

115 學年度國立中央大學英文系碩士班甄試入學考試

【筆試試題】

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Directions: Please, read carefully the following excerpts from the conversation with philosopher of education Meira Levinson and public philosopher Nigel Warburton on the aims of education. Respond to Q1 and Q2. Please, do not go off topic.

Warburton: “Now, historically, societies have seen the point of education for society differently, haven’t they?”

Levinson: “Yes, that’s exactly right. State schools were founded in the United States. They were the first country in the world to have a universal system or at least relatively universal system of state funded education. And that was entirely for civic aims. And as other countries around the world adopted state funding schooling, that was again for civic purposes.

The idea was that you needed to create a new type of citizen for a new type of political order, for a democratic political order. And the justification for funding schools and, hence, for education as a whole was a civic one for a couple hundred years. In the last fifty years especially, there’s been a shift again around the world to justifying education from an economic perspective. And this reflects, I think, a shift in the growth of neoliberal perspectives in general about how we think about the good of a society and what it is that we’re trying to do. But now, yes, the language that justifies education and the primary social aim of education that gets talked about at a political level is an economic justification.”

Warburton: “So crudely, historically, the aim of education, particularly in America, was to equip people to be functioning within a democratic society. And that’s now been transformed into a question of, are they good for the GDP [=Gross Domestic Product]?”

Levinson: “Crudely, yes. That’s right. Before state schools were founded, the aim in the United States and elsewhere around the world was to create a virtuous person. Usually, that meant a religious person, somebody who was saved or walked in the way of God. So, yes, I would say very crudely, it went from the saving of the individual soul to the social aim of creating new citizens for a new democratic order, and now, yes, to the creation of creative workers for the XXI century economy who can promote the GDP.”

Q1: *Do you think you have been educated to promote the economy in Taiwan (or not)? Please, justify your response.*

Warburton: “We’ve been talking about how things are, but you’ve been thinking about education for a long time. I’d love to know how you think things should be?”

Levinson: “I think that we owe children the opportunity to develop the capacity for *autonomy*, to take charge of their lives, to figure out what a good life is from their perspective, whether or not that is consonant with what their family has taught them, the community, whatever, and to lead that life as they see fit. There are limitations on that. It should not be a criminal life, right? We’ll probably involve meaningful relationships with others, it should hopefully be economically self-sufficient, but in general I think that children should have the opportunity to lead lives that they think are valuable.”

Warburton: “Now this is a liberal position, and one of the challenges to liberalism is that you cultivate individual skills and qualities, but at the same time you have to live in a society with other people and to some extent you are formed by your position in society. So, liberalism is very good for the strong, powerfully autonomous people, but not so great for the people who are held back through inequalities.”

Levinson: “Yes, I think that one thing that’s important to realize is that even if we talk about autonomy as something that’s inside an individual person, in fact, that’s not true. That part of the characteristic of autonomy is a social characteristic of whether or not both your way of life is supported by society, but also what kinds of inequalities prevent you and others like you from pursuing ways of life that are valuable. And so, part of being

an autonomous individual is actually learning how to work with others in order to promote a more just society that allows not only oneself as an individual, but one's community and one's compatriots and eventually, ideally, the entire global world, to live lives that are valuable by individuals' own lives."

Warburton: "What would that mean in practice though, if I'm constructing my ideal education system? How would it be different from present-day education?"

Levinson: "One important way in which it would be different is that it would give children a lot of opportunity, in fact, to work with others, in order to identify problems that they see in the world, opportunities that they see in the world, to try to address them, improve them, enact them, so actually, give children a lot of opportunity to practice being citizens. In schools today, we give children basically daily opportunities to read, daily opportunities to write, to do mathematics, often daily opportunities to run around on the football pitch or whatever. Because we think that that kind of daily practice is essential to helping them become readers, writers, football players, scientists, whatever.

We do not give children daily opportunity to practice *citizenship*, and we should, because one thing that we know every child is going to grow up to be is a citizen—whether or not they will be a legal citizen of the country they are living in—they will be a resident of a country, and they will have social obligations and social opportunities, and so, it is essential that we give children the opportunity, in fact, to practice those skills of citizenship about getting together collectively in order to act, to improve society."

Q2: What does Levinson hold regarding education for autonomy and citizenship? Do you agree with Levinson (or not)? Please, justify your response.