

REALISM AND EDUCATION

Fundamental Principles of Realism

1. Metaphysics - Phenomenal World is true: In the words of Ross, "Realism simply affirms the existence of an external world and is therefore the antithesis of subjective idealism. Realists have full faith in the truth and reality of the matter. They have no faith in any world beyond this real world and life. The basic principle of philosophic realism is that matter is the ultimate reality. Hills, trees, cities and stones are not simply ideas in the minds of observing individual or even in the mind of eternal observer. They exist in and of themselves, independently of the mind. The external world might be known or unknown by man, but is reality. It is not at the mercy of man. It exists independently of being known to, perceived by or related to mind. Man can only comprehend it through the media of his senses. One need to dip below the surface to know reality Maitique says "A wise man sees as much as he ought, not as much as he can."

2. Epistemology-Senses are Doors of Knowledge: Realists believe that senses are the doors and gateways of knowledge. True and real knowledge comes through our senses and is the result of our control with the external world through the media of the senses. Bertrand Russell who is neo-realist, writes " I contend that ultimate constituents of matter are not atoms.... but sensations. I believe that the stuff of our mental life..... consists wholly of sensations and images."

3. Theory of Organism: All conscious and non-conscious things form an organism which is a reality. Whitehead writes, "The universe is a vibrating organism in the process of evolution. Change is the fundamental feature of this vibrating universe. The very essence of real actuality is process. Mind must be regarded as the function of the organism." The concept of mind of a realist is quite different from that of idealist who believe that mind is infinite and absolute. Realists, in place, believe that like other material things, mind has mechanical functioning. It discount the creative ability of man. In the words of Harbert, " Mind is what it studies." It is difficult to accept this view of education as it amounts to portray that the mind is mere a camera to register the reality

of the universe. However, this position is not acceptable to other philosophers because mind has a lot of scope for enrichment, elevation and creativity.

4. Opposition of Idealism: Realism is opposed to idealism in the sense that it believes that there is no place for imagination. They have a firm belief that there is no such entity as God, soul or other worldliness. All such things are the creation of human imagination and thus are not real. They assert the scientific realities of matter and that its attributes are true and real.

5. Man A part of Material World: Realism places great emphasis on Man and human endeavor, which should be combined with science and also with common sense. It has no belief in transcendental life. It, in place, wishes a man to be a practical man, man of affairs and seeker of truth and reality. Realists want a man to be man of sterner virtue who can perform all his objectives of life realistically and magnanimously. He is to be useful to himself, society and the country.

6. Emphasis on Experimentation and Scientific Reasoning: According to realism no experience can be accepted as true unless it is analyzed and classified in totality. It builds up a body of knowledge which is objective and agrees with the stand of physical sciences. It has a distinctive faith in observation experience, experimentation and scientific reasoning. For them experience is the touch-stone of what is real. Whenever the simple and direct experience cannot determine the objective truth, the commonsense puts it in scientific research. In realism, the role of intelligence is of great significance in the present age of falling ideals and falling idols as it is intelligence which formulates concepts and develops general and abstract ideas.

7. Importance of Present Life: Rusk says, "The aim of new realism is to expound a philosophy which is not inconsistent with the facts of common life and with the development of physical. Science". There is no need to bother about heaven or hell. One needs to place emphasis upon physical and material existence. Realists are for molding and directing of human behaviour as conditioned by firstly physical and material facts and secondly the object of present human life. All this goes long way in promoting human welfare and happiness.

Types of Realism:

In the thought process it can be of two types i.e. Rational realism and natural or scientific realism.

1. Rational Realism- This may be further divided into "classical realism" and "religious realism". The main form of religious realisms is "scholasticism", the official philosophy of the Roman

Catholic Church. Both schools bear the imprint of the Athenian philosopher Aristotle. However, rational realists look directly to Aristotle, the scholastics do so only indirectly, basing their thought on that of St. Thomas Aquinas. By harnessing the doctrines of Aristotle to the theology of the Church, Aquinas created a new Christian philosophy, later called "Thomism," in opposition to the modified Platonism espoused by most theologians of his time.

2. Natural and Scientific Realism: This branch of philosophic realism, accompanied the rise of science in Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, its leading spokesmen have been Francis Bacon, John Locke, David Hume, John Stuart Mill, Ralph Barton Perry, Alfred North Whitehead, and Bertrand Russell.

Skeptical and experimental in temper, natural realism maintains that philosophy should seek to imitate the rigor and objectivity of science rather than philosophy to investigate its properties. Philosophy's function is to coordinate the concepts and findings of the different sciences. They believe that right and wrong come from man's understanding of nature. In explaining it, they do not oppose religion. They believe that science and religion rather complement each other and give full explanation and the mysteries of the universe. They held an opinion that things are valuable which help man to adjust himself to his environments. They want man to grow as a whole and into a complete being. They believe that man ever remains imperfect so he should go on making efforts to perfect himself. The most significant feature of the universe is that it is permanent and enduring. Change is real, but it takes place in accordance with permanent laws of nature, which gives the universe a continuing structure. The world's permanence is the background against which changes occur and may be assessed:

Natural realists declare that man is a biological organism with a highly developed nervous system and an inherently social disposition. There is no need to suppose that his cultural achievements are due to a separate entity known as mind or soul. What we call 'thought' is really a highly complex function of the organism that relates it to its environment - similar in kind though not in degree, to such other functions as respiration, assimilation, and metabolism. Most scientific realists deny the existence of free will, they argue that the individual is determined by the impact of the physical and social environment on his genetic structure.

Since in the realist view, the world exists independently of man and is governed by laws over which we have little control, the school should transmit a central core of subject matter that will

acquaint the pupil with the world around him. The Catholic realist adds that since the order and harmony of the universe are the result of Divine creation, we should study nature as God's handiwork. In his view the prime purpose of education is to prepare the individual person for life in the hereafter. For the classical realist the purpose of education is to enable the pupil to become an intellectually well-balanced person, as against one who is simply "well adjusted" to his physical and social environment.

Forms of Realism in Educational Thought

It has three forms i.e. Humanistic Realism, Social Realism and Sense Realism.

(a) Humanistic Realism: It is the same as classical realism. In day to day life a thing is called classical if and when it seeks to make a high peak of achievement. Old literature i.e. Bible, which too is classic, is important in the education of the youth as it is the product of human intelligence. They hold the opinion that classical literature is a source of models of excellence. A thing is said to be classic because it is relevant for ever. A model of excellence is always relevant to learn even now. It is why that by reading the classic literature, one gets insight of reality.

The humanists or classical realists aims at producing scholar and a professional men and emphasize the study of classic in order to understand the social life and institutions of those days which can serve as models for orienting our present life.

(b) Social Realism: It aims at producing men of affairs', thus the aim of education should be to prepare practical man who is worldly wise. Montaigne considers virtue' as the aim of education. In accordance with his thought process virtue is the foster mother of all human pleasures and without it the whole course of life is unnatural, turbulent and deformed. The realists are all out for practical and useful education and want the teacher to train judgement rather than memory. In the words of John Locke a gentleman's calling is "to have the knowledge of man of business, a carriage suitable to his rank, and to be eminent and useful to his country, according to his situations." Such realists prefer experience to studies, as studies are only means to an end and not end in themselves. They advocate the study of genealogy, riding, fencing, gymnastic, modern language and customs of institutions of neighboring countries

(c) Sense Realism The essence of this school of thought is that all knowledge comes through the senses and reasons rather than through memory. In the words of Bertrand Russell. "Thoughts, beliefs, desires, pains and emotions are all built up out of sensations and images."

It regards nature as the treasure house of all scientific knowledge, which must be attained by training the senses. It seeks to replace literary and linguistic studies by scientific ones. They are eloquent and persuasive defenders of scientific education. Montaigne was all out for knowledge acquired through senses rather than books. In the words of Herbert Spencer, "Whether for intellectual, moral or religious training, the study of surrounding phenomena is immensely superior to the study of grammar and lexicons." Similarly, his contemporary Henry Huxley pleaded for even greater eloquence. In the introduction into schools of a "complete and through scientific culture, which should be commenced with the dawn of intelligence." Bacon was of the view, "The natural sciences as well as physical sciences alone will relieve the sufferings of men, raise and refine their standard of living, enrich their minds and enable them to live happily together." Their three major contributions to education are: (i) Formulation of inductive method(ii) Advocacy of mother-tongue as medium of instruction. (iii) Substitution of new scientific and social studies for studies in language and literature.

Realist Values and Education:

Realists agree with idealists that fundamental values are basically permanent, but they differ among themselves in their reasons for thinking so. Classical realists agree with Aristotle that there is a universal moral law, available to reason that is binding on all of us as rational beings. They, therefore, emphasize that education should aim at the cultivation of reasoning power and want that children should be taught to live by absolute moral standards. It is indicative of the fact that what is right for an individual should be right for all others also. They believe that virtues do not come to the man automatically, these have to be acquired and inculcated so it is the right reason which establishes the universal moral laws. The task of education thus is to train man and his intellect. God will help man to the make 'correct choices' and observe discipline which is helpful in eliminating bad habits and cultivating good ones. In their view reason need to be supplemented by faith. Scientific realists deny that values have any supernatural sanction. Good is that which accommodates us to our environment, evil is that which estranges us. Because both human nature

and physical nature are constant, the values they accommodate the one or the other are constant also. It is true that social institutions and practices vary considerably in various parts of the world, but basic values remain the same. Where idealists hold man to be perfectible, scientific realists accept him as he is imperfect. He should, therefore, go ahead to perfect himself. According to realists right and wrong come from man's understanding of nature. In this way they do not oppose religion and hold the view that both religion and science are complimentary as long as they give full explanation of the mysteries of the universe. They hold the view that the things are valuable which help man to adjust himself to his environment. They recognize these values which can be expressed and tested scientifically and are helpful in realising man's 'wholeness' or 'completeness.'"

Aims of Education and Realism:

- a) **Formation of Complete Man:** Education is primarily concerned with the world as it is here and now. According to Realists, education must aim at the formation of a complete man, skilled in art and industry." It can be possible if all aspects of man i.e. physical, moral and intellectual are developed.
- b) **Preparation for a Happy and Successful Life:** Milton is of the view: A complete and generous education is one which gets a man to perform skillfully, justly and magnanimously all offices both private and public in peace and war. It can be possible if an individual learns all those skills, practical knowledge in general and professional functions in particular so as to make his life happy in the social set up in which he lives and promote welfare of the social as well.
- c) **Complete Knowledge of Nature and Social Environment:** A child is to be exposed both to the external nature and social environments. It should give to the student the complete knowledge of the natural phenomenon around and also adequate understanding of human society, human nature, human motives and human intentions so as to enable himself to adjust social and natural environments.
- d) **Developing Physical and Mental Faculties:** Their aim is to produce a man who is both physically and mentally sound so as to solve his problems in the time to come. They want him to be receptive to beauty and human feelings.

e) Development and Training of Senses: Senses are the gateway of knowledge and as such need to be so developed that senses are in a position to perceive the realities of life and nature. Education should so sharpen the judgement and deposition of pupils that they are able to make sensible choices and decisions in order to lead a successful and pleasurable life. The natural tendencies, propensities and activities of the child develop to his utmost perfection so that he may control the natural environments to his best advantage.

f) Vocational Education: As education is to be of practical utility to the child, so the problem of livelihood is the main problem of life. Education must prepare him for a vocation so as to face the realities of life in an effective way.

Curriculum and Realism:

"A man is the original resource' of his nervous system, plus the content of all the subjects, he has studied, plus all other objective influences which have been brought to bear upon his nervous system in its introduction with such contents." It is, therefore, necessary that such an education be imparted which should not only provide enrichment to the individual in the present but also secure it for him when he grows up. He must grow up to be a man with concrete duties of life which he should perform decently and beautifully. In order to fix up the priorities of the curriculum the realist educator keeps in view:

- (a) Previous background of the pupil.
- (b) The relationship between different subjects and also between various parts of the subject.
- (c) The social demands of the pupil.

In order to be a useful member of the society the preferences of realists education are the following:-

- (a) The first priority is given to the scientific subjects like physics, and chemistry, zoology and botany, as these deal with nature and provide pupils with the requisite skill and knowledge for facing the realities of the world in an effective and successful way. They provide basic information for various branches of sciences as these provide socially and vocationally useful information to

the individual. Huxley advocates the introduction, in all schools, of a complete and through scientific culture which should commence as soon as intelligence dawns upon pupils.

(b) The second place is given to the mathematics and language. The realists believe that mathematics help in building up stern virtues of persistence, determination and toughness and helps the student to understand the world in its numerical and special aspects. They are precisely in favour of modern language which enables the students to conduct all types of social intercourse.

(c) Literature written in mother language has its place of importance, if it deals with contemporary problems.

(d) Realists place civics in high esteem so long as it explains the contemporary events to be understood in the light of relevant past events.

(e) They do not oppose the teaching of arts like painting and dancing, if it is taught objectively, but give them low priority.

(f) Realists are not opposed to the teaching of religion. They are not in favour of arranging the curriculum in water tight compartments, but advocate a system of co-ordination of different subjects and also their correlation with life. Basically, in place of subjects, they want projects which include activity and develop thinking.

Methods of Teaching and Realism:

Realist's system of teaching lays emphasis upon gaining knowledge through senses in accordance with the nature of the child and his capacity of observation and experience. The teacher places the facts before the child, as they exist. He is to be faithful conveyer of the facts. The facts, no doubt, should be logically united i.e. step by step. He should start with the part and build the whole. It is quite opposite to what idealist says that start from the whole and proceed to the parts analytically. The teacher is to teach through synthetic method. He begins with elements or parts and how under given conditions the wholes, shape themselves.

Realists believe in the principle of 'Aggregation' which can be explained that (a) a piece of wood (b) tools (c) carpenters, remain different entities in themselves when kept apart. They have little

beauty in their existence as such. But when the principle of aggregation is applied, something new, beautiful, i.e. table or chair, may come up. This may inspire and give pleasure to anyone who looks upon them. Realists want the teacher to realize and make perfect beauty the principle of aggregation. He should try to extract beauty out of the parts without destroying the beauty of the part. To him, education is the process of enquiry and reflection and is to vary with teachers, students and situations. The ingenuity of the teacher lies in creating a problematic situation, a situation that provokes the reaction and is a natural stimulus for the intellectual exercise of knowing or learning or thought. It was Bacon, the famous realist who introduced the inductive method, in the process of education. In this method, the child does self-learning to a great extent, by employing inductive method. It helps the students to distinguish truth from falsehood, to learn to see independently and to create useful things. This method involves collection, organisation, comparing, questioning and informing.

Milton, another realist advocated the method of learning by travelling. John Locke also advocated tours, observations and learning by experience as powerful means of education. The important thing to note is that realist regard all knowledge as one unit. This advocates the principle of correlation between various subjects of study.

Realism and Teacher:

Montaigne has said that the teacher must have a well made rather than a well fitted head. The role of teacher, in Realism, is neither as high and important as the Idealist advocate nor so negligible as the Naturalists speak out, it is fairly important. It is why they have said, "A person to be a teacher must, first of all, be a well-bred gentlemen."

The realist insist upon training of teachers before they engage themselves in the teaching a work, in an effective way. It is one of the duties of the teacher to encourage the students to make their own discoveries so that they learn to stand on their own legs and proceed further in an effective way. He plays his role in such a way that his students become genuinely interested in their subject and their grip of subject is so based that knowledge and facts sink into their nervous system and become entirely imbibed with the spirit. In place of passing on the information, he imports good

manners. He is for the training of the judgement and understanding rather than the cultivation of memory.

He has firm conviction in science and appreciates the scientific methods. He removes the distinction between the school work and the real life outside the school. He tries to teach through men and things and to avoid the use of books as far as it is possible to do so. His slogan is 'things rather than words.'

Case histories of individual students is always of great assistance in establishing human relationships between the teacher and the taught. Individual attention, individual progress and individual ideas of the student is respected by the teacher.

Realism and Discipline:

It lays emphasis upon the social development of the child for which the moral and religious education plays an important role. They advocate self-discipline to effect smooth adjustment of the child with external environments. The teacher is not to impose discipline on him but is to inspire and encourage for the correct type of values. Comenius wants the school to be taken like the lap of mother i.e. full of love and affection. Realists, thus advocate synthetic form of discipline which should help him to adjust with the realistic world which exists in reality.

Realism and School:

All realists do not have the same type of views about the school. Some are of opinion that there should be no school at all. They place emphasis upon wide travelling tours and teaching by private tutors as the best means of education. However, good many of them place emphasis upon the importance of school and class teaching to a significant level. They regard school as the mirror of society reflecting its true state of affairs. Thus, the school should include all the activities which are going on in the society. It should also develop equipment and aids for effective observation and experimentation of the child. School, to them, is the institution which meets the needs of the child and demands of the society. Thus, school is the only institution which provides for the full development of the child according to his nature and needs. In addition, school is the institution which provides vocational education to prepare for a career. It is why that Comenius has said, 'Schools are the true foregoing places of men.'

Merits of Realism:

1. Realism insisted that education should be practical and utilitarian.
2. Realist prescribed the realistic and useful aims of education and insisted that aims should be directly related to the needs of individuals and demands of the society.
3. The importance of scientific education in curriculum is of great importance in the present era.
4. It has revolutionalised the methods of teaching. It is because of realism that inductive method has been replaced by deductive method. The realists have lead the educationists to have more faith in Heuristic, Experimental and Correlation devices.
5. Synthetic form of impressionistic and emancipatory discipline is the giving of realism.
6. It places emphasis upon objectivity. The objective methods of teaching and evaluation are gaining ground.
7. It has brought a change in the organizational patterns of school. Now these are increasingly becoming centers of joyful activities, practical engagements and interesting experiments. Children show eagerness to such schools.

