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Article abstract

This essay argues for the urgent need for philosophy as the necessary first step in any educational undertaking. Philosophy is involved with making fine distinctions which are necessary to clarify concepts and terms. The paper focuses primarily on the problems with an overreliance on scientific research in the social sciences, with special emphasis on the dangers posed in educational research. Three specific problems are identified. First, the emphasis on scientific research downgrades non-scientific research, which may be more appropriate as modes of inquiry in many aspects of education. Second, the emphasis on scientific research distorts research in areas such as the arts and humanities because individual success as a scholar is largely measured by criteria that make sense in the natural sciences but not necessarily in the arts. Third, and most significantly, the paper questions whether social action and interaction can be investigated in a truly scientific manner.

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***Philosophical Inquiry in Education*, Volume 26 (2019), No. 2, pp. 146-155**

Social Science, Philosophy and Education[1]

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This essay argues for the urgent need for philosophy as the necessary first step in any educational undertaking. Philosophy is involved with making fine distinctions which are necessary to clarify concepts and terms. The paper focuses primarily on the problems with an overreliance on scientific research in the social sciences, with special emphasis on the dangers posed in educational research. Three specific problems are identified. First, the emphasis on scientific research downgrades non-scientific research, which may be more appropriate as modes of inquiry in many aspects of education. Second, the emphasis on scientific research distorts research in areas such as the arts and humanities because individual success as a scholar is largely measured by criteria that make sense in the natural sciences but not necessarily in the arts. Third, and most significantly, the paper questions whether social action and interaction can be investigated in a truly scientific manner.

In a paper published alongside this, Jack Martin (2019) has argued convincingly and eloquently about the problems and shortcomings inherent in empirical research in educational psychology. In this paper, I want to begin by focusing more generally on the question of: to what extent can research in the social sciences sensibly be conducted in a truly scientific manner?

The study of education is generally classified as a species of social science (even though it makes little sense to think of the study as a monolithic discipline of any kind), and most of the research in the field is, or attempts be, 'scientific' in the popular sense. That is to say it is empirical, whether taking the form of surveys, systematic observation, opinion gathering, quantifying, or, less often, attempts at genuine experimental testing. There are, however, problems with this categorization and emphasis.

First, it tends to downgrade non-scientific research, and philosophy particularly, as a mode of inquiry, and, more generally, the importance of the arts in public education. Implicitly it suggests that the business of education is mechanistic: a matter of training skills rather than developing insight, imagination, and understanding.

But, as Claudia Ruitenberg (2019) has ably demonstrated in this issue, it is highly misleading to characterize education essentially in terms of skills or, in current jargon, 'competencies'. Particularly damaging is the widespread tendency to treat so-called skills of, say, critical thinking, creativity, or imagination as generic. By a 'generic skill' I mean one that can be deployed in more or less any context, such as the skill of wiggling your ears, tuning car engines, or pruning fruit-bushes. But most of the

[1] A version of this paper was originally delivered at a symposium held in my honor at Simon Fraser University on 2nd November, 2018. I have omitted from this published version a number of the more personal allusions to friends and colleagues, particularly to the other participants in the symposium, though I have retained the briefest of references to other papers. However, I would like to record here my immense gratitude to all who organized, contributed to, and attended the event.

important abilities that humans can display, such as the ability to understand, to exercise compassion, or to proceed imaginatively are not, strictly speaking, 'skills' and are certainly not generic.

It is important to stress that concern about the ubiquitous talk of 'skills' or 'competencies' is not simply an argument about words. And, as we shall see below, it is a mistake to think that philosophy is simply or even primarily about words. It is true that a philosopher might begin by pointing out that, according to the dictionary, the word 'skill' means a 'special physical ability acquired and improved by training and practice'. But the objection to referring to a disposition such as compassion, an intellectual achievement such as understanding, or a characteristic such as imagination, as 'skills' is not fundamentally an objection to the wrong word being used; it is an objection to the failure to distinguish between such qualities and those, such as an ability to run fast or to juggle, that can be developed and facilitated by practice alone. Understanding is not developed in the same kind of way that running is; compassion is not developed on the training field; imagination is not increased by practice, whatever that might be supposed to mean.

More importantly, qualities such as understanding, compassion and imagination are not generic. If you can run faster than others, then, generally speaking you can do so in dry or wet weather, on sand or grass, at 2am or 2 pm. Similarly with other physical skills such as juggling, dribbling a soccer ball, planing wood or wiggling those ears. But obviously your understanding of science does not imply that you necessarily understand poetry, your compassion for the poor does not necessitate that you feel compassionate towards the rich. The imagination you display in your art-work does not guarantee that you will be equally imaginative about human relationships.

The widespread use of the word 'skill' in education and the assumption that abilities are generic serve to reinforce the idea that we are merely sophisticated automata that can be trained to behave and conduct our lives in an orderly fashion. It prevents us from recognizing the importance of context when it comes to displaying various human qualities, and from recognizing the importance of content in education. Rather than assuming that understanding, compassion, imagination and so forth are skills that we can develop by training, we should be focusing on the questions of what we want people to understand, where we want people to exercise compassion, and in what spheres imagination needs to be displayed.

Secondly, emphasis on scientific research tends to *distort* research in other areas such as the arts and humanities, as individual success as a scholar is largely measured by criteria that make sense in the natural sciences but not necessarily in the arts. For example, the need to acquire funding, the view that journal articles are more valuable than books, and indeed, the very emphasis on publication as criteria for promotion and tenure, may all make sense in respect of science but not necessarily in philosophy. Generally speaking, truly scientific research does require substantial funding; that is seldom the case in philosophy. And scientific knowledge is cumulative in a way that philosophy is not, which may well lead to the conclusion that papers reporting on some new insight or discovery, or on the findings of some study, are central to science, whereas in the arts book-length treatments of fresh topics are more likely to be of value. (Similarly the supposedly *de rigeur* inclusion of a chapter on method at the beginning of a PhD thesis makes more sense in respect of an empirical investigation than a philosophical one.)

Thirdly, and this of course is the main point, it begs the question of whether in fact there can be such a thing as a social *science*. Can inquiry into social action and interaction be conducted in a truly scientific manner? Can one demonstrate the truth of psychological, sociological, or educational issues

such as best practices for teaching in the same way as one can demonstrate the truth of claims about mixing certain chemicals, building bridges in certain ways, or propagating plants? I maintain that the answer to that question is "No". The fundamental questions in psychology and sociology and more generally in respect of education cannot be answered scientifically. But before defending that claim, I need to note certain caveats.

First, I am not disputing the value of psychological or sociological questions. On the contrary, I think them among the most important and interesting questions we can ask about our world. The question is how best to examine them. Secondly, I am aware that not all psychologists and sociologists see themselves as scientists or proceed in a scientific manner. But alternative theoretically derived approaches have their own problem: namely the problem of validating them. Freudian theory, for example, may very well be sound, but it cannot reasonably be claimed that this has been shown to be the case. This in turn gives rise to the question of why one should think, for example, that a trained Freudian analyst knows any more or even as much about human psychology as many distinguished novelists: novelists who are often distinguished precisely because of their insight into the human condition, which is the product of imagination and intuition combined with non-systematic observation, rather than of any particular discipline, method, or theory.

Thirdly, I am aware that the notion of scientific method is itself not without issue. Most obviously there is the so-called problem of induction - in essence the question of why one should assume that, because the sun has risen every day so far, we should assume it will do so tomorrow. And there are problems too with the position of someone like Karl Popper who tries to get round that difficulty by suggesting that a claim may be said to be scientifically established if, after repeated rigorous controlled experiment, it has not been so far falsified. Nonetheless, it is surely uncontentious to say that scientific method, involving rigorous observation and empirical testing, is for the most part sound procedure in the sphere of the physical world, and that it has, as a matter of fact, delivered many true claims.

Finally, there are of course some social and psychological questions about human beings that can be dealt with scientifically. It is widely reported, for instance, that students in Finland perform better than any other nationality on various tests, and I have no reason to doubt that that empirical claim is valid. My point is that questions such as those to do with cause and effect (e.g., "why do Finnish students perform better?"), or whether these tests are a valid way of assessing educational success, cannot be answered scientifically. And these questions are surely more, or at least equally, important.

So, the question remains as to whether it makes sense to look for answers to various important questions about human interactions by aping the methods of natural science. My argument for a negative response revolves around two insoluble problems and one putative fact. The key concepts in the natural sciences, whether they are of abstract ideas or concrete matter, are clearly understood, and more or less universally understood, by experts in the field. Of course, at any given moment certain cutting-edge terms may refer to concepts not yet fully understood (e.g., 'black holes'). But by and large these are disciplines that, despite so-called paradigm shifts from time to time, have built up a vast and coherent network of clear concepts.

This is simply not the case in the sphere of human activity, where most concepts are not universally and clearly understood; indeed, they have been characterized as "essentially contested" (Gallie, 1956), generally because they are either evaluative, man-made constructs, or both. Sulfur is given to the chemist in nature and the chemist knows all about the properties of sulfur. By contrast, most key psychological, social, and educational concepts are primarily constructed by us rather than given in

nature. How to define 'depression', 'middle-class' or 'imaginative' is a matter for debate and, though some answers may be regarded as more or less absurd and others more or less convincing, often the debate is not conducive to a definitive 'correct' answer.

The second insoluble problem is this: in a subject such as chemistry these key concepts are not only clearly understood; they are also observable and generally quantifiable. Chemists can recognize and measure arsenic if so minded. And while atoms are not directly observable in that way, the concept of an atom is so well articulated and understood by scientists that it can likewise be coherently theoretically observed.

But the concepts central to the social sciences cannot for the most part be observed or quantified even if clearly articulated. Even with a clear definition of 'gifted', it is not necessarily obvious or even discernible who is or is not truly gifted. And fairly obviously one cannot measure the relative giftedness of a Berlioz or a Beethoven. It is not that it is difficult: it is that the very idea doesn't make sense. This being the case, when some misguided soul attempts to do so they simply end up distorting the concept by defining it in terms of something that is measurable. This is, for example, exactly what Charles Murray does in his book, *Human Accomplishment* (2003), when he argues that Beethoven and Mozart are the two greatest Western composers, essentially solely on the grounds that they are mentioned more than any other composers in a seemingly random collection of reference books. But such a procedure simply confuses the question of who the best composer is *thought to be* with the question of who the best composer *is*.

For another example, let us take happiness. What is happiness? When philosophers ask this question, they are not asking for a dictionary definition or a synonym such as 'well-being' or 'satisfaction'. Nor are they asking for opinions on what kinds of pleasure ought to count towards or as happiness. (They are not for example asking whether intellectual pleasure is superior to carnal pleasure, or Grand Opera to the Grand Ole Opry). They are not asking for surveys of what people think makes them happy. They are not asking for theories as to what would make everybody happy. And the reason we are not asking for any of these things is because it doesn't make sense to look for an answer to these questions until we have answered the logically prior question of what counts as happiness or what it means to say that someone is happy. That question requires starting with some definition, which might well come from a dictionary, although it doesn't have to, and unpacking or elucidating that definition. Thus, *the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (3rd Edition) defines happiness as a "state of pleasurable content of mind, which results from success or the attainment of what is considered good." The task of the analytic philosopher is to try to come to grips with this, to make sense of it and to evaluate its plausibility, asking questions such as: is 'content' here the noun meaning 'that which is contained' (with emphasis on the first syllable) or the noun meaning 'satisfaction' (emphasis on the second syllable)? Do we accept that happiness is conceptually linked to 'success' in some way? Success as judged by the person in question, or by others? Do we accept that people who are not successful cannot be happy? Is happiness really to be linked with the 'good'? Regrettable as it may be, surely bad people and unsuccessful people can be happy.

In this particular case it is difficult to answer the question ("what is happiness?") other than in the sort of general and abstract terms of Rousseau's suggestion that "a conscious being whose powers were equal to his desires would be perfectly happy" since "true happiness consists in decreasing the difference between our desires and our powers" (Rousseau, 1762/1974). But happiness in this sense is not quantifiable or observable in any meaningful way, and as soon as we try to make it so by, for

example, equating happiness with what people say makes them happy, with neurophysiological facts about the working of the brain, or with behaviors that are sometimes symptoms of happiness, we are talking about something else. Drinking excessively may truly make me happy but it is not the meaning of happiness; smiling may sometimes be a symptom of happiness, but it is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition of that state of mind.

In short, it is difficult to conduct scientific research in the realm of human affairs given the intangible nature of the key concepts, and logically impossible without completing the prior philosophical task of offering a reasoned analysis of any particular concept. But, thirdly, there is an altogether different kind of observation to be made.

The physical world is governed by laws. We don't know all of them and some that we think we know may turn out to be incorrectly or incompletely understood. But there is no doubt that the physical world is governed by laws. That, one might say, is why science works. But there is no a priori reason to suppose that, in important respects, the world of human interaction is governed by laws. And I would say that it is not. Because humans have minds, as distinct from brains, because we have a certain kind of understanding, because we have a degree of autonomy, we are to some extent masters of our destiny. We act, and are acted upon, and to some extent control and change the environment even as it, to some extent, shapes us. There is no law saying what a human will do when his or her world seems to collapse around them because what happens will depend to a large extent on individual human agency.

Likewise, there is no law or set of best practices for good teaching: even a fairly basic suggestion such as "make yourself audible", though sensible and plausible, is nonetheless only true as a generalization since it might on certain occasions be incorrect. For example, one's mumbling may lead one's students to find some alternative more effective way of acquiring knowledge, such as going to the library or hiring a private tutor. There is no law or set of laws; we are all individual agents and every situation is unique. What is effective for some is not for others. And even if there were a law or set of laws, we could not find them without first analyzing the concept of educational success. For without a clear and in some sense monitorable notion of what constitutes being well-educated, how can you begin to assess, by whatever method, successful means to achieve it?

So, the very idea of the study of education being a social science is suspect, many of the crucial questions being conceptual and evaluative. What is to count as being 'well-educated'? That is the fundamental question in the study of education. Without a clear, comprehensive, and defendable answer, nothing else can profitably be said or done about educational matters. Answering that question is in turn going to demand a philosophical inquiry into what is most worth knowing, since nobody disputes that education has something to do with developing some kind of understanding. Only then can we start to discuss questions as to desirable types of teaching, for at least part of the meaning of good teaching must be 'whatever contributes to successful education.' And while, there may be some reasonable generalizations about teaching, ultimately what is appropriate or most desirable for a teacher to do will depend upon the particularities of their situation. There can be no science of teaching and it is no accident that there is no plausible body of teaching theory.

I raised the question of "what is happiness?" above in order to make some points about conceptual analysis. But I have another reason for wanting to raise this topic, and that is to disassociate myself from the view, currently popular among some educationalists, that education itself is somehow about, or partly about, happiness or well-being. I do believe, without being able to produce any real evidence

to support the belief, that there is a connection between education and happiness. Not a necessary one, but, at a general level, a contingent one. It is not that I think educated people are more likely to be happy; in fact, I sometimes fear the opposite. But I believe that if more people were better educated, we would have a more reasonable, and therefore happier, world. Nonetheless, I would argue that education as such is about developing human understanding of various important modes of inquiry, not about promoting happiness. We should not be judging the quality of our schools by how happy students are or how happy they may be in the future.

At this point, it needs to be stressed that, just as the demand that everything be empirically demonstrated is absurd and dangerous, so is the view that the only alternative is that something be logically demonstrated. The fact is that there are many claims about the world that we would do well to accept even though they are neither empirically demonstrable nor strictly speaking 'logical'. One problem here is that the word 'logical' is itself overused and misused and often leads to the idea of reasonableness being sidelined. Let me illustrate this by reference to the contemporary argument about language and the rules of grammar, spelling, and the like.

There are those such as N.M. Gwynne who, in his book *Gwynne's Grammar* (2014), argue for the view that the rules of grammar should be known, taken seriously, and followed; in short, correct grammar should be taught. It matters that one abides by the conventions of spelling and grammar. Note that I say 'conventions'; Gwynne tends to say 'rules' because he believes they are not simply customs that could have been different but that they are grounded in 'logic'.

In sharp disagreement stands Oliver Kamm, author of *Accidence Will Happen: A Non-pedantic Guide to English Usage* (2015). Basically, his argument is that language is as language is used, so if people start saying "who I saw" where Gwynne would claim they ought to be saying "whom I saw", such usage becomes the new norm and teachers should not be 'correcting' such usage. But we do not have to choose between 'logically entailed' and 'a mere matter of convention or usage'.

On the whole I'm on Gwynne's side so far as the conclusion goes. That is to say: it does matter that people master and use current rules, though of course nothing will stop changes occurring over time. But at the moment it matters that people can distinguish between 'its' and 'it's', or imply and infer, or reject and refute. Why? For the sake of efficient communication and precision in language and, hence, thought. Common rules facilitate common understanding. A world in which we can readily distinguish between a situation in which I, the speaker, am suggesting something without actually stating it (imply) from one in which the audience assumes that I am implying something, whether or not I am in fact doing so (infer), is a world of greater subtlety and nuance than one in which we can't or won't make such a distinction.

But where Gwynne is wrong and Kamm is right is that the importance of such rules has nothing to do with logic. It is not a matter of logical necessity that 'it's' should be the way to write 'it is', while 'its' should be the way to write 'of it'. A case could be made for reversing the convention. But it is desirable to have an agreed convention and the one we have is in itself entirely reasonable. And it is unreasonable to maintain that it simply doesn't matter what conventions people choose to follow as Kamm comes close to doing at times. It is simply confusing to read that Trump refutes a claim, and not be able to tell whether the author means that he simply denies the claim or that he shows it to be false (unlikely as that might be).

The examples are slight, but the point is surely important. The case for many rules, conventions, and claims in life is not that they are empirically validated or logically entailed, but simply that they are

reasonable. And, as Ian Gregory (2019) has strongly argued elsewhere in this journal, it is vital at this point in history that we stand up to defend the values of truth and reason: some testimony is more reasonable than others.

As an unashamed advocate of the right to hold and express any belief I like even if, and in, fact especially if, it causes offence to some, another matter of concern to me is what is commonly referred to as 'freedom of speech'. Indeed, if it doesn't cause offence to anyone, there would be no issue. But of course, we are aware of the distinction between stating a belief, for example, that abortion is not acceptable, in a seminar or private discussion versus yelling it at young women entering an abortion clinic. The latter is to be deplored, not because one should not be allowed to express the belief, but because, given the situation, it is insensitive and cruel behavior. Similarly, it is acceptable to hold and express the view that Israel should cease building settlements in disputed territory, but it might be foolish, downright dangerous, or indeed culpable, to try to incite a crowd to violent action by playing on this belief.

There is, in other words, a distinction, usually one of context or situation, to be drawn between expressing a belief and incitement to action. It is my right to express my belief, but I do not have a right to stir up violence by expressing it. So I believe in the right to free thought and expression, just as I believe in my right to wield an axe but of course there are situations in which I should keep my thoughts to myself just as there are situations in which I should leave my axe at home. There is nothing contradictory in that, yet some seem to find it problematic. Perhaps the problem stems partly from people throwing in words such as 'absolute' or 'universal'. It would be simpler and clearer, rather than talking of an absolute right to free speech, to say: people should be free to hold and express any belief, provided that they do not express it in situations where they seek or are likely to incite trouble.

Of course, at this point someone will say but what counts as trouble, or how can one tell which situations are potentially troublesome? Well of course sometimes it is hard to draw the line. When does tough but legitimate interrogation become torture? When does what used to be called flirting become harassment? When does bringing up the young to hold certain values become indoctrination?

It is the need to pursue such fine distinctions as these that gives rise to the urgent need for philosophy, and we must not let the facts of life–the often murky, confused and contradictory situations in which we find ourselves–get in the way of clear theoretical distinctions. This is the point of theory: to provide an ideal template against which to try to interpret actual situations. Border-line cases do not invalidate clear theoretical distinctions. The difficulty, in some cases the impossibility, of determining whether we should count certain institutions as engaging in indoctrination rather than education does not invalidate the distinction between them and does not mean that we can never find clear instances of one or the other.

This point of course applies to Mill's crucial distinction between self and other regarding actions. It is true that it is sometimes difficult to tell whether a particular action is or is not entirely self-regarding. But that is a different problem and does not invalidate the important claim that in so far as an act does not materially adversely affect others it should be entirely free. So, we can (and should) meaningfully assert that saying things that some others may find unpleasant is not reprehensible in itself. The problem here is that, ludicrous as it is, we have come close to accepting that if somebody doesn't like something then they are being harmed. But I am not *harmed* by the fact that there is rap music (even though I can't stand it), I am not *harmed* by the legalization of cannabis (even though I am against it), and I am not *harmed* by the fact some people don't like WASPs such as myself (even though I would

love to be universally adored). Sometimes one feels that there should be less talk of our *right* not to be offended, and more emphasis on the *duty* of not taking offence.[2]

Talk of freedom of speech and taking offence brings me conveniently to the subject of universities and the craven ways they have adopted since the leadership of scholars gave way to the management of bureaucrats and expansion and pursuit of financing became the raison d'etre of the institution at the expense of the humbler task of passing on understanding. The assault on freedom of thought and expression at all levels of education is frightening. Children must apparently be shielded from anything potentially upsetting. Health and safety regulations often unwarrantably curtail a number of educational possibilities. But even in institutions of higher education it seems there must be 'safe places.' That is to say: places where controversy and disagreement can be avoided. Speakers with unpopular views must be 'disinvited'. There must be trigger warnings. That is to say: before I start my lecture on the philosophical problems inherent in religious belief, I must warn all believers that they probably won't want to attend. I must also make sure that I remember that the person who today, though not necessarily yesterday, is sitting third to the left on the sixth row of my class of 100, likes to be referred to as 'they' rather than 'he' or 'she'. And of course, I must not show videos where people such as Jordan Peterson express views that are not shared by the administration. All this in an institution designed to pursue understanding.

Perhaps I should rephrase 'an institution designed', because of course it will be pointed out that the word 'university' can mean anything we want it to mean, and in fact the nature of the university has evolved over time. That is true. So, let me rephrase: We need to have institutions in which people are free to pursue arguments without fear or favor and, call them what you will, we are in danger of having no such places.

I have suggested that educational practice cannot be determined by scientific method, talked about happiness and freedom of speech, and made some points along the way about reasonableness, borderline cases, and the importance of discrimination in the sense of making fine distinctions. Discrimination seems to me the essence of what philosophical inquiry is about. Of course many who call themselves 'philosophers' in education have quite different priorities (and it is perhaps worth pointing out the paradox that while, as Robert Manery and Ian Winchester (2019) have argued, philosophy is formally in decline, the number of those who see themselves as being 'philosophers' seems to have increased.) Some think we should be creating theories of education; some like to extract educational ideas from the works of philosophers of the past; some engage with the mysticism of the East, and some with the obscurities of the European tradition.

Far be it from me to proscribe any of these activities. But I think our priority should be to get every would-be educator, and ideally this would include administrators and parents as well as teachers, to analyze for themselves the key concepts in the field. I say: "for themselves". By all means let us draw on the work of others. In every discipline or subject that is an illuminating and generally efficient way to proceed. Nonetheless the point of engaging in analysis is for each individual to arrive ultimately at a clear understanding of their own. As to which concepts are key, I have already indicated that what constitutes being 'well-educated' is central, and that, since any answer is almost certain to have some

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[2] In fact, I wrote a paper with that title ("On the Duty of Not Taking Offence", *Journal of Moral Education*, *34* (3), 2005), which, sadly was rather less well done than it might have been. I should like to record here, as I failed to do at the time, that I owe the idea and title to Her Honor, Judge Rebecca Brown.

reference to knowledge or understanding, another is the nature of knowledge. What can we know? How can we know? What is the relationship between truth and knowledge? Between knowledge and belief? What is most worth knowing?

I could go on, but that is not necessary here, where the point to stress is that such inquiry is necessarily philosophical. It cannot be done by tracing history or by scientific examination. But since it has been admitted that it will not always yield universally or, sometimes, even broadly agreed answers, why bother to engage in such inquiry? Because, without it, we are not thinking. Instead, we are being led by method. Without it, success is defined by what can be measured or quantified. But if one thing is clear it is that education, like the good life, cannot be defined solely, if at all, in terms of the quantifiable. We can only reasonably assess the quality of our practice in the light of a clear understanding of our goal. And each person needs to come to an understanding of that goal for him- or her-self. (Incidentally, in referring to the good life, I should like to acknowledge that I find Ann Chinnery's (2019) suggestion elsewhere in this issue that the notion of human life carries moral connotations persuasive.)

The fact that there is less and less institutional commitment to the need for philosophical inquiry, along with the increasing restraints on our freedom of expression and behavior might suggest that this is a good time for me to be retiring. I sometimes feel, in the words of a country song, that "I've enjoyed as much of this as I can stand"[3]. But I would hate to end on anything suggesting a sour note. In the first place, my points are intended to refer to general tendencies in higher education. My own university's recent record in respect of my concerns seems to me to be better than that of many other institutions, and the Faculty of Education in particular has remained remarkably level-headed. Secondly, I have personally had a most enjoyable and fortunate career; I am glad to be retiring at this time precisely because I have been so fortunate, and it would be quite unreasonable to expect the world in which I have been so comfortable to go on forever without change. I have had more than my share of good luck, friendship, satisfaction, and support. So, to all those who made this possible here at Simon Fraser University, and the Faculty of Education in particular, my sincere thanks.

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[3] "I've Enjoyed as Much of This as I Can Stand" was written (and recorded) by Bill Anderson. Also recorded by Porter Wagoner, Jim Reeves and Lorrie Morgan, among others.

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About the Author

Robin Barrow studied philosophy and classics at the University of Oxford and has a PhD from the University of London. He was Reader in the Philosophy of Education at the University of Leicester, before moving to Simon Fraser University as Professor in 1982. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1996 and has been entered in the Canadian Who's Who since 1994. He was Dean of Education at Simon Fraser University from 1992-2002. He has also been Visiting Professor at the Universities of Auckland and Western Ontario. He was Vice-Chair of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (1980-3), President of the Northwestern Philosophy of Education Society of North America (1984-5), and President of the Canadian Philosophy of Education Society (1990-1). He is the author of 25 books and more than 100 articles, and the editor of a further five books. His likes include opera and Grand Ole Opry, Victorian literature and soccer. His dislikes include all forms of political correctness and academic waffle. He was also Andrew Lloyd Webber's first librettist.