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### Title

**Is R.S. Peters' way of mentioning women in his texts detrimental to Philosophy of Education? Some considerations and questions.**

#### Abstract

Discussion in this article considers the unfortunate way R.S. Peters made mention of women when it was pertinent to his argumentation: portraying them, directly or indirectly, as abuse-able (murderable), deficient, aberrant, clueless and inconstant. It is argued that the high profile and esteem within which R.S. Peter's texts are held within philosophy of education might be a problem for it as a scholarly mixed gender community. Three issues are considered in relation to current possible bias caused by R. S. Peters' presentation of women in his texts: implicit (unconscious) bias against female philosophers of education; a connection between denigration of women's value by Peters and current low status and marginalisation for alternative (progressive) educational ideas; and the extent to which these matters could be invidiously affecting the development of philosophy of education as scholarship and community.

**Keywords:** R.S. Peters; philosophy of education; implicit bias; feminist epistemology; gender equality; progressive education

## Article text

### Introduction

This paper focuses on selections from the writings of R.S. Peters and suggests that his work includes aspects of linguistic sexism which are of the time when Peters wrote but which have the potential to do damage now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century - also before and beyond - to our understanding of education and educational philosophy. That he was 'very much a man of his time' (Barrow 2010, 9) is in some regards an active issue for philosophy of education now. Whilst the 'general' sexism in Peters' writings has already, naturally, been noticed and commented upon (e.g. Phelan and Garrison 1994), a brief collection of some of the actually rather shocking specific instances of his mention of women in his writing has not been published with commentary.

The paper considers three connected aspects. Firstly, it suggests that the manner in which Peters mentioned women, as examples, in his argumentation could be a current problem for philosophy of education as a community. A problem would occur, I suggest, largely on account of implicit sexism bias. Such a form of bias can be held by both men and women and is subconscious. It is an unspoken and even unrecognised assumption that women are lesser, compared to men. I indicate below that valuing the voice of Peters – in line with the esteem he is held in – may imply agreeing *implicitly* with his presentation of women as inferior, unless strong and deliberate counter claims are made within the community of educational philosophers. Actively disowning this aspect of his work is needful, for otherwise, a silence is in place that can (more significantly) allow subtle and subconscious bias to have invidious and unintentional effects for women as philosophers of education. I do not *claim* implicit bias is the current case, but I raise the issue for consideration in light of some work done on the issue as acting against women as philosophers, in philosophy as singular discipline.

Secondly, how Peters portrays what could nowadays be called 'educational alternative' stances of the progressive 'child-centered' variety (for what I mean for 'progressive' these days, see e.g. Fielding 2010; Thomas and Pattison 2012), is discussed to highlight the modern denigration of such approaches as linked to Peters' presentation of women. By clearly linking women to educational progressive (nowadays, also 'alternative') approaches, the question is asked whether Peters has contributed to creating a situation within philosophy of education where Peters' educational un-mattering of women stops validity being given to this form of education, as connected.

Thirdly, I make some brief comments about the implications of the above two possible bias issues for flourishing deep seated diversity of epistemological, as well as female gendered, activity. How does a modern field of educational philosophy, formed and functioning from within a community of philosophy of education that Peters helped significantly to found and whose philosophical constructs and conceptual legacies it has inherited, consider and question the issue of his presentation of women and his connections of women to a certain kind of education?

For my argument to hold it relies on what *exactly* Peters says about women in his writings. My comments relevant to today are based on this language and the fact of this in our modern community. It is suggested this language of Peters has a power that is an influence still, in ways which can be fruitfully and helpfully brought into conscientization.

### **R.S. Peters and women: What does he say about them?**

Naturally when one reads Peter's writing, allowances are made that the period of the 60s and 70s in which he wrote some of his key texts was still to see social forms of gender equalising such as law attempting to generate equal pay. That social period was still to better appreciate that women might have more to their capacities than being a supportive 'loving wife' (R. S. Peters 1967, 1) to a man. Crucially the form that writing took back then did not require acknowledgement of both genders. It almost exclusively addressed itself to men and spoke about men or boys when speaking about 'people'. For instance:

We talk about a person being trained as a philosopher, scientist, or cook, when we wish to draw attention to his acquired competence in a specific discipline of thought or art which has its intrinsic standards; we do not use the phrase 'education as a philosopher, scientist, or cook'. We can, however, ask the further question whether such people are educated *men*. (R. S. Peters 2007, 61, emphasis in the original)

But, there is something about the way in which Peters spoke about men as people that excludes women. For instance:

In a teaching situation love must be a type that is appropriate to the special type of relationship in which the teacher is placed, to his concept of them as pupils rather than as sons or brothers. (Peters 2007, 64).

Women do not seem to exist in an educational universe of Peters' imagination. For a philosopher – a supposed thinker – who existed in a world where approximately half (and possibly more due to the second world war) of his local community of acquaintances were women, and who was personally in relationships with women, Peters does however not acknowledge women and females in general in his writings as existing with any authenticated presence, autonomy or educational voice. Even when he mentions in his argumentation a 'woman's equality issue' such as a fair wage and voting rights he manages to miss the larger point of female suffering in favour of an analytical approach and write with a surprising level of emotional and social 'distance' from what the issue of voting and wage inequality actively signifies for those affected (R. S. Peters 1966a). He writes in a way that Jane Roland Martin calls 'an ivory tower person' (1981, 104) certainly. But furthermore, lest we forget, he actively objectifies women in his writing as the following quote from this same essay on equality would suggest: 'Similarly whether a man fixes his eye on one girl in the street rather than another is not a matter of justice, whatever its status in the sphere of manners.' (op.cit. 124).

Two further examples from his writing show this tendency to portray women and the female as present for the decisions and existence of a man and their invisibility when it comes to educational matters:

Even Hobbes, thought to be one of the precursors of modern totalitarianism, presumed that the sovereign would not interfere with matters such as the subject's choice of vocation, choice of wife, and choice of education for his children. (R. S. Peters 1966b, 205)

In deciding, for instance, whether to inflict corporal punishment on a pupil, one difference in the situation might be that this boy is the son of a political enemy. (R. S. Peters 1966a, 122)

This is a distortion of an educational truth, even for his time. Women were very much connected to their children's education as home-makers and mothers. Naturally, girls abounded in schools. In terms of educational decision making and power, looking after the course of a child's education, was, in the period of the 60s from whence these extracts come, not just a man's domain at all and possibly quite the opposite. I remember my grandparents, whose children were schooled in the 50s and 60s, disclosing to me that one division of labour in the marriage was the understanding that my grandmother – an 'educated' woman - was to be in charge of the children's education. Furthermore, to focus on the second quote just given, a political enemy might have a *daughter* who needs a thrashing; a girl might be a school pupil. But that does not seem to be possible in Peter's imagination or indeed within a concept of a school, as portrayed in this instance. It sounds rather like the school in which pupils reside are, by default, single sex establishments for boys. In 1966, this was not educational *reality*. The action and effect is to deny the (valid) existence of females, through writing. They are written out. This is a pernicious silencing of denial (see Zerubavel 2006). It also raises questions, I believe, about Peters' status as an educationist. Different people will see that in different ways of course and make different levels of consideration of the time in which Peters wrote as a justification or such a stance in his writings. Perhaps at the time of Peters' writing of these texts it was less of a question mark over his educationist status, even through the eyes of women, given what was culturally expected and accepted then. Today, however, in the light of improved gender equality and less denial and silence around the role of women in society as educational players and decision makers, I suggest it marks him – for us - as deficient.

The way in which Peters *does* mention women adds to the impression of them as being silenced. They are portrayed as deserving low status, existing with a lack of autonomy and there is a disinterest in recognising their existence as a part of a written educational discussion. Even for his time the extent to which this occurs is striking. If we compare this approach to women to another writer of his period, Thomas S. Kuhn, we see in Kuhn's writings a linguistic disregard for women but no stand-out mentions of them (Kuhn 1962). Erich Fromm, as another writer of Peter's generation, is also 'of his time' in the way he writes without gender neutrality (Fromm 1956) but he does not offend a modern woman's sensibilities with his old fashioned ways. Peter's mentions of women stand out.

This happens in modern times with perhaps some level of pain for women reading his texts now. It would be interesting in the future to conduct a survey of women in the field of philosophy of education to gauge their responses to Peters and his mentions of women. For present purposes of conscientization with a view to such possible wider action, I can offer a personal account of one woman (new) in the field: I myself do not want, when encountering a canonical writer in the academic field of my activity, to have to wade through Peters' mentions of women. They actively offend me and, in fact, without fail. Each time he mentions women I find it humiliating and I am yet to read a mention he makes of women in his texts which is not distasteful to my modern understanding of myself and my fellow women. I am also left with a distasteful sense that the men and women who are my colleagues now, do not challenge this when Peters is used and is esteemed. I have found it

strange that I have never, before offering this article, openly heard disapproving mention of this tendency of Peters' in discussion. I assumed it was a widely understood matter that Peters is a problem in this regard, and yet in the development of this article I have received some (encouraging) comments from reviewers who both recognise the silence and indicate they believe it is time this issue emerged from the shadows. This is also not just an issue dealing with the past. When I discovered in the last year a recent reprinting of Peters work involving negative mentions of woman, without editing or prefacing about this (i.e. Peters 2007) it affected me such that I felt betrayed by modern scholarship standards that his gender blindness and strange or clichéd sexist comments about females are not dealt with. I doubt I am the only woman to feel this way.

Different people will have different levels of sensitivity to this matter. Is it really so bad? Am I being oversensitive? Let us then consider a few more examples and the issue can be an open question. When Peters mentions women they are in the following kind of positions: a girl is from a remand home, a mother is insufficient, a female teacher has only an unevicenced hunch for her views (see R. S. Peters 1959, 56, 116, 130). Girls have no taste or common-sense: 'girls [who] develop outwards from this solid centre' of liking boys for the right reasons not the wrong ones (Peters 2007, 66). Women are amongst the mad and Nazis: 'It is no use employing logical arguments with a maniac, a hysterical woman, or an enraged Nazi.' (Peters 1966a, 125).

When it comes to his discussion of women's rights, Peters offers the following criticisms on behalf of women:

In the case of voting, for instance, anyone who is prepared to argue the case will never base his proposal purely on the fact that women are women. There are, of course, those who have a completely irrational attitude. For them women may simply be classed as inferior beings. But argument is pointless with such people... (Peters 1966a, 127).

That might be viewed as Peters sticking up for women. Peters goes on shortly after to suggest other considerations concerning women's rights:

If however, a person is really prepared to argue he will produce reasons related to principles such as those of the consideration of people's interests or respect for persons. He will connect 'being a woman' with other properties such as being ignorant of public affairs, or being influenced too much by emotion or by the opinion of her husband, which are relevant to what he considers to be the point of the activity. He may also point out that children and imbeciles are not permitted to vote. Presumably this is because it is thought that matters of private and public interest are not well promoted by the votes of those who lack a knowledge of public affairs. Or it may be thought that they are not fully 'persons'. Are women, therefore, in these respects, which are accepted as relevant, different from men? But supposing women *are* ignorant. Supposing it is argued that the illiterate should be excluded from voting as well as women for more or less the same reasons. The issue is not yet settled. For what of their dignity as persons? Should not their point of view be taken into account of even though it is not a well-informed one? And how is their point of view to be taken into account of if they have no opportunity of expressing it? (Peters 1966a, 127-128)

I suggest that even if this is the way that argument takes its structure, is the end effect to portray women as questionably informed, questionably eloquent, questionably rational? Is it innocent discussion or is there something there that could offend a woman reading this 'use'

of women to prove a male philosopher's point? Ought we to wonder about it?

Another strange inclusion of mention of women - in a 'helpful' context of their domination by men: 'The 'mixed-up kid' who says that he cannot help trying to strangle his girl-friend is committing a logical absurdity...' (Peters 1959, 60). I offer to this present exercise in consideration a final example:

When Pope said that women have no characters at all he was not, surely, suggesting that they were dishonest, selfish, and mendacious. Presumably he was suggesting that they were fickle, inconstant, and sporadic in conforming to standards because they were at the mercy of their moods and inclinations. Or he might have been suggesting that they took their standards entirely from their husbands or from the clique in which they happened to collect. (Peters 1959, 113)

### **What Affects from Peters on the Status of Women in Philosophy of Education Today?**

Although scholars may have some reservations with regard to educational arguments, Peters is esteemed in the community of philosophy of education (eg Cuypers and Martin 2011; Hirst 1986a). The event of Peters' recent death in old age brought forth, naturally, further remarks about his position and contribution to philosophy of education, as currently experienced. For instance, this obituary comment by the London Institute of Education Director Chris Husbands: 'His contribution to the philosophy of education cannot be overestimated, and many of his works on the aims of education still command a global readership almost fifty years after they were written' (IoE 2012).

Let us remember, as if it were significant for philosophy of education, that Peters is read around the world. This includes countries where serious and systemic neglect, abuse and inequality towards women takes place, such as Nigeria. I know that for a fact because a Google analytics style programme tells me really rather often (via on online profile page I have) that "R. S. Peters AND aims of education" (or a variant) searches, landing on my page, come from Nigeria and other countries where women are poorly protected from male abuses. It is not politically disputed that women in many countries, such as those that produce people searching for information on R.S. Peters via search engines, are viewed as less than men. This is still widely prevalent to the point of often being blatantly and unashamedly against a woman's human rights. Wiley Blackwell, as publisher of the journal connected to the organisation (Philosophy of Education Society Great Britain) that Peters helped to found, offers access links on their website page for that journal to Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, India and many other places condemned for their violent and regular abuses of women. His books may have made their way to these countries.

As a part of philosophy of education scholarship, to what extent does R. S. Peters' written portrayal of women perpetuate social and personal difficulties for women in such countries, rather than offer other, happier, alternative perspectives as developed contemporaneously in some countries by feminism. When philosophy of education, as influenced by Peters, is put into play in these countries, what impact does it have on education as a mixed gendered activity? Given that we often deliberately denounce and exclude sexist writings in today's journal submissions and outputs, can we control Peters, esteemed abroad - and esteem supported abroad by esteem closer to a more gender-equal home base - as *not* acting against our present wishes in this regard? Is he a good ambassador for philosophy of education supported for consumption abroad, without a robust stance that

can deal with this aspect of his presentation to the public in particular?

### **Implicitness**

Given the above examples of writing from Peters portraying or hinting at women as deficient, does this esteem and influence underpin and support something in philosophy of education that feminist philosophers from philosophy as a singular discipline are beginning now to highlight as a serious issue for their field? Is esteeming R.S. Peters, in part, an academic's problem? Work by Jenny Saul and Helen Beebee, heads of the philosophy department of the University of Sheffield and School of Philosophy, Theology & Religion at University of Birmingham respectively, offer a new perspective on matters to do with gender inequality in philosophy. They highlight the fact that women in philosophy constitute around only 20 percent of posts, for instance (Beebee and Saul 2011). They further suggest that what goes on in philosophy is implicit bias, which is non-deliberate prejudice:

Recent psychological research has shown that most people—even those who explicitly and sincerely avow egalitarian views—hold ‘implicit biases’ against such groups as blacks, women, gay people, and so on, based on unconscious stereotypes of these groups. (2011, 12)

If R.S. Peters, with his stereotypically sexist portrayals (direct or indirect) of women as helpless, deficient and clueless is part of philosophy of education and philosopher women are showing by exposition from research that stereotypes cause unconscious sexism, what effect does R.S. Peters as esteemed and influential have on the thinking of people in philosophy of education about women as philosophers and equal colleagues in the academy? It is worth considering if the presence of such writing in the canon of philosophy of education adds to what is clearly a powerful social issue such that ‘Even... members of the ‘targeted’ group are susceptible to implicit bias...’ (ref. citation above). One could conclude, at best, Peters in the canon does not *help* equality of perception of women as equally as competent as men. I think it is fair to suggest that Peters going unquestioned and there being a continuing silence about this matter of his writing-comments on women aids a situation where a woman as an excellent and valid philosopher of education is somehow slightly deviant. She is not esteemed as an equal in any respect to the male philosopher of education. Beebee discusses women in philosophy as being seen as ‘atypical’ and ‘therefore counted as deviant in some way’ (Beebee forthcoming). Such a situation means that male philosophers are normative for the discipline as what a philosopher *is*, and women are required to conform: to be a male philosopher in order to be a proper philosopher; to speak and think according to a phallogocentrism that defines women by what they lack, not what they offer. This is of course something which many philosophers, both male and female, have pointed to critically in their commentaries of thinking (eg Derrida 2004; Irigaray 1985). Perhaps it is good and scholarly for philosophy of education to consider *to what extent* phallogocentrism is stubbornly occurring in its own arena because of the influence of R.S. Peters.

### **Women as Silly Educationists and R.S. Peters**

As the previous section showed, Peters wrote in an unfortunate way when the subject (in both senses of the term, as topic and as object) of women came into his writing. What I have not yet highlighted is that this denigration was extended to women's educational activity. Education as activity has developed since the start of compulsory schooling in the late 19<sup>th</sup>

century with a patriarchal and masculine epistemology (Pendlebury 2005). The very recent challenge to this epistemology by feminist philosophers of education seeking to widen the framework of available perspectives about what constitutes valid education is an important advance. Work on care and the home by philosophers such as Nel Noddings and Jane Roland Martin shows how significantly feminist forms of knowing have been ignored and kept invisible (Noddings 1984; Jane Roland Martin 2011). Women and their thoughts about education have been missing (Jane Roland Martin 2003).

With recent initiatives from the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain having funded gatherings of female (and male) philosophers (in particular early career philosophers of education) offering support to development of female networking, women are finding new levels of voice in the scholarly community. My presentation here then is perhaps foremost to highlight a legacy of writing, thinking and no doubt networking, that was in the past without an awareness of gender as a vibrant part of what philosophy of education is and can be in a positive manner. It is also to present a problematisation of a legacy that does not offer such positivity for the actualisation of a newly thriving gender equality in philosophy of education, if such potential is troubled by an *unqualified* regard for a key community figure in relation to this 'woman' issue. Clearly, without specific problematisation in this 'woman' respect regard for R.S. Peters is then wrongly construed and perpetuated. Problems with him are not just about his educational arguments.

A few gatherings of women networking and discussing philosophy, of course, does not significantly impact instantly on the possibility that the legacy mentioned is soaked inexorably and deeply into the epistemological bones of philosophy of education. To dissolve a patriarchally and masculine soaked perspective will not happen overnight. We are, as Paul Standish says, in commenting on the passing of R.S. Peters, now at 'the end of an era' (IoE 2012). To make a transfer to another situation, to another era, where women are not 'deviant' or 'atypical' as philosophers of education but are instead normal and the epistemology of education is deep-seatedly and authentically variant, not determinant, is a long term project. In being long term it addresses both the reality that modern philosophy of education *is* a community open to diverse perspectives (Chambliss 2009; Hayden 2012) *and* the aporias which allow that diversity to seem to answer the issues brought forward here, yet where the situation does not go far enough in recognising factors in the heritage of philosophy of education demanding closer scrutiny for deep seated diversity to flourish.

What I now wish to focus on then - but briefly - for its links to the 'woman issue' discussed here, is that Peters did not like 'progressive education'. It was too vague: 'It cannot remain for long romantically aloft once the glare of philosophical analysis is turned upon it.' (Peters 2007, 59). He furthermore linked it to women: 'He, or more likely, she, tends to believe that education consists in the development from within of potentialities...' (58). Peters criticises the progressive educational foci of ' "growth" and "self-realisation", as caricatures of an educational situation': he prefers 'determinateness about standards' (p59). There is a flaw in Peters' reasoning here. He also admitted that 'there are many issues... on which no work exists at all. What, for instance, is meant by "education"?' (R.S. Peters 1973, 3). So, what is progressive education a caricature of, if we don't know what is meant by education?

What happens in this regard seems to be a dismissal of a certain form of 'progressive' education by virtue, I suggest, of its connection to the female. I will base my presentation not so much on what Peters says as argument against such education: that is the topic for an entire other paper. I will instead limit myself here to comments on his writing. Whenever Peters mentions this form of education, he has a habit of moving from use of the male

persona to signify a teacher or educationist, to that of a female persona. For instance, in the essay *What is an Educational Process?* (R. S. Peters 1967), Peters notably uses the word man again and again (and all personae in the writing are male), yet at page 16, where he begins to mention education that involves 'spontaneous curiosity' the writing takes a negative turn and comments such as 'rather a lot of nonsense is talked in this context about children 'discovering' things' (p. 17). The teacher involved written about over the length of these two pages has become suddenly female. As indicated above, Peters saw those connected to progressivism as 'more likely, she' (Peters 2007, 58). It is a connection that denigrates both I suggest, given that women are portrayed by him – as I suggest above - also as lesser; with progressivism as less valid than the kind of 'liberal education' Thiessen identifies is Peter's real philosophical concern: 'normative, cognitive and procedural criteria of education' (Thiessen 1989, 1). Thus, 'the undifferentiated concept of education which refers in a very general way to the bringing up or rearing of children' (ibid) is women's work and not of educational value (see Jane Roland Martin 1981), whilst a concept of education that is clearly philosophically analytically 'manipulatable' is important and a valid concept for tinkering with. Peters is behaving with regard to education as though that which is hegemonically in the realm of the feminine (during the time of his writing) is not education at all. Whilst this might be old news for philosophers of education today who have studied Peters' approach, what I suggest it creates today is an underpinning for conversations about education that feeds concerns, priorities and delimits arenas of philosophical conversation about education which *persist* in devaluing and de-validating 'women's work' or, in more modern terms, a certain type and kind of educational activity that Peters was perhaps *right* to connect to women. Women do 'progressivist' education, of its 'child centred' kind, *well*<sup>1</sup> (Jane Roland Martin 2011). Peters' connected denigration of both is a phallic fallacy ripe for investigation of its rationale. I consider that looking at how he portrays women in his writing offers such investigation materials.

It is well known that Peters was instrumental in developing philosophy of education as a discipline and used analytical rigour as a style to develop and underpin much needed validity: 'there can be little doubt that the new order took any reputable educational philosophy to be continuous with a particular tradition of Anglo-American logical or conceptual analysis' (Carr 1998, 181). What we 'know' is that the reason of such thought is dominantly male, not female (Lloyd 1984). So, not only can we make links at the surface of Peters writing and question those links for their pernicious effects on value and validity of different forms and concepts of education but we can dig deeper. Does R.S. Peters conflating women and a certain style of education, compounded by his influence, turn that style of education into a style that is less valid than educational thought able to withstand 'the glare of philosophical analysis' (see above) – that type of analysis clearly being analytical? Is the fact that educational alternatives, including progressivist ideas (but not determined by them) are marginal and marginalised in Great Britain now (Conroy 2010; Lees 2011), part of a picture where education is historically not linked to women, not developed by women and women are devalued in the face of deciding what counts educationally? Indeed, if such education does not have at present as vital and vibrant a role in philosophy of education than it could I suggest it might be because of R.S. Peters and his formative influence on the field .

<sup>1</sup> Which is not to say that men do not also do it well, of course.

## More Than One

Clearly Peters is not the only figure in such a situation as just described. There are many factors of which he might be one. But what is clear is that his writing about women in his educational philosophy creates effects. My own distaste at reading his remarks is an example. Other, more substantive links, have been hinted at in this presentation but they suggest that further in-depth work, outside the current scope of this consciousness raising article, is needed. A final question here I would like to raise is why this presentation of women is so little remarked upon? Since my own first exposure to what seems to me personally to be a wonderful community of philosophers of education who seem to *actively* strive to include women, despite a poor record of this elsewhere in higher education philosophy, why a silence about Peters' language about women? Are we just too busy to bother to notice and create conversations about it when there are so many other, nicer things to talk about? Is *not* noticing and *not* mentioning a question of overlooking a small detail about Peters? Or, is it a factor in more substantial concerns and questions to do with modern philosophy of education as significantly founded by Peters?

Outing Peters then (further) as an influential sexist writer who may be contributing to inevitable implicit bias and other worries such as stereotype threat (under-performance because it is expected of a woman – see Beebee and Saul 2011; Saul forthcoming) is to problematise adulation of his contribution to what philosophy of education has become. Women are not missing (so much) these days. Yet perhaps silences need to be broken before we can consciously realise that some things are missing, are silences and are important contributions – such as due regard and wide ranging discussions for 'otherwise' educational alternatives philosophical approaches and perceptions of women philosophers of education as natural and normal, not bucking a back-story. These are contributions that can only emerge if we submit ourselves to conscientization; if we question the role and influence of this 'great founding father' (see Cuypers and Martin 2010, p.3); if we look at the generation of effects *for* philosophy of education that do not *found* but determine, at cost to women and educational difference, because of links to women and negative portrayals. These are contributions of critique furthermore that no longer suffer a rationale to support their exclusion through silence, as acted out by an 'acceptable' former time's less equal social (and personal) attitude in philosophy of education.

## Redrawing the map?

Conceptual mapping – which is something Peters found very important (Hirst 1986b) - is fine and good but concepts are not for human manipulation without attending to their 'reality' as Megan Laverty argues, for they have 'to use Stephen Mulhall's phrase, "genuine substance"... They are *not* mere epiphenomena' (Laverty 2010, 34, emphasis in original). In other words, 'It is within the complex interplay of meaning and life that concepts come to be understood in greater depth. Conceptual understanding is progressive.' (op cit, 36). This 'interplay' includes women. I suggest therefore that the writings of Peters, in the ways that they conceptually exclude women and denigrate women as thinkers, damage philosophy of education. The truth of educational thought is significantly underplayed in terms of complexity in Peters.

Sadly, Peters was good at dismissing women as being involved in education. Katz notices, 'his casual dismissal of child-rearing' (Katz 2010, 101). Haydon acknowledges his lack of appreciation that 'study and reflection on the moral development of girls and women

could bring a distinctive perspective to the field, and that Peter's language is unremittingly not gender-neutral' (Haydon 2010, 184-5). It is this ease of Peters' as a philosopher in speaking educationally without women that I suggest is suspect: wrong, flawed and open to question. It also has affects as I have hinted at above that are about what we know about education. In this sense, Peters as a writer who writes badly of and about women is limiting educational understanding, not developing it.

## Conclusion

Not everyone will agree with my presentation and the implications it bears for what we do and how we do it in philosophy of education. Perhaps it is in modern *differences* of response to the issues being pointed to that any debate for a 21<sup>st</sup> century philosophy of education community, about Peters as an educationist 'for all', is located. I think that there will be clear differences of opinion: between those who consider there is something to the idea that Peters is, in this respect of his writing about women, a troublesome figure for the community, and those who think that this 'heritage' from Peters does not matter today. More than in any denigration of Peters himself, it is in the debate caused about our modern differences of opinion about this, that I see that the interest and potential for scholarly development is located. The value *to be had now* is in consideration of what the field is and might be for women especially, given likely differences from various quarters in reaction to the presentation here.

To give him his due: R.S. Peters was an ardent academic worker and without his personal contribution philosophy of education would likely be less than it is today. He was a pioneer of philosophy of education. Busy people miss things inevitably. But to miss the importance of half the human race? What kind of educational thought is that? What kind of educational philosophy has it founded? What kind of community did it begin? I simply suggest this is worth thinking about some more, because, whether male or female, we care about what we do.

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