

# Changing the Educational Landscape: Philosophy, Women, and Curriculum (Jane Roland Martin)

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it would be of interest. His discussion of the issues involved seemed balanced enough to be acceptable to both of the (by no means similar) Christian denominational strands—Roman Catholicism and Evangelicalism—which Thiessen says bear the brunt of charges of indoctrination.

My own arguments were rather with liberal educational ideology Thiessen criticizes. To some of the authors he critically discusses, like Barrow and Woods, Hirst, Holley, Peshkin, and especially White, Callan, and Gardner, I want to reiterate Paolo Freire's key insight that to profess neutrality in areas of social concern is to tip one's hand as a supporter of the status quo. In this case, religious or denominational noninvolvement displays an allegiance to secular humanism, the prevailing cultural ideology. To use a parallel example, do any parents or teachers forswear a linguistic tradition for their children or students in order to protect their grammatical autonomy?

Without exception, however, every question and critique that occurred to me were voiced by Thiessen in the course of his book in a clear and forceful, yet respectful manner. He writes convincingly from a breadth of knowledge, an engaging rationality, a critical open-mindedness, and an abiding commitment.

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**Jane Roland Martin, *Changing the Educational Landscape: Philosophy, Women, and Curriculum*. NY: Routledge, 1994.**

*Changing the Educational Landscape* is a synopsis of Jane Roland Martin's philosophical enterprise between 1969 and 1993. The articles are loosely organized around the themes identified in the secondary title—philosophy, women, and curriculum.<sup>1</sup> In Part One, Martin examines the implications of introducing women into the canon of educational thought; in Part Two, she supposes a newly cut curriculum based on lessons we can learn from problematizing obstacles in women's education. Except for the opening essay and the article "A Professorship and Office of One's Own" in Part One, all articles have been previously published.

The two main sections of her book are preceded by a somewhat autobiographical essay on her academic career which, in her words, moved "To Philosophy and Back Again" as her research questions and methods began to incorporate the significance of women in educational thought. The non-chronological arrangement of her articles does not readily illustrate this philosophical movement. However, a comparison between *The Schoolhome: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) and an earlier work *Explaining, Understanding, and Teaching* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970) does reveal some changes in her philosophical enterprise and methods. Like most introductions, Martin's introductory essay walks the reader through the development of her ideas. Of particular interest is her personal account of her struggle to identify with the subject matter of philosophical inquiry. She explains that, as a young analytic philosopher, she felt alienated from her philosophical projects and from the realities of daily experience in schools. Among academics whose research (ideally) incorporates abstract concepts and objective analysis, this is a familiar, if not common, problem. A solution typified here in Martin's work is to set aside cause-effect

or theory-driven arguments and to develop both questions and arguments using contextualized empirical issues.<sup>2</sup> As she explains it, “my research into women’s education and ‘place’ illuminated what happened at home and in my classrooms” (p. 1).

Included in Part One is her revealing case study of Sophie and Emile as they appear in Rousseau’s philosophy of education. Here, she introduces a distinction between productive and reproductive forms of knowledge, which are identified with gender-appropriate roles—that is, the education of Emile as a rational, autonomous, moral individual matches his future function as a citizen in the public realm; and, the education of Sophie as feminine by nature matches her future function as wife and mother.<sup>3</sup> Martin’s exposure of this two-tiered paradigm lays the groundwork for her critical analysis of R.S. Peters’ and Paul Hirst’s ideal of the educated person—an ideal that reflects the autonomous male figure “in his dual role of patriarch and citizen . . . in the small fatherland which is the family” (p. 63). She points out, however, that the main problem is not so much Rousseau’s gender bias; rather, the most troubling consequence of his dualistic view is that philosophers of education have turned a blind eye to half of its equation, that is, to girls’ education. Ignoring Sophie’s education as part of Rousseau’s overall philosophy of education, they have positioned Emile’s education as the singular ideal. But, as the song goes, “You can’t have one without the other”. Thus, by embracing a philosophy of education and a curriculum that speak only to the needs of half the population, educators perpetuate a masculinist and impoverished ideology of knowledge, education, and “the good life” in general.

In Part Two, salient features of a new educational landscape take form. One feature is a stronger presence of the three C’s—caring, concern, and connection. Stressing her ideal of “school as a moral equivalent of home,”<sup>4</sup> Martin draws upon similar or complementary views of past educators such as Pestalozzi, Montessori, and Dewey. Although underlining the three C’s as “vital to the well being of the world beyond the private home” (p. 235), she does not examine the potential problems of advocating these already inappropriately feminized and often exploited attributes. In contrast to feminists and profeminists who have critically explored the gender imbalance in the provision of domestic care and its low socio-cultural status,<sup>5</sup> Martin espouses idealized notions of family, home, and the three C’s. I make this observation not because schools do not need to develop a better sense of caring, concern, and connection but because to cultivate these feminized concepts as part of school practice first requires exposing the school system’s long-standing reproduction of gender bias in maintaining a semblance of the three C’s in the curriculum. For example, elementary teachers, the majority of whom are women, are presumed or expected to be more caring than high-school teachers. Similarly, “soft” subjects, such as the arts, are positioned in the curriculum to compensate for the lack of the three C’s in the teaching of “hard” subjects. Although the feminization of care is more readily associated with personal and family relationships than with curricula and institutional education, similar forms of gender bias in schooling need to be fully exposed before refurbishing the curriculum with the three C’s.

In general, the features of a new educational landscape emerge through Martin’s critical examination of conventional educational practices that separate “reason from emotion, thought from action, education from life” (p. 179).

Thus, she calls for a re-examination of “epistemological fallacies” (p. 176) that exclude non-discursive knowledge, “frill” subjects, and corporeal ways of knowing. Underscoring these curricular suggestions is her view “that it is self-defeating to try to change the education of girls and women without radically revising the education of boys and men” (p. 8). Although these themes are not all treated with equal attention, this collection of articles illustrates Martin’s broad appreciation of gender-related problems manifest in curricular norms. Some of these problems—for example, the mind/body split, which has been a major focus of gender studies in other fields of philosophical inquiry—are slowly being admitted into the philosophy of education.<sup>6</sup> In short, by examining numerous gender-related problems in education and philosophy of education in general, Martin has prepared and sowed the grounds for a “newly cut turf” (p. 131); the educational implications have yet to be fully realized.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The organization of Martin’s articles is not, at first, self-evident. In contrast, connections between key concepts identified in secondary titles and those examined in the text are unmistakable in the organization of, for example, Evelyn Fox Keller, *Secrets of Life, Secrets of Death: Essays on Language, Gender, and Science* (New York: Routledge, 1992); and Deanne Bogdan, *Re-Educating the Imagination: Toward a Poetics, Politics, and Pedagogy of Literary Engagement* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1992). Unlike these feminist philosophers who represent two very different fields of academic study, Martin develops a more fluid allegiance to the themes identified in her book title.

<sup>2</sup>See Martin, *Changing the Educational Landscape*, p. 6. Similarly, because of her “‘bifurcated consciousness’ as a mother and an academic,” feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith rejected conventional research practice in sociology and established everyday experience as an entry point as well as a conceptual and methodological focus of her research. For a discussion of (and tribute to) Dorothy Smith’s methodology, see Marie Campbell and Ann Manicom, eds., *Knowledge, Experience, and Ruling Relations: Studies in the Social Organization of Knowledge* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), in particular, pp. 4-12.

<sup>3</sup>“Sophie and Emile: A Case Study of Sex Bias in the History of Educational Thought” marked the first time Martin had presented research on women and education; The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, where she presented this paper in February 1981, was the first location for this new venture. This research also served as a key aspect of *Reclaiming a Conversation: The Ideal of an Educated Woman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>4</sup>Martin, *The Schoolhome*, p. 210.

<sup>5</sup>For a critical examination of the gender imbalance in the provision of care and the efficacy of “emotional sustenance,” see Sandra Lee Bartky, “Feeding Egos and Tending Wounds: Deference and Disaffection in Women’s Emotional Labor” in *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 99-119.

<sup>6</sup>For example, I include an examination of the mind/body split as it affects the curricular status of music education and advocacy strategies equating musical experience and musical cognition, illustrating a negative predisposition toward the body and corporeal knowing. See Charlene Morton, *The ‘Status Problem’: The Feminized Location of School Music and the Burden of Justification* (Ed.D dissertation, University of Toronto, 1996).