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A Literary Review of Select Educational Philosophies

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A Literary Review of Select Educational Philosophies

About the Author:

Logan Hegedus graduates May 2016 with a degree in Elementary Education and a concentration in Psychology through the University of Montana, Davidson's Honors College. The philosophical research provided will transcend throughout Logan's future career as an elementary educator. The age old question of "how best do I teach and guide my students" is not answered, rather evaluated through a lens of acclaimed classic philosophers.

Common Themes Found Throughout:

The four different philosophers identified throughout the content of this paper vary somewhat in their approach to educating a citizen, although they all agree that a successful end result of such an education is a functioning society. A common thread found throughout each theory is the strong presence of an educator. Whether the philosopher theorizes that students are born with the innate ability to learn, or are simply waiting to have their minds filled, no educational task can be performed without the help of a teacher. It is up to the teacher to exert an influence over the child to channel creativity, elicit morality, encourage intellect, and acts as a model for what a proper citizen should look like.

Plato

Plato, arguably one of the most notable philosophers in history, asserts his claim of education and learning as something that cannot be explicitly taught, but rather facilitated through the development of a tutor's thoughtful questioning. Plato divides the educated into two groups of people: the working or labor force, and the moral and intellectual elite. This schism in society produces a fully functioning society of leaders and guardians.

Aristotle

Aristotle asserts his view of societal excellence as a republic of leaders who exert a strong governmental influence. In his writings of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle affirms a well-rounded early childhood experience leads to the functioning of a perfect society. Aristotle believes a balance in educational material will lead to a happy citizen, someone who is apt to actively participate within a republic. Additionally, Aristotle asserts that habituated experiences lead to mastery. For example, a student is not expected to know how to live a virtuous life by simply observing it. Instead, he is expected to repeatedly practice and institute virtuous actions into his daily life to truly reach a level of automaticity. After being repeatedly practiced, the student will have mastered virtue.

Rousseau

Rousseau's philosophy on education throughout his writings of *Emile* does not evaluate how to educate a person regarding how to become a member of society, but rather how to function in society. Rousseau claims that he teaches a man to be a man, with no more than that. Yet, beginning at childhood, it is important to remember that a child is not a man, but a child is a child and should be treated as so. It is up to the tutor to foresee the transition to manhood and anticipate appropriate changes, rather than "mistreating" the child as an adult. Rousseau elaborates upon four different stages in a man's life in which he develops from a baby to a man. He also states the different practices of education and learning a tutor should implement with his pupils.

John Locke

John Locke, an esteemed philosopher, is best known for his assertion of the right to life, liberty, and property. John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* asserts that children are capable of moral reasoning, and should be treated as reasonable persons. Teachers are to facilitate their students' learning. Students, who are to learn rational thought from their teachers, might therefore apply it to the free society in which they live. It is up to the citizen to determine the society in which they will live, and only an educated citizen may be able to make such rational judgments.