting from the proposition that a defensible liberalism requires ‘an attachment to personal autonomy’ (p. 185), questions his co-authors on their commitment to ‘this autonomy aim’. He critiques Harris for not making clear what philosophers should be doing in ‘theorising the empirical’, Barrow, essentially for ‘aristocratic pronouncements’, Standish for leaving the aims of education as being ineffable (p. 187), Strike for opening up the possibility of indoctrination, and so on. His summing up of his co-authors’ positions is somewhat testy as it seems that he is ‘not sure what to make of ... these ... arguments’. Perhaps his comment that ‘there is as yet no consensus about what liberalism is or what educational aims would be in line with it’ (p. 195) is a fair summary of both his position and the book. That liberalism is a far from coherent set of principles is scarcely a new idea. Nor is the idea that it provides a fertile ground for critiquing other allegedly liberal views, especially neo-liberalism. But that is of course liberalism’s strength.

The problem for philosophers of education is how to return to or take up afresh the topic of aims in education without returning to some of the sterile debates that bedevilled philosophy of education in the 1960s and 1970s. Some of the authors in the volume are well aware of this difficulty and are deeply critical of the analytic approach to philosophy of education that underlie those earlier debates (e.g. Gilroy). Nevertheless, in general, this collection remains within an analytic mode with scant recognition of the advent of poststructuralist thought not only in philosophy, but also in the social sciences that impinge upon education. This is perhaps unfortunate but it compares unfavourably with the approach to these issues concerning poststructuralism adopted by Blake et al. (1998).

In particular, given that much of the volume is concerned with the notion of autonomy, it might be thought that poststructuralist writing might have been fortuitously mined to problematise the concept of autonomy itself, particularly in relation to education. This does not happen anywhere in the book. Winch, for example, distinguishes between a minimal and a strong sense of autonomy, between being able to lead an ‘independent life as adults ... in a developed society’ including the questioning of some of the values of that society and ‘the ability to formulate and carry out a life plan’ (pp. 74ff.). But whether autonomy itself, construed in either sense, involves freedom and independence, or possibly mere tutelage, is not raised. Of course underlying autonomy is a notion of the self as being able to think and act autonomously. Only Walker raises substantive questions about the self and the development of reason (pp. 112-121). But he does not turn for example to Michel Foucault who has critiqued notions of the self and how the self is constituted, in part by the social sciences, so that people believe that they are free, or autonomous.
Foucault argues they may well not be as free as they think they are (see further, Marshall, 1996), and have been constituted as autonomous in part in the cause of governmentality. Thus they may remain in tutelage according to Foucault.

This is not to say that poststructuralism is totally ignored for there are indexed references to Derrida (1), Foucault (1), and Lyotard (2—not indexed)! But these are in passing, at best, and their views are not adopted or utilised as central portions of discussions and arguments. Nor could I find any reference at all to Nietzsche, though David Cooper’s book on Nietzsche is listed in the bibliography. But Nietzsche is not indexed. (There is a number of problems with page numbers in the index.) As an educator, and as a person attempting to transcend good and evil, Nietzsche had much to say on these issues but he is totally occluded. This silence seems to this reviewer to be all rather myopic.

Nevertheless, within those constraints, this is an important and worthwhile book.

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Working the Ruins—Feminist Poststructural Theory and Methods in Education
Elizabeth A. St. Pierre & Wanda S. Pillow (Eds), 2000
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The necessity to move beyond modern notions of disciplinariness to ‘the transdisciplinary project’, has in part developed out of the characterisation, by Readings, of the University as a ‘ruined institution’. The Academy finds its ivory tower in rubbles, with its societal currency challenged by the media and entertainment industries (‘“Supermodels” Save the Fur Seal—captured on film!, a close friend says, ...’), and its institutional value ‘reduced to a technical ideal of performance within a discourse of “excellence” ’ (Peters, 1996, 1998, p. 7). Peters cites Klein (1998) on the transdisciplinary project which, ‘dwell(ing) in the ruins’, has developed through, and responded to, these challenges:

Gibbons, et al. (1994) identify a fundamental change in the ways that scientific, social, and cultural knowledge are being produced. The elemen-
tal traits are complexity, hybridity, non-linearity, reflexivity, heterogeneity, and transdisciplinarity. The new mode of production is 'transdisciplinary' in that it contributes theoretical structures, research methods, and modes of practice that are not located on the current disciplinary or interdisciplinary maps. (Peters, 1998, pp. 20–21)

Within the ruins of humanism and education, the 'twilight of foundationalism', new spaces interconnect to new planets to discover and explore new and multiple discourses to challenge dominant forms of knowledge. In Working the Ruins—Feminist Poststructural Theory and Methods in Education the developing theories generally, and loosely, related to feminism and poststructuralism are given a thorough working over as to what relationships do and can reposition the academy, academics, students and the academic subject(s) with the confidence of inspiring new reflexivities and new possibilities in 'different worlds' (p. 1).

The editors, Elizabeth A. St. Pierre and Wanda S. Pillow, establish that they '... are working in and out of (a relationship) as feminist and poststructural, a relationship that gestures toward fluid and multiple dislocations and alliances' (p. 3) with due acknowledgement given to the difficulties inherent in using terms such as feminist and poststructuralist which are, by (a) definition, fluid and multiple, and contestable as evidenced within the chapters of Working the Ruins. The relationship between the two is one which entertains both convergences and divergences while supporting the '... seemingly common goal of redefining the subject' (Leach, p. 224).

In this attention to the subject the educational disciplines are to be 'troubled', with an editorial acknowledgement of Michael Peters' Nietzsche, Poststructuralism and Education: after the subject (1997)—the methodologies with which the humanist subject 'exists' are to be deconstructed, new methods of research, data collection, textual presentation to be envisaged and practised (pp. 9–10).

The multiplicity of the content in Working the Ruins makes reviewing it highly problematic in itself. Questions arise such as where to begin, how to end, and of course how is the middle going to relate to all this? Would it be more appropriate to use asides, to layer texts, to employ fiction and irony, be playful and 'gossip' in order to present images, feelings, ideas regarding the development of new academic discourses. Reviewing the book raises concerns as to how to establish the reviewer's relationship with the subjects, the authors, the discourses. Is the reviewer to remain ambiguous, academic, supportive, critical, impartial? Should a book review become somewhat autobiographical? Clarification of these ramblings, or ru(m)inations, necessitates attention to the tropes emanating from the 'ruins'.

Questions of textual format and relations are raised in chapters by Wendy Morgan, on hypertext; and Laurel Richardson, on the production of academic authority. Issues of discursive style are developed by St. Pierre, on the search for new spaces within and around which different relations can be established with and through the reader; Mary Leach on the dangers of neglecting 'Othered' discourses; Erica McWilliam on the absence of play within academia; and Bronwyn Davies on fictional writing and the repositioning of the subject.
Revisiting ethnographic research methodologies is central to the chapters by Patti Lather and Donna E. Alvermann. The use of rhizoanalysis, for Alvermann, opens new 'entryways' while Lather troubles her own epistemologies and methodologies in searching for new forms of discourse, new challenges to existing knowledge. Deborah P. Pritzman discusses the impact expectations of ethnographic seamlessness has on research of subjects whose experiences are not ordered chronologically, thereby suggesting the multiple experiences of time generates readings beyond systematic narrations of experience.

Chapters by Kate McCoy and Pillow contest cultural expectations regarding the teenage pregnant body, for Pillow, and the perceptions of cultural difference, for McCoy. For Pillow the body becomes a 'site of deconstruction toward an understanding of the paradox of how social structures and modes of representation simultaneously "form and deform" women' (pp. 200–201); while McCoy advocates the use of 'network(s) of intelligibility' to encourage student teachers to become 'inquiners and strategizers' (pp. 237–238).

The lived experience of the marginal in relation to the increased popularity of poststructuralism and postmodernism with academia generally connects the chapters by Sofia Villenas, Lubna Nazir Chaudhry and Patricia Hill Collins.

An articulation of the ways in which women of color have lived the postmodern aesthetics of an oppositional consciousness (Sandoval, 1991) ... and of claiming space and place from the margins (hooks, 1984; Perez, 1991) can help us be reflexive and critical about how and why we take up the politics we do and why we evoke particular regimes of truth, such as spirituality and faith (Villenas, p. 76).

Villenas challenges feminist theory which marginalises 'the mundane and the ordinary' and constructs 'an almost grand narrative of "feminist" living' (pp. 80, 87) while Chaudhry relates three experiences which challenge aspects of her identity (as a Pakistani, a Muslim, an American, a feminist and an academic), and the fluid nature of her relationship with these terms in varying contexts.

Collins, likening postmodernists to Albert Memmi's 'colonizers who refuse' (colonists who reject their status), asserts that the crisis of identity which occupies postmodern thought reflects the crisis of identity which is lived by academics whose status has become troubled. The crises of postmodernism have little relevance or use to those outside academia, and post-methodologies, specifically the focus on micro-politics, and 'overemphasizing hegemony and stressing nihilism', maintains injustice and potentially disempowers oppositional discourses (pp. 48–52).

Collins' notes the potential for excluded groups to use postmodern theories of decentring, difference and deconstruction while regarding, sceptically, its use by academics who enjoy hierarchical privilege. Furthermore:

The seeming fascination with identities of difference emerges in (the) practice of comparing stories of difference uprooted from ethical or political contexts. Such approaches minimize the significance of difference that are imposed from without—those resulting from oppression—and tacitly
preserve the Enlightenment assumption of a freely choosing, rational human who is now free to be different. This is the liberal rational choice model applied to the issue of identity—one can emphasize or construct the different facets of one's subjectivity as differently as one chooses. (p. 63)

It would appear, following Collins, that the postmodern/poststructuralist critiques of the autonomous, rational individual of neo-liberal governmentality, and of the disciplines which aid the construction of this subject, are in actuality reinforcing this individual through their attention to a politics of difference. Whether Collins' suggestions entertain a certain validity and academics who espouse 'poststructural' theories challenging the role of the 'university in resisting forces of cultural homogeneity which (threaten) to erode indigenous traditions in the wake of a globalisation which commodifies both word and image' (Peters, 1998, p. 11), are primarily responding to their own troubled status within academia; or whether a politics of difference does indeed contest the effects metanarratives such as the neo-liberal subject have on human existence is beyond the realms of this review; however it is clear the debate will continue until poststructuralism (accidentally) facilitates an evolution in academia amenable to oppositional discourses.

It is this desire to facilitate change which drives Working the Ruins, and is driven with a sense of the everyday—through both the reflections of personal experience, and the motivation to apply these discourses to challenge dominant discourse, grand narratives, and find the spaces in between (pp. 4-5), akin to Peters' description of transdisciplinarity:

One of its effects is to replace or reform established institutions, practices, and policies. Problem contexts are transient and problem solvers mobile. Emerging out of wider social and cognitive pressures, knowledge is dynamic. It is stimulated by continuous linking and relinking of influences across a dense communication network with feedback loops. As a result new configurations are continuously generated. (Peters, 1998, pp. 20-21)

One new configuration addressed in Working the Ruins is the book review. Davies suggests standard, 'authoritative' forms of literary criticism are defunct when applied to 'new discursive and interactive practices' in fiction (p. 181). Providing literary criticism becomes similarly problematic within an environment wherein the challenge is directed at standard academic discourse. Therefore it may be appropriate to acknowledge the contestability of this review. Issues are left untouched, disregarded, or altogether missed. Equally contestable are the decisions on how to format the review, the space (word count) given for individual chapters; chapters grouped together; or the recognition of chapters in their relation to overarching tropes of a book. Working the Ruins acknowledges that the spaces in which such potential contestation occurs characterise multiplicity, diversity and fluidity, even the '(p)oint to doing philosophy' (St. Pierre, p. 275). Within the review relations are formed between the chapters, sections, spaces within and without, the reviewers interests, academic or otherwise and associations within and without academia. The review
itself, then, whether ‘authoritative’ or not, engages with the text in ways that enables multiple readings (of a text about multiple readings).

Working the Ruins, cognisant of its challenges to dominant epistemologies and methodologies, is a text which provides moments of play, confrontation and support. The chapters, each leaving a distinct impression, combine as a single text to further motivate those who would choose to dwell within the ruins of academia and its troubled disciplines, to address and readdress relationships and technologies within and without. Working the Ruins then, offers many things to many ‘academics’, and in this sense it is well worth a read. Further to this, in a literary market glutted by self-help/discovery and personal motivational best-sellers, a reader could do a whole lot worse than look to this book for a little bit of personal discovery, and self-motivation—whatever those things are.

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