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## State of nature theories and their reflections on education policies

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### Abstract

The purpose of this article is to suggest how the state of nature theories might play a key, if precisely delineated, role in the shaping of education philosophies. The argument begins with the nature of confidence in the relationship between education and human nature. To illustrate the distinctive contribution philosophy can make, we propose three distinguished theories that each one has different impacts on education philosophies.

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### 1. Introduction

Human nature is the concept that there are a set of logical characteristics, including ways of thinking, feeling and acting, which all 'normal' human beings have in common. Here I will deal with the philosophies of education that based on different views about nature of human and their influences on education policies.

State of Nature is a term describes the natural condition of mankind and refers to philosophical assertions regarding the condition of humans before social factors are imposed, thus attempting to describe the "natural essence" of human nature. In a broader sense, the state of nature is the condition before the social conditions comes into being influential. As social conditions come into being influential, the argument begins with a reflection on the nature of confidence in the relationship between education and human nature.

There is no agreement among scholars about the concept of human nature (Rousseau, 1998), so there are different educational philosophies based on distinguished approaches to the state of nature. In a sense there is no such thing as the philosophy of education; there are only philosophies of education that can be classified in many different ways. The elementary question to be asked by all philosophers is, "what is the nature and ultimate significance of the men at state of nature and how the answers influence education philosophies". As things developed in philosophy, three camps emerged: there were those who hold that at the state of nature human are inherently good; those who hold that at state of nature human are in war of all against all and those who hold that there is nothing fixed at state of nature. These three different approaches to state of nature have different impacts on education policies.

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According to those who see human nature at state of nature good, like John Locke, al-Farabi, they accept students inherently good and capable of choosing good or evil. Therefore they try to prevent the nature of students from imposed or misleading ideas that may damage the nature of student. For that reason they limit role of teacher with data transferring and his position in class is to be as a sharer of knowledge and experiences. The empathy is fundamental characteristic of this type of education programs and during the education process, as no one wants to be controlled by others the educator must not try to control others also. Thus who attempts to get others into his absolute power, puts himself in a state of war (Locke, 1982). Consequently state of nature philosophy requires absolutely free education environment. This philosophy of education agrees partly with liberal education programs. But those who support this philosophy may oppose all kinds of education programs, by declaring these programs as involvement in human nature. It emerges in pluralistic societies such as the Western democracies there are some groups that do not wholeheartedly support the development of autonomous individuals and state-provided education programs.

Existentialist education philosophy can be applied to this theory. Because existentialism proposes that we should not accept any predetermined creed or philosophical system and aims for the progressing of humanity. It engages the student in central questions of defining life and let the individual exist in his individuality (Macquarie, 1973). It attempts to help the student acknowledge his or her own freedom and accept the responsibility for that freedom. It aims to help the child realize that the answers imposed from the outside may not be real answers. The only real answers are the ones that come from inside each person, that are authentically his or her own. This idea is very close to the liberal education philosophy (Locke, 1982).

The basic philosophy of education that Rousseau advocates is rooted in the notion that human beings are good by nature. Rousseau claims that the goal of education should be to promote our natural tendencies. This is not to be confused with Rousseau's praise of the pure state of nature. Rousseau is very clear that a return the state of nature once human beings have become civilized is not possible (Rousseau, 1998). Therefore, we should not seek to be noble savages in the literal sense, with no language, no social ties, and an underdeveloped faculty of reason. Rather, Rousseau insist that someone who has been properly educated will be engaged in society, but relate to his or her fellow citizens in a natural way. Rousseau's philosophy of education, therefore, is not based on particular techniques that best ensure that the pupil will absorb information and concepts. It is better understood as a way of ensuring that the pupil's character be developed in such a way as to have a healthy sense of self-worth and morality. This will allow the pupil to be virtuous as well in the unnatural and imperfect society in which he lives (Küken, 1996).

According to İbn Sina (Avicenna, 2003), İbn Tufail (Abubacer, 2003) and John Locke, humans in the state of nature have perfect freedom to order their actions according to the laws of nature. We acquire knowledge, they argued, from the information about the objects in the world that our senses bring to us. Thomas Hobbes and Locke agree that people are of equal value, and treat each other as they would want to be treated. But according to Hobbes, humans in the state of nature are inherently in a "war of all against all," and life in that state is ultimately unpleasant (Hobbes, 1994). To Hobbes, this state of nature is remedied by good governing and education. According to this view the aim of education is rebuilding the characters of students and their education relies on the tutor's constant supervision. The tutor must even manipulate the environment in order to teach sometimes difficult moral lessons about humility, chastity, and honesty. The educator, in that kind of education programs has very important role. Because, an educator is who achieved to build a model character for himself. For that reason the educator plays a key role in class and has the right to impose his opinions to students. He or she is the object of the class and acts as a control agent like police officer or prison officer. And schools are to produce people who are both smart and good. We can see this type of education policies in undemocratic and undeveloped countries. In this kind of programs individual interests are not taken in care and intervention of state in education is at highest level. This broke important and also politically dangerous ground, and gave the most shocking examples, of totalitarianism and brain washing education programs. NOW, if education is a complete success, every person will have the correct sense of justice and injustice, and will obey the rules of justice without exceptions. This would be equivalent to the situation where people truly reveal their preferences for collective goods, and are willing to pay their fair share of the costs.

David Hume's view brings together and challenges the theories of Rousseau and Hobbes. Like Rousseau, he believes that society shapes us, but that we are born evil and it is up to society to shape us into who we become. Hume turns away from Locke and Hobbes's stressed independence, instead placing the focus on the family and society. However, for society to flourish it is necessary for there to be the "Rules of Justice". These rules are necessary due to the "insecurity of man" that can only be remedied in justice (Hume, 1978).

Giving to society all the power to bring up human character might be called social determinism. According to social determinism, human behaviour is determined by social factors, so inherent human instincts are never truly to

blame for actions generally considered neither "bad" nor truly credited with actions generally considered "good". The important point about this was the idea that human nature was not fixed. For that reason the education programs that based on this philosophy, does not consider state of nature as a base for their education policies. For them the necessities of this life, the health of body, and the information of mind would require to be directed by the will of others, which is not their own will in reality.

According to the Judaism, Christianity and Islam, human beings were created good but were wounded by their own free decision to sin. Human beings were in a state of "original holiness and justice," but lost these due to disobeying to the will of God. This approach to the human nature requires an education which is based on restoring of human nature to its original state. According to the education programs that are based on these ideas, the emotions, the mind, and the skills needed to be educated according to law of the universe which represents the law of God. Thus we are born free as we are born rational; not that we have actually the exercise of either: age that brings one, brings with it the other too. And thus we see how natural freedom and subjection to parents may consist together, and are both founded on the same principle. A child is free by his father's title, by his father's understanding, which is to govern him till he had it of his own responsibility. The freedom of the child, notwithstanding he were never so free, never so much sovereign, be in subjection to his mother and nurse, to tutors and governors, till age and education brought him reason and ability to govern himself and others. A man may be said to have attained so far forth the use of reason as sufficient to make him capable of understanding those laws whereby he is then bound to guide his actions; this is a great deal easier for sense to discern than for any one, by skill and learning, to determine.

When we analyze all these different theories and their reflections on education policies, the solution from the one site is coercion and discipline; that from the other site is to worry whether education involves discrimination, or indeed trespasses against the equal rights and dignity of the student. The idea that of the young mind is as an empty pot that needs filling up and the idea that at state of nature human beings are in war to each other indeed trespasses against the equal rights and dignity of students. This is one area where humanistic educators have had an impact on current educational practice. The orientation espoused today is that the environment should be psychologically and emotionally, as well as physically, non-threatening. Allow the student to have a choice in the selection of tasks and activities whenever possible. Students will learn best what they want and need to know. That is, when they have developed the skills of analyzing what is important to them and why as well as the skills of directing their behaviour towards those wants and needs, they will learn more easily and quickly. Most educators and learning theorists would agree with this statement, although they might disagree on exactly what contributes to student motivation.

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