

Analytic Philosophy of Education, Then and Now

Koichiro MISAWA
Kyoto University

Abstract

Analytic philosophy of education is now a somewhat forgotten tradition of enquiry in Japan, or so it often appears. In this paper, I challenge this ignorance or indifference by highlighting the striking parallel between the historical and contemporary thinking and literature on reason, represented most clearly by the so-called London line's *Education and the Development of Reason* (1972) and David Bakhurst's *The Formation of Reason* (2011). I have no wish to claim that looking into the parallel is the only right way to give analytic philosophy of education the fuller attention it deserves. Exploring the parallel, however, offers the advantage of allowing us to recognise that reason and human rationality pervade human life and to acknowledge the importance of enquiring into education with that recognition. Questions regarding acquiring a mind at all and having the capacity to reason at all are therefore part and parcel of philosophical studies of education. Significant attention to the two overlapping threads of analytic philosophy of education reminds us of the commonsensical, but often academically overlooked, notion that the question of what it is to be a human being is inseparable from the question of what it is to become a human being. Such a philosophical-educational exploration, or 'philosophical anthropology', can be advanced most substantially when we pay due respect to the fruitful interactions between early and contemporary analytic philosophy of education without favouring one at the expense of the other.

Key words: analytic philosophy of education, reason, human nature, the London line, David Bakhurst

I. Introduction

The last fifteen years have witnessed the deaths of the founding figures of the so-called analytic philosophy of education. The eastern side of the Atlantic lost Richard Stanley Peters (1919–2011) and Paul Heywood Hirst (1927–2020); the western side lost Israel Scheffler (1923–2014).

Correspondence:

Koichiro MISAWA, Kyoto University. Email: misawa.koichiro.5i@kyoto-u.ac.jp

Many readers of this journal might see the deaths of such principal protagonists of yore as threatening the existence of, or representing the demise of, the analytic philosophy of education itself. Indeed, this classical discipline easily succumbs to caricature, especially in Japan – painted as constantly and hopelessly engaging itself in the foundationalist business of formulating high-level/foundational directives which would guide educational research and practice, through the austere but inadequate methodology of logical/conceptual analysis (cf. Carr 2004). I am highly sceptical, however, of this and many other criticisms directed at analytic philosophy of education.

In this paper, I attempt to justify my scepticism, thereby underlining the importance of giving analytic philosophy of education the attention it merits. Contrary to the standard image in Japan, and though often neglected and sometimes even maligned, analytic philosophy of education *is* surviving and even flourishing – to the point of *resurrection*. Addressing its resurrection clearly requires attention to *two* periods. One is obvious: the period of excitement and enthusiasm in the 1960s and early 1970s when Peters, Hirst and Scheffler played leading roles in establishing and solidifying the philosophy of education as an independent academic discipline, whose methods, insights and outlooks derived from analytic philosophy. The precise dating of the other period and, in fact, the existence of the resurrection itself might well be much more controversial, but I would identify the period of resurrection with the 2010s and after, taking David Bakhurst's *The Formation of Reason* (2011) as a primary point of departure for an analytic new wave.

It might be objected that no such landmark revival occurred around 2010. My insistence, critics might continue, makes it sound as though the account I provide is little more than a manifesto for a preferred history, and tendentious as a result. Only time will tell, of course, whether and how my resurrection perspective makes sense in the history of analytic philosophy of education. It is by no means my intention, however, to boldly assert that Bakhurst's book will prove to have been seminal of a whole new tradition. Nor am I intent on claiming that currently there exists a large cadre of philosophers who identify themselves as analytic philosophers of education, working towards a common goal; Bakhurst and like-minded thinkers are, unlike the London line, not developers or promoters of a new academic discipline. My aim is simply to draw attention to a clear and interesting parallel between what progenitors of analytic philosophy of education did in the heyday of the discipline and what Bakhurst and others have recently been trying to do, bringing out not just that the analytic discipline is neither moribund nor already dead but that it keeps evolving in ways that would enrich philosophy of education discourse.

The following sections provide a lens through which the *evolution* – as opposed to two separate programmes in separate periods – can be recognised. In Section II, I lay out

a historical account of the way in which (British) analytic philosophy of education took distinct shape in the 1960s and developed subsequently as a new academic discipline. As reliable commentators (e.g. Cuypers 2018) as well as some founders themselves (e.g. Hirst 1993) admit, analytic philosophy of education at that time had a rather ‘rationalist’ ring. (Those already well acquainted with the contours of the analytic paradigm may wish to skip to Section III.) In Section III, I describe why this paper omits (i) the North-American tradition of analytic philosophy of education (represented by Scheffler and Harvey Siegel, for instance) and (ii) a considerable body of work by analytic philosophers of education in the intervening period (roughly from 1980 to 2010), in favour of the remarkable similarities that contemporary analytic philosophy of education bears to early analytic philosophy of education. The account is intended to indicate that the two strands can be seen to work with so broad a conception of reason – broader than is standardly interpreted – that it informs and even permeates human life. In Section IV, after elaborating on John McDowell’s philosophical view of transformation from human animals to rational agents, a view that may not be identical with but is closely analogous to Peters’s conception of ‘education as initiation’, I look to Bakhurst’s philosophical-educational exploitation of McDowell’s transformational view. In Section V, I seek to clear the ground for fascinating future investigations into how the early and contemporary versions of analytic philosophy of education feed into each other, appreciating the centrality of education (in the broadest sense) for the human condition and thus for the human life-form. I conclude with some remarks on the distinctive character of the philosophical-educational exploration adumbrated in the preceding sections, with one caveat that calling such an exploration ‘analytic philosophy of education’ might be a misnomer – ‘philosophical anthropology’ being a better candidate.

II. The London Line and Analytic Philosophy of Education in its Heyday

British philosophy of education, also known as analytic philosophy of education, is roughly sixty years old. As the sobriquet indicates, it has its explicit origin in analytic philosophy, which appeared on the scene through what Gilbert Ryle and others called a ‘revolution in philosophy’ (Ryle, et al. 1956) during the first half of the twentieth century and has since been prevalent in many Anglophone countries and their zone of influence. The founding figures of analytic philosophy of education, often called the ‘London line’,¹

1. In his final published work, Peters recalls a description by Bernard Williams of him and his fellow analytic

successfully applied the techniques developed in such a revolutionised philosophy, in particular the methodology of logical and conceptual analysis (of the sort the so-called ‘ordinary language philosophy’ had honed), to educational problems and practices or, perhaps more accurately, to educational *concepts*,² such as learning, teaching, training, creativity, autonomy, indoctrination and punishment. The analytic paradigm came into prominence, however, not only by virtue of its method or approach, but also of a family of *substantive* conceptions of education – education understood as a distinctive epistemic and moral enterprise concerned with the promotion of mind, knowledge, understanding and rationality (Martin 2021: 98). The general climate of the analytic philosophy of education in its heyday is well epitomised by the title of the compilation edited by the central members of the London line (i.e. Peters, Hirst and Robert Dearden): *Education and the Development of Reason* (2010/1972).

By the mid-1960s, analytic philosophy of education had taken clear shape and progressed as an autonomous academic discipline. In 1962, R. S. Peters, who was already an established analytic philosopher with one co-authored book, *Social Principles and the Democratic State* (1959, with S. I. Benn) and two monographs, *Hobbs* (1956) and *The Concept of Motivation* (1958)³ as well as having been described by John White as ‘the founding father of British philosophy of education as practised in the second half of the twentieth century’ (White 2001: 118), was appointed to the Chair of Philosophy of Education at the Institute of Education, University of London.⁴ In 1964, Peters and P. H. Hirst, who, alongside Peters, played a major role in the establishment and development of the analytic philosophy of education, launched the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB), where Peters occupied the seat of Chairman from 1964 to 1975; Peters was also the editor of the society’s annual conference *Proceedings* and its successor the *Journal of Philosophy of Education* from 1966 to 1982. In 1966, Peters published his ground-breaking *chef d’oeuvre* in the philosophy of education, *Ethics and*

philosophers of education as the ‘khaki regulars from Malet Street’ (Peters 1983: 36). The London line dominated the subject, at least during the decade of 1965–1975 (ibid.). The majority of philosophers of education during this period, who tried, along with Peters, to bring about a revolutionary break with the past styles of philosophy of education, were based in, or had intimate connections with, the Department of Philosophy of Education at the London Institute, which itself, under Peters’s influential leadership, expanded rapidly to become the largest in the world. In addition to Peters and Hirst, the London line included, among others, Robert Dearden, R. K. Elliot, David Cooper and John White (Cuypers and Martin 2013: 6).

2. Thanks to John White for this point.

3. In addition, Peters published *Authority, Responsibility and Education* (1959), whose first edition was based on his talks delivered mainly on the Home Service and Third Programme of the BBC between April 1956 and January 1959. Its revised edition (1973) incorporates his further work in the decade that followed, and it is this revised edition that was reprinted in 2015 by Routledge.

4. Peters was the second Chair of Philosophy of Education at the London Institute, preceded only by Louis Arnaud Reid, who took office in 1947 as the first Chair.

Education (Peters 1966a), whose influence can easily be perceived in the fact that that title has been adopted for the official journal of the International Network of Philosophers of Education (INPE).

In the ‘General editor’s preface’ to the first volume of the acclaimed book series *International Library of the Philosophy of Education*⁵ starting in 1965, Peters, after describing the volume as ‘the first English collection of essays on philosophy of education written from the “analytic” point of view’, proclaimed: ‘Philosophy of education has now become firmly established in England as a branch both of *educational theory* and of *philosophy*’ (Peters 2010/1965: xi, italics added). It is of crucial importance here to understand how this newly established academic discipline diverged, conceptually and substantively, from the then extant types of philosophy of education: (i) ‘principles of education’, (ii) ‘the history of educational ideas’ and (iii) ‘philosophy and education’ (Peters 2010/1966b: 62–9; Peters 2010/1983: 30–2). Peters claimed that calling (i) ‘principles of education’ philosophy of education is tantamount to ‘[making] a takeover bid for the philosopher as a kind of oracle’ (Peters 2010/1983: 32). Principles of education consisted, at their best, in ‘wisdom and aphorisms about education’ (ibid., 31), and Peters and other analytic philosophers of education neither made little of their importance, nor were they sceptical about whether they have any place at all in educational research or in the training of teachers. Nonetheless, Peters averred, and others agreed, that ‘the philosopher, *qua* philosopher, cannot formulate such principles’ (Peters 2010/1966b: 63) on the grounds that they necessarily contain *empirical* elements. And empirical speculation, as found in A. N. Whitehead’s *The Aims of Education* (1967/1929) and Percy Nunn’s *Education: Its Data and First Principles* (2009/1920), is not a task for philosophers proper; philosophers are not oracles.

The analytic conception of philosophy of education differs also from (ii) ‘the history of educational ideas’ or ‘the Great Educator’s approach’ (Peters 2010/1983: 31). On the latter conception, students in most colleges of education were taken on ‘a Cook’s tour of thinkers’ typically from Plato (*Republic*) through J. J. Rousseau (*Emile*) to John Dewey (*Democracy and Education*), mainly by historians,⁶ with the aim of relating great educators’ thought to current educational problems (Peters 1966b: 64; Peters 2010/1983: 31; Cuypers and Martin 2013: 9). Peters saw (at least some of) the ideas of the great

5. *International Library of the Philosophy of Education* comprises 24 distinguished books and essay collections, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul. Volume 1 is Reginald Archambault’s edited *Philosophical Analysis and Education* (1965), and all 24 texts were reprinted in 2010 by Routledge.

6. This was not surprising, given the fact that while ‘philosophers were not, in general, interested in the study of education’, educational psychology and the history of education were ‘most fully developed within the orbit of teacher education itself in the first half of [the twentieth] century’ (Tibble 1966: viii).

thinkers of the past as ‘the heritage’ into which every teacher ought to be initiated at some stage of their career, but regarded such initiation as ‘supplementary to and not a substitute for the philosophy of education’ (Peters 2010/1966b: 65). This historical conception does not count, according to Peters, as philosophy of education due to two main flaws. For one thing, works treated in courses of this kind were ‘works in general theory of education’; thus, those works also have components other than philosophical ones, such as ‘empirical generalizations’ (ibid.). They were thereby ‘only minimally philosophical’ (Peters 2010/1983: 31). For another, those courses seldom bear fruit unless students are given some philosophical training, without which they will be unable to critically evaluate the ideas offered; ‘*Plato Today* has to be very skilfully contrived to be effective’ (ibid., italics in original). In effect, students with no such philosophical preparations, almost inevitably, found difficulties in grasping the relevance of classical ideas to the pressing issues with which they were confronted (ibid.).

Finally, the analytic style of philosophy of education must not be conflated with the conception of philosophy of education as (iii) ‘philosophy and education’. This third conception concerns itself with drawing out and examining the ‘implications’ of ‘pure philosophy’ for education (Peters 2010/1983: 30). There were, and are, basically two motives for this conception of philosophy of education. The first is sociological or institutional. Those working in colleges or departments of education were (and are) often eager to convince their ‘pure’ colleagues in the Faculties of Arts or Philosophy Departments, who were (and are) occasionally ‘supercilious critics’, that they are genuinely and competently doing philosophy. The second, more philosophical motive derives from the belief that ‘one cannot go very far without tackling fundamental issues in logic, epistemology, and metaphysics’ (Peters 2010/1966b: 67). This ‘applied approach’ (Cuypers and Martin 2013: 9) struck Peters as quite dubious, because, in his conception, philosophy of education must start from actual problems of *education*. So, while the first two conceptions of philosophy of education from which the analytic conception sought to mark itself off were concerned with ‘many matters that are not strictly philosophical’, the third conception was ‘not concerned specifically enough with what is *educational*’ (Peters 2010/1966b: 67, italics added). Not surprisingly, therefore, Peters thought more highly of John Dewey’s writings on education (though he found them insufficiently analytic) than of D. J. O’Connor’s *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (1957), which is quintessentially analytic in style.

III. Analytic Trajectories

Analytic philosophy of education was established and prospered in the 1960s and the early 1970s as a branch both of educational theory (like educational psychology and the sociology of education) and of academic philosophy (like the philosophy of science and political philosophy). For the founding figures, ‘analytic philosophy of education’ was a pleonasm, as it were, since they believed all philosophy of education worthy of the name was analytic.

According to the generally accepted account (at least, in Japan), the excitement and enthusiasm did not last long (e.g. Miyadera 1997; Carr 2005; White 2024). From the late 1970s onwards, the analytic paradigm was subjected to serious criticism from various quarters (e.g. existentialism, phenomenology, (neo-)Marxism, neo-Aristotelianism, critical theory, multiculturalism, postmodernism and poststructuralism). This diversification of philosophical traditions and intellectual resources that contemporary philosophers of education draw on characterises the philosophy of education in the post-analytic era; the place of the analytic approach, within the discipline, is now accordingly peripheral in a recognisable sense.

This account, while not entirely without foundation, is untenable. Analytic philosophy in no way faded from the philosophy of education scene around 1980 (in the U.K. or, more broadly, in Anglophone areas). On the contrary, much philosophy of education in the ensuing decades might well have been described as ‘footnotes to Peters’⁷ in many respects, through to the end of the century and after. Many carved their own significant paths in the analytic tradition – e.g. Robin Barrow, Eric Bredo, Eamonn Callan, Emily Robertson, Hugh Sockett in North America and David Bridges, Andrew Davis, Penny Enslin, Richard Pring, Judith Suissa in the U.K., to name but a few.

But if the familiar account fails to carry conviction, would it not follow that my picture that places considerable emphasis on a close parallel between the London line and David Bakhurst also loses ground? Why not give closer consideration to the North American tradition of analytic philosophy of education? More specifically, why suppose, in relation to the London line’s conception of the development of reason, that Bakhurst’s *The Formation of Reason* has more to say about reason and rationality than Harvey Siegel’s *Educating Reason* and *Rationality Redeemed?* have to say about them?

Certainly, my description of post-Second World War English-language philosophy of education is severely partial, not least because it makes little or no mention of what

7. I owe this phrase to Paul Standish.

happened on the western side of the Atlantic, which has clearly also served its own role as a vital and leading force in the Anglophone philosophy of education. Indeed, the U.S. also witnessed the analytic turn in philosophy of education around the 1960s, advocated and promoted most notably by the American counterpart to Peters, Israel Scheffler, who is perhaps better known than his British counterpart in the world of academic philosophy today.⁸ Analytic developments in North America were undoubtedly and inarguably an essential and integral part of the development of analytic philosophy of education.

My aim is not to offer an exhaustive historical account, however. For my purposes, I opt to emphasise the analytic trajectories in the U.K. rather than giving both sides of the Atlantic equal billing. The primary reason for this is, apart from my personal commitment to British philosophy of education (as an outsider to both sides of the Atlantic), that there does seem to have been a North American tendency to address the issues of reason and human rationality in the light of *critical thinking*. The work of Harvey Siegel, a powerful successor to Scheffler, at least in terms of his analytic spirit, exemplifies this tendency. Few would, of course, deny the importance of fostering one's reasoning ability in schools or elsewhere. The ability to reason well (or better), or to think critically (or more critically), is necessary for a flourishing life. Yet the ability is often (naturally enough) associated with the ability to *step back* from situations with which one is (unreflectively) engaged. Whether the scope of reason extends beyond the ability to step back into our unreflective perceiving and acting is an issue as yet unresolved but one that needs to be addressed if we want to make sense of the character of reason and rationality and of the place they occupy in education and in human life more generally. And the question requires attention to the capacity to reason at all, including but not exclusive to the ability to step back, and this in turn necessitates attention to the nature of human beings as such, which at least some of the London line set themselves the task of considering. Largely for this reason, while fully aware that it is possible to cast, in a different context, Siegel's seminal works, such as *Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking and Education* (1988) and *Rationality Redeemed?: Further Dialogues on an Educational Ideal* (1997), as sequels to the London line's *Education and the Development of Reason* (2010/1972) and as precursors of Bakhurst's *The Formation of Reason* (2011), I highlight the likenesses and

8. Like the London line, Scheffler thought of philosophy of education as a discipline, whose methods, insights and outlooks should derive from analytic philosophy. Scheffler's inclination is well represented in, for example, his 'Toward an Analytic Philosophy of Education' (1954), *The Language of Education* (1960) and *Conditions of Knowledge: An Introduction to Epistemology and Education* (1965). The clear parallel between Scheffler and the London line was not a strange coincidence; they fed each other. For instance, Peters took advantage of Scheffler's invitation to Harvard and spent some time there as a Visiting Professor in 1961 (White 2001: 119; Cuyppers and Martin 2013: 6).

differences between the latter two.⁹

The two versions of analytic philosophy of education – one led by the London line and the other reanimated by Bakhurst and others – have much in common, especially in terms of their endeavour to develop accounts of human beings as rational animals. They share the conviction that we cannot understand how (best) to educate our children if we do not take due account of the human condition. And yet, Peters, reflecting back on the two decades after the establishment of analytic philosophy of education, deplored the lack of ‘an explicit theory of *human nature*’ (Peters 2010/1983: 33, italics added). In those days, philosophers of education were enamoured with analysing such concepts as ‘reason’, ‘autonomy’, ‘needs’, ‘interests’ and ‘learning’, but Peters was adamant that ‘they drifted on the surface with no general account of man [*sic*] and his place in the natural world and social order to anchor them’ (ibid.). This is what many contemporary analytic philosophers of education are centrally concerned with, as far as I can see. One of the major issues addressed in such a new analytic philosophy of education is the question of what it is to be *distinctively human*.¹⁰ In other words, the reinvigorated analytic philosophy of education attempts to provide a fuller account of not just reason but of human nature – the latter of which Peters diagnosed as remaining largely and problematically unexplored in the analytic philosophy of education of his time.

Despite Peters’s diagnosis, however, I do not think it is the case that the issue of human nature was totally ignored for the first twenty years in the history of analytic philosophy of education. The work by the London line – in particular, Peters himself – did yield insights about human nature and the human condition. And yet it is the case that they are often only implicit and lurk in the discussions that focus on other issues, such as reason, mind and initiation. Hence, revisiting this and other neglected aspects of the ‘old’ analytic philosophy of education, with twenty-first-century eyes, deserves to be promoted and deepened. No substantial treatment has yet been offered of their affinities and tensions and of the transition between early and more recent strands of analytic philosophy of education. To embark on such a project, it is advisable to situate the line of argument advocated by the ‘new’ analytic philosophy of education *vis-à-vis* that provided by the London line. The next section is an initial effort for that.

9. I hasten to add, though, that attempts to draw a sharp line between British and American lines of development in philosophy of education are practically useless, especially in recent times. It is also noteworthy here that the agenda of research on critical thinking continues to expand, too. For a succinct account of recent scholarship in critical thinking, see Kunimasa Sato’s contribution to Misawa, Tsuchiya and Sato (forthcoming).

10. The title of Jan Derry’s recent article, ‘A Problem for Cognitive Load Theory—the Distinctively Human Life-form’ (Derry 2020), exemplifies this present-day trend.

IV. The McDowellian Preliminary to the Resurgence of Analytic Philosophy of Education

In an oft-cited passage of *Mind and World*, John McDowell claims: ‘Human beings are not [born at home in the space of reasons]: they are born mere animals, and they are *transformed* into thinkers and intentional agents in the course of coming to maturity’ (McDowell 1996: 125, italics added).¹¹ There immediately arises a familiar temptation to dismiss this claim as being ignorant or uninformed of the achievements of, say, the biological and ecological sciences (e.g. MacIntyre 1999: 60–1). There is indeed no shortage of empirical studies that seem to show that newborn human babies and at least some of the ‘mere animals’ exercise or are guided by a kind of practical reasoning – reasoning about what to do – implying that it is hubristic and anachronistically anthropocentric to suppose that rationality is the sole preserve of mature human beings.

Such an implication is ostensible, however; McDowell’s claim does not necessarily conflict with the best discoveries of today’s natural-scientific investigations. His point is that a human animal with no *second nature* becomes a human individual who is capable of responding to *reasons* with a distinctive mode of rational-conceptual intelligibility that is open to the world. It is ‘*initiation* into conceptual capacities’ (McDowell 1996: 84, italics added) that makes us inhabitants of what Wilfrid Sellars calls ‘the logical space of reasons’ (Sellars 1997/1956: 76), where its denizens are rational, not just in the sense that they can, like non-human animals, flee from danger, but also in the sense that they are, unlike non-human animals, responsive to reasons as such. McDowell claims that we need not be spooked by this transformation, for which he evokes the German idea, *Bildung* (ibid.). There is no mystery in the story, he urges, because such initiation is a normal part of human maturation as long as we are first initiated, except in very special conditions or circumstances, into a natural *language*. McDowell writes:

In being initiated into a language, a human being is introduced into something that already embodies putatively rational linkages between concepts, putatively constitutive of the layout of the space of reasons, before she comes on the scene. ... [A] natural language, the sort of language into which human beings are first initiated, serves as a repository of tradition, a store of historically accumulated wisdom about what is a reason for what. The tradition is subject to reflective modification by each generation that inherits it. (McDowell 1996: 125–6)

11. Compare Peters’s ‘No man is born with a mind’ (Peters 1965/1964: 102).

Through this initiation into the space of reasons, an individual human being acquires a *mind* – i.e. the capacity to think and act intentionally at all, the capacity that enables her to live her life in the world (ibid.). McDowell’s line of argument is strikingly analogous to what Peters insists in ‘Education as Initiation’: ‘To have a mind is not to enjoy a private picture-show or to exercise some inner diaphanous organ; it is to have an awareness differentiated in accordance with the canons implicit in all these inherited traditions [constituted by distinctive forms of knowledge such as science, history, mathematics, religious and aesthetic appreciation as well as the practical types of knowledge involved in moral, prudential, and technical forms of thought and action]. “Education” marks out the processes by means of which the individual is initiated into them’ (Peters 1965/1964: 103).

The picture of initiation into the logical space of reasons is key to apprehending the way in which McDowell painstakingly denies the prevailing view, which he calls ‘modern naturalism’ (e.g. McDowell 1996: 85), the view that our being natural animals is profoundly at odds with the distinctive character of our mindedness, namely with the *sui generis* character of our responsiveness to reasons as such. The seeming oddity and the threat of incoherence disappear once we acknowledge that such initiation equips us to acquire rational powers by means of which we can live a certain kind of life – a distinctively human life. Human life is our natural way of being, which is ‘already shaped by meaning’ (McDowell 1996: 95), but this ‘natural’ cannot be exhausted by the *modern* conception of nature that tends, as in the natural sciences, to suppose ‘whatever is natural is as such empty of meaning’ (McDowell 2000: 107). McDowell’s corrective to this excessive domination of the modern conception of nature is to bring into view the simple ‘reminder’ that ‘our nature is largely second nature’ (McDowell 1996: 91) since ‘responsiveness to reasons is second nature to human beings’ (McDowell 2008: 225). With the notion of second nature in mind, he seeks to accomplish the overarching project of *Mind and World* and many other writings: ‘We need to recapture the Aristotelian idea that a normal mature human being is a rational animal, but without losing the Kantian idea that rationality operates freely in its own sphere’ (McDowell 1996: 85).

Obviously, the notion that human animals are transformed into thinkers and intentional agents through initiation into conceptual capacities that enable us to become able to be at home in the logical space of reasons – i.e. to live our lives in the world – has developmental and *educational* aspects and implications. McDowell is notoriously silent, nonetheless, about such dimensions (except his frequent reference to Aristotle’s story of moral education, in which, McDowell thinks, the idea of second nature finds expression). It does not mean, of course, that McDowell fails to countenance the importance of

Bildung in human life; it is rather that talk of *Bildung* in detail does not fall within the sphere of philosophical enquiry as he conceives it.

Greatly inspired by McDowell's line of argument, David Bakhurst, a former student of McDowell's at Oxford, brings illuminating the *Bildungsprozess* into focus as a genuine philosophical exploration. Extending and complementing McDowell's picture, his programme culminates in *The Formation of Reason* (2011). As he admits, Bakhurst originally did not set out to write a book in philosophy of education, but, through the influence of Jan Derry and others, the book came out as part of *The Journal of Philosophy Education Book Series*.¹² In that widely read book, he develops a socio-historical account of the human mind primarily by defending and expanding McDowell's philosophy, along with the work of thinkers on which he has extensively written, such as that of Lev Vygotsky, Evald Ilyenkov and Jerome Bruner. The broad thrust of Bakhurst's argument is that the distinctive character of human mindedness resides in our responsiveness to reasons, which is not an inborn ability but one that we normally acquire as a child through initiation, typically via the acquisition of our first language, into styles of thinking and reasoning by virtue of which we can navigate the relevant normative landscape. In the process, human children become minded beings, that is, rational agents who self-consciously appreciate reasons about what to think and do. Thus, one of the most significant educational ends is the cultivation of *autonomy*, the power to determine for oneself what to think and do in light of what there is reason to think and do. In this way, the philosophy of McDowell in general and what Bakhurst terms McDowell's "transformational view" of human development' (Bakhurst 2015: 302) in particular have been successfully brought to the attention of philosophers of education, leading to the symposium 'Second Nature, *Bildung* and McDowell: David Bakhurst's *The Formation of Reason*', which appeared in the first issue of the 50th anniversary volume of the *Journal of Philosophy of Education* in 2016.¹³

V. The Centrality of Education in Human Life: The Bakhurstian Orientation

I was – and, in fact, still am – enamoured of Bakhurst's philosophical accounts (with

12. Bakhurst, who was not originally trained as a philosopher of education (in colleges or departments of education), has taken over as Executive Editor of the *Journal of Philosophy of Education* since 2021.

13. For a good overview of the current state of the debate about the transformational view, see C. J. An (2018, esp. sections 1–3); I have also discussed each symposium contribution in Misawa (2017).

relevant empirical insights) of the process of initiation, and thought – and still think – that they have a vital bearing on the way we think about education in human life. I therefore thought *The Formation of Reason* and his subsequent writings broke new ground in philosophy of education (especially in its analytic tradition). It is not that I was unaware of Peters's well-known conception of 'education as initiation' and that that conception had been honed and amplified by the London line and subsequent generations. It is rather that I held 'initiation' in the educationally relevant context applies to two different levels and that the London line's conception is concerned, as Hirst's famous 'forms of knowledge' thesis exemplifies,¹⁴ with the *later* stage of initiation – i.e. initiation into particular knowledge domains (e.g. physics). For this stage of initiation to come about, someone who will be initiated into or participate in a particular domain of knowledge needs to have a mind at all, even if she has no knowledge or skill in the domain in question prior to the initiation or participation. Bakhurst's McDowellian conception of initiation, in contrast, focuses attention on the *earlier* stage – i.e. the very beginning of human life, a special kind of life being transformed from a merely animal mode of living. I therefore took the view that whereas the London line's conception still afforded a framework capable of examining and improving the way we consider schooling, it said little about the issue of our fundamental condition as rational beings, which Bakhurst's conception directly addressed. In effect, their difference in emphasis seemed to be vividly reflected in the titles of their representative works: the London line's edited *Education and the Development of Reason* (2010/1972) and Bakhurst's *The Formation of Reason* (2011).¹⁵ The analytic philosophy of education as the London line established and advanced it would be rejuvenated, I thought, if it incorporated the new wave of philosophical-educational interest in the human condition, human nature and the human life-form, the wave that had almost brought about a sea change in (analytic) philosophy of education by Bakhurst and like-minded philosophers (of education).

I now find the view I took – that the publication of *The Formation of Reason* inaugurated a new era in philosophy of education – rather premature and perhaps tendentious. It is true that central members of the London line were eager to engage with the *development* of reason and Bakhurst is keen, as the 2011 book title shows, to elucidate the *formation* of reason. The former members – notably Peters – did, however, give a substantial treatment of the formative period of human development without necessarily

14. For more on Hirst's forms of knowledge thesis and his later turn of focus from forms of knowledge to forms of social practices, see Misawa and Watanabe (2023) and Misawa (2023).

15. Perhaps, the two apparently different levels (of initiation into the realm of reason) can be seen to be implicit in the block quote from McDowell and the quote from Peters that follows in the previous section.

presupposing children's capacity to exercise rationality; Bakhurst has, from the 2010s onwards, taken further steps towards enriching the development of reasons. There emerges the question, then, of the extent to which, and the sense in which, the London line (especially Peters) and Bakhurst share a similar view on such fundamental elements necessary in contemplating education as mind, reason, initiation, experience, personhood, freedom, knowledge, understanding, rational autonomy, human development and liberal education. Further questions would be whether and how ideas and conceptions, especially concerning reason and human nature, developed in the twenty-first-century analytic philosophy of education, are really anything more than an echo of the insights of the traditional analytic philosophy of education; and whether and how the London line might, if we look back from the twenty-first century, have actually gone beyond what has generally been found in their work.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to pursue these issues in detail, but I want to take note, before closing, of Bakhurst's recent slight modification of his McDowellian 'transformational view' of human development.

Neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism features the concept of human nature. As Irene Liu notes, however, neo-Aristotelians have focused more on advancing 'a satisfactory naturalism of *first nature*' than on fully developing the naturalism of *second nature* (Liu 2017: 598, fn. 5, italics added). Rosalind Hursthouse, a leading proponent of that ethical naturalism, provides a vivid gloss on the basic Aristotelian idea that is supposed to lend credence to the naturalism of *first nature*: 'what human beings *are* is a species of rational, social animals and thereby a species of living things—which, unlike "persons" or "rational beings", have a particular biological make-up and a natural life cycle' (Hursthouse 1999: 206, italics in original, note deleted). Hence comes the central concept of the naturalism of first nature: 'species nature' or 'life form' (Liu 2017: 600). This line of thinking readily invites us to see the findings of natural-scientific investigations as constituting the primary part (if not the whole) of our understanding of the human condition.

Bakhurst's main project is roughly the following: he seeks to substantiate the classical view that humans are rational animals, in a way which basically agrees with a McDowellian naturalism of second nature, but whose key focus is on a *sine qua non* for a fuller realisation of the nature of the beings we are that has largely escaped the attention of McDowell and his followers: the *educational* character of the human condition. Bakhurst once liked to call this line of argument McDowell's "'transformational view" of human development', as we have seen. This view is, of course, not without its critics; for instance, Sebastian Rödl and Andrea Kern recommend conceiving of the process as

an actualisation (of potentials) rather than a transformation (e.g. Rödl 2016; Kern 2020). This is a matter of debate in contemporary philosophy of education, in the course of which Bakhurst has made some concession to the actualisation view according to which we have a single nature—i.e. human nature (e.g. Bakhurst 2016, 2020, 2021). What matters here is not to pursue and analyse the relevant arguments (with which I will engage on another occasion) but to recognise the basic thrust of his argument: the centrality of education to human nature or our life-form (Bakhurst 2021, 2023).

Many current discussions around, say, human nature, practical rationality and the formation of reason are moving on in step with recent developments in the broadly analytic tradition of philosophy (whether in a neo-Aristotelian fashion or not). In other words, new conversations between philosophers of education and ‘mainstream’ philosophers interested in education (broadly conceived) have now re-started, where education is no longer almost exclusively associated with ‘learning’ and ‘teaching’ in schools but is taken (by many, though not most, philosophers) as central and critical to the human condition.

Such new conversations have now ‘re-started’ because there was a period in which the disciplinary and institutional barriers between philosophy of education and general philosophy were far less stringent than was the case during the intervening period. The period was, of course, the 1960s and early 1970s when British philosophy of education – i.e. analytic philosophy of education – was born and advanced. The London line may not be Bakhurst’s direct intellectual ancestors, but they are, no doubt, intellectual relatives in various respects.

VI. Concluding Remarks

It is absurd to try to turn the clock back to the heyday of analytic philosophy of education – the 1960s and early 1970s. No room is left for nostalgia for the better times, economically and institutionally, that enabled its ‘heyday’. And a diverse range of philosophical traditions and intellectual resources that characterise contemporary philosophy of education may well be a sign of the health of the discipline rather than a source of misery. A sharp distinction should be drawn, however, between the fact that Anglophone philosophy of education today is no longer equivalent to the *analytic* philosophy of education and the capricious observation that it has (long) run out of steam.

In this paper, I have tried to build a case for bringing into view striking points of affinity between the work by the London line and the McDowell-derived Bakhurstian

line of philosophical-educational exploration. My attempt must not be taken as glorifying the resemblances with a halo, since such a glorification and/or a simplification might give the reader the wrong impression that during the intervening period between the two in question there did not emerge much work that seeks to answer the need for a theory of human nature, as Peters had put it. As alluded to in the third section, many analytic philosophers of education have attempted to broaden the focus of reason and human nature, even if their works frequently have not advertised themselves in those terms. But the resemblances between early and contemporary analytic philosophy of education scarcely need repeating, most vividly with respect to the formation and development of human reason and to the conceptuality that permeates human life.

Analytic philosophy of education is now a somewhat forgotten tradition of enquiry in Japan, or so it often appears. I hope I have made it explicit that this indifference constitutes a massive loss for the philosophical study of education, by demonstrating that the underlying rumour that the analytic discipline is obsolescent is not true. The advent of the recent ‘resurrection’ can stimulate renewed interest in the earlier ‘incarnation’. With today’s philosophical-educational perspective, for instance, one can read the work of Peters as concerning himself with not only later stages but also the most formative years of human development (e.g. Peters 2015/1981); hence, the familiar accusation that Peters’s concept of education is much too narrow (e.g. Martin 2011, 2020) is unwarranted. The relationship between the London line and Bakhurst (and scholars broadly aligned with him) goes the other way also. Just as the work by the latter can rekindle interest in the work by the former (with twenty-first-century eyes), so the latter work can and ought to be situated more thoroughly in the context of the history of analytic philosophy of education. This is so that we can gauge the extent to which contemporary analytic philosophy of education has moved the way forward and, *pari passu*, acknowledge the sense in which it sheds new light on the educationally fundamental issues previously discussed by classical analytic philosophers of education, such as mind, reason, nature, normativity, personhood, freedom, knowledge, understanding, rational autonomy and liberal education. (Remember that in the Introduction I wrote that analytic philosophy of education keeps *evolving*, which does not imply that newer stages are better than earlier ones.)

As the London line guards against the ‘philosophy and education’ approach (as described in the second section), the Bakhurstian line of philosophical-educational exploration is also *not* one that seeks to glean educational implications and lessons from (purely) philosophical discussions of reason, human nature and other profound issues. Rather, it is an exploration that contends that educational questions are inherent and (at

least sometimes) fundamental to these philosophical discussions. In other words, the exploration is premised on the assumption that it is utterly wrong to think that ‘What is it to be a human being?’ is a question addressed (purely philosophically) in ‘mainstream’ philosophy, whereas ‘What is it to become a human being?’ is a question addressed (more educationally) in the philosophy of education—the latter being regarded as an applied sub-branch of the former. The question of what it is to be a human being cannot adequately be approached in isolation: it entails first and foremost, or, perhaps more accurately, presupposes, the other question. The cogency of the assumption that the question of the nature of the beings that we are is a single, philosophical-educational question will become more apparent in further investigations.

One final point worthy of attention: it might not be necessary to make so much of the ‘analytic’ identity in advancing and amplifying the philosophical-educational exploration just outlined. Given that both McDowell and Bakhurst are not exactly typical analytic philosophers in that their works do not confine themselves to the narrow sense of the discipline, and that they are widely read beyond it and often hailed as bridging the analytic-continental divide or moving beyond those terms, it might well seem somewhat odd that I depict their works as being celebrated for their contributions to a revival of ‘analytic’ philosophy of education. Understood in the way I have been delineating, ‘philosophical anthropology’, as Bakhurst puts it (e.g. Bakhurst 2020, 2021), might be a better label for such philosophical human studies, although I have used the expression ‘contemporary analytic philosophy of education’ or its cognates for ease of discussion. Whatever the label, the philosophical-educational exploration as we see it will, no doubt, make a fresh contribution, together with renewed focus on the works by early analytic philosophy of education, to addressing perhaps the most difficult question throughout the entire history of the human race: what is the nature of the beings we are?

Acknowledgments

This paper is a substantially revised version of a manuscript prepared for a symposium on ‘How to Envision “Education”’ held at the 2023 annual meeting of the Japanese Philosophy of Education Society. Portions of the manuscript have appeared in *Studies in the Philosophy of Education* (written in Japanese), under the title ‘Revisiting Analytic Philosophy of Education: Reappraisals and Future Prospects’. I am grateful to the symposium organisers, Yasuo Imai and Masamichi Ueno, and to other speakers, Mika Okabe and Satoshi Tanaka. I am also grateful to David Bakhurst, Jan Derry, Paul Standish,

Keiichi Takaya and Fukutaro Watanabe for their helpful and critical comments on earlier drafts of this paper, including drafts that did not take a journal article form. Email exchanges with John White greatly aided me in describing Peters's project in the 1960s, for which I am deeply indebted. Finally, I wish to thank the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) Kakenhi [grant number JP22K02199] for financial support that enabled me to work on this project.

References

- An, C. J. (2018) 'On Learning, Playfulness, and Becoming Human', *Philosophy*, 93: 3–29.
- Archambault, R. (ed.) (2010/1965) *Philosophical Analysis and Education*. London: Routledge.
- Bakhurst, D. (2011) *The Formation of Reason*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Bakhurst, D. (2015) 'Training, Transformation and Education', *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 76: 301–27.
- Bakhurst, D. (2016) 'Response to Rödl, Standish and Derry', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 50: 123–9.
- Bakhurst, D. (2020) 'Teaching and Learning: Epistemic, Metaphysical and Ethical Dimensions—Introduction', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 54: 255–67.
- Bakhurst, D. (2021) 'Human Nature, Reason and Morality', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 55: 1029–44.
- Bakhurst, D. (2023) 'Philosophy's Blindspot'. *Aeon*, <https://aeon.co/essays/education-should-matter-to-philosophy-what-took-so-long>, accessed 18 March 2024.
- Benn, S. I. and Peters, R. S. (1959) *Social Principles and the Democratic State*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Carr, W. (2004) 'Philosophy and Education', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 38: 55–73.
- Carr, W. (2005) 'Introduction: What is the Philosophy of Education?', in W. Carr (ed.) *The RoutledgeFalmer Reader in Philosophy of Education*, pp. 1–14. London: Routledge.
- Cuypers, S. E. (2018) 'Analytic Philosophy of Education and the Concept of Liberal Education', in P. Smeyers (ed.) *International Handbook of Philosophy of Education: Volume 1*, pp. 1083–96. Cham: Springer.
- Cuypers, S. E. and Martin, C. (2013) *R. S. Peters*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

- Dearden, R. F., Hirst, P. H. and Peters, R. S. (eds) (2010/1972) *Education and the Development of Reason*. London: Routledge.
- Derry, J. (2020) 'A Problem for Cognitive Load Theory—the Distinctively Human Life-form', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 54: 5–22.
- Hirst, P. H. (1993) 'Education, Knowledge and Practices', in R. Barrow and P. White (eds) *Beyond Liberal Education: Essays in Honour of Paul H. Hirst*, pp. 184–99. London: Routledge.
- Hursthouse, R. (1999) *On Virtue Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kern, A. (2020) 'Human Life, Rationality and Education', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 54: 268–89.
- Liu, I. (2017) 'Elevating Human Being: Towards a New Sort of Naturalism', *Philosophy*, 92: 597–622.
- MacIntyre, A. C. (1999) *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*. Chicago, Ill: Open Court.
- Martin, C. (2021) 'Analytic Philosophy of Education', in A. Pagès (ed.) *A History of Western Philosophy of Education in the Contemporary Landscapes*, pp. 85–106. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Martin, J. R. (2011) *Education Reconfigured*. New York: Routledge.
- Martin, J. R. (2020) 'The Path Not Taken', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 54: 744–56.
- McDowell, J. (1996) *Mind and World*, 2nd edn. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- McDowell, J. (2000) 'Responses', in M. Willaschek (ed.), *John McDowell: Reason and Nature*, pp. 91–114. Münster, Germany: LIT.
- McDowell, J. (2008) 'Responses', in J. Lindgaard (ed.) *John McDowell: Experience, Norm, and Nature*, pp. 200–67. Malden, MA, Blackwell.
- Misawa, K. (2017) 'Humans, Animals and the World We Inhabit: On and beyond the Symposium "Second Nature, Bildung, and McDowell—David Bakhurst's *The Formation of Reason*"', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 51: 744–59.
- Misawa, K. (2023) 'Practical Rationality in Education: Beyond the Hirst–Carr Debate', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 57: 164–81.
- Misawa, K. and Watanabe, F. (2023) 'P. H. Hirst no Kyoiku Tetsugaku: Gorishugi to Jissenteki Tenkai' ('P. H. Hirst's Philosophy of Education: Rationalism and his Practical Turn'), *Tetsugaku*, 150: 59–84.
- Misawa, K., Tsuchiya, Y. and Sato, K. (forthcoming) "'Chiteki Toku" to Kyoiku wo Meguru Gendaiteki Tenkai' ('Recent Developments in Virtue Epistemology:

- Intellectual Virtues and Education'), *Kyoiku Tetsugaku Kenkyu*.
- Miyadera, A. (1997) *Gendai Igrisu Kyoiku Tetsugaku no Tenkai (The Developments in Contemporary British Philosophy of Education)*. Tokyo: Keiso Shobo.
- Nunn, P. (2009/1920) *Education: Its Data and First Principles*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Library.
- O'Connor, D. J. (1957) *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Peters, R. S. (1956) *Hobbs*. Harmondsworth: Pelican Books.
- Peters, R. S. (1958) *The Concept of Motivation*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Peters, R. S. (1959) *Authority, Responsibility and Education*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Peters, R. S. (1965/1964) 'Education as Initiation', in R. Archambault (ed.) *Philosophical Analysis and Education*, pp. 87–111. London: Routledge.
- Peters, R. S. (1965) 'General Editor's Preface', in R. Archambault (ed.) *Philosophical Analysis and Education*, p. xi. London: Routledge.
- Peters, R. S. (1966a) *Ethics and Education*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Peters, R. S. (2010/1966b) 'The Philosophy of Education', in J. W. Tibble (ed.) *The Study of Education*, pp. 59–89. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Peters, R. S. (2010/1983) 'Philosophy of Education', in P. H. Hirst (ed.) *Educational Theory and Its Foundation Disciplines*, pp. 33–61. London: Routledge.
- Peters, R. S. (2015/1981) *Moral Development and Moral Education*. London: Routledge.
- Ryle, G., et al (eds) (1956) *The Revolution of Philosophy*. London: Macmillan.
- Rödl, S. (2016) 'Education and Autonomy', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 50: 84–97.
- Scheffler, I. (1954) 'Toward an Analytic Philosophy of Education', *Harvard Educational Review*, 24: 223–30.
- Scheffler, I. (1960) *The Language of Education*. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas.
- Scheffler, I. (1965) *Conditions of Education: An Introduction and Epistemology*. Chicago, IL: Scot, Foresman.
- Sellars, W. (1997/1956) *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, with an Introduction by R. Rorty, and a Study Guide by R. Brandom. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Siegel, H. (1988) *Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking and Education*. New York: Routledge.
- Siegel, H. (1997) *Rationality Redeemed?: Further Dialogues on an Educational Ideal*.

New York: Routledge.

Tibble, J. W. (1966) 'Introduction', in J. W. Tibble (ed.) *The Study of Education*, pp. vii–x. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

White, J. (2001) 'R. S. Peters', in J. Palmer (ed.) *Fifty Major Thinkers on Education: From Confucius to Dewey*, pp. 118–22. London: Routledge.

White, J. (2024) 'What is Philosophy of Education? Overlaps and Contrasts between Different Conceptions', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jopedu/qhae019>

Whitehead, A. N. (1967/1929) *The Aims of Education and Other Essays*. New York: The Free Press.