

- [\*Paulo Freire\*](#)

Date: 1921-1997

A Brazilian committed to the cause of educating the impoverished peasants of his nation and [collaborating](#) with them in the pursuit of their liberation from oppression, Freire is best-known for his attack on what he called the "banking concept of education," in which the student was viewed as an empty account to be filled by the teacher.

- [\*Martin Heidegger\*](#)

Date: 1889-1976

Heidegger's philosophizing about education was primarily related to higher education. He believed that teaching and research in the university should be unified and aim towards testing and interrogating the "ontological assumptions presuppositions which implicitly guide research in each domain of knowledge."<sup>[16]</sup>

- [\*Allan Bloom\*](#)

Date: 1930-1992

Bloom, a professor of [political science](#) at the [University of Chicago](#), argued for a traditional [Great Books](#)-based [liberal education](#) in his lengthy essay [The Closing of the American Mind](#).

- [\*Jean Piaget\*](#)

Date: 1896-1980

Jean Piaget was a [Swiss developmental psychologist](#) known for his [epistemological](#) studies with children. His [theory of cognitive development](#) and epistemological view are together called "[genetic epistemology](#)". Piaget placed great importance on the education of children.

- [\*Maria Montessori\*](#)

The Montessori method is an approach to educating children based on the research and experiences of Italian physician and educator [Maria Montessori](#) (1870–1952). It arose essentially from Dr. Montessori's discovery of what she referred to as "the child's true normal nature" in 1907,<sup>[19]</sup> which happened in the process of her experimental observation of young children given freedom in an environment prepared with materials designed for their self-directed learning activity

- [\*Rudolf Steiner\*](#)

Date: 1861-1925

Steiner founded a holistic educational impulse on the basis of his spiritual philosophy ([anthroposophy](#)). Now known as [Steiner or Waldorf education](#), his pedagogy emphasizes a balanced development of [cognitive](#), [affective/artistic](#), and practical skills (head, heart, and hands). Schools are normally self-administered by faculty; emphasis is placed upon giving individual teachers the freedom to develop creative methods.

- [A. S. Neill](#)

Date: 1883-1973

Neill founded [Summerhill School](#), the oldest existing [democratic school](#) in Suffolk, England in 1921. He wrote a number of books that now define much of contemporary democratic education philosophy. Neill believed that the happiness of the child should be the paramount consideration in decisions about the child's upbringing, and that this happiness grew from a sense of personal freedom. He felt that deprivation of this sense of freedom during childhood, and the consequent unhappiness experienced by the repressed child, was responsible for many of the psychological disorders of adulthood.

- [John Holt \(educator\)](#)

In 1964 Holt published his first book, [How Children Fail](#), asserting that the academic failure of schoolchildren was not *despite* the efforts of the schools, but actually *because* of the schools. Not surprisingly, *How Children Fail* ignited a firestorm of controversy

- [Plato](#)

Date: 424/423 BC - 348/347 BC

Plato's educational philosophy was grounded in his vision of the ideal [Republic](#), wherein the [individual](#) was best served by being subordinated to a just society. He advocated removing children from their mothers' care and raising them as [wards of the state](#), with great care being taken to differentiate children suitable to the various castes, the highest receiving the most education, so that they could act as guardians of the city and care for the less able. Education would be [holistic](#), including facts, skills, physical discipline, and music and art, which he considered the highest form of endeavor.

- [Avicenna](#)

Date: 980 AD - 1037 AD

In the [medieval Islamic world](#), an elementary [school](#) was known as a [maktab](#), which dates back to at least the 10th century. Like [madrasahs](#) (which referred to higher education), a maktab was often attached to a [mosque](#). In the 11th century, Ibn Sina (known as *Avicenna* in the West), wrote a chapter dealing with the *maktab* entitled "The Role of the Teacher in the Training and Upbringing of Children", as a guide to teachers working at *maktab* schools. He

wrote that children can learn better if taught in [classes](#) instead of individual [tuition](#) from private [tutors](#), and he gave a number of reasons for why this is the case, citing the value of [competition](#) and [emulation](#) among pupils as well as the usefulness of group [discussions](#) and [debates](#).

- [John Locke](#)

See also: [Some Thoughts Concerning Education](#), [Of the Conduct of the Understanding](#), and [Essay concerning Human Understanding](#)

Date: 1632-1704

Locke's [Some Thoughts Concerning Education](#) is an outline on how to educate this mind: he expresses the belief that education maketh the man, or, more fundamentally, that the mind is an "empty cabinet", with the statement, "I think I may say that of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education."<sup>[9]</sup>

- [Jean-Jacques Rousseau](#)

Date: 1712-1778

Rousseau, though he paid his respects to Plato's philosophy, rejected it as impractical due to the decayed state of society. Rousseau also had a different theory of human development; where Plato held that people are born with skills appropriate to different castes (though he did not regard these skills as being inherited), Rousseau held that there was one developmental process common to all humans. This was an intrinsic, natural process, of which the primary behavioral manifestation was curiosity. This differed from Locke's '[tabula rasa](#)' in that it was an active process deriving from the child's nature, which drove the child to learn and adapt to its surroundings.

- Aristotle , Avicenna and [tabula rasa](#)

In [Western philosophy](#), traces of the idea that came to be called the *tabula rasa* appear as early as the writings of [Aristotle](#). Aristotle writes of the *unscripted tablet* in what is probably the first textbook of [psychology](#) in the [Western canon](#), his treatise "Περὶ Ψυχῆς" (*De Anima* or *On the Soul*, Book III, chapter 4). However, besides some arguments by the [Stoics](#) and [Peripatetics](#), the notion of the mind as a blank slate went largely unnoticed for more than 1,000 years.

In the 11th century, the theory of *tabula rasa* was developed more clearly by the Islamic philosopher, [Ibn Sina](#) (known as "Avicenna" in the [Western world](#)). He argued that the "human intellect at birth is rather like a *tabula rasa*, a pure potentiality that is actualized through education and comes to know" and that knowledge is attained through "[empirical](#) familiarity with objects in this world from which one abstracts universal concepts" which is developed through a "[syllogistic](#) method of [reasoning](#); observations lead to propositional statements, which when compounded lead to further abstract concepts." He further argued that the intellect itself "possesses levels of development from the material intellect (*al- 'aql al-hayulani*), that potentiality that can acquire knowledge to the

active intellect (*al- 'aql al-fa 'il*), the state of the human intellect at conjunction with the perfect source of knowledge."<sup>[1]</sup>

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#### ■ Thomas Aquinas and Scholasticism

Both an outgrowth and a departure from Christian monastic schools,<sup>[1]</sup> European scholasticism was both a method of learning taught by the [academics](#) (*scholastics*, *school people*, or *schoolmen*) of [medieval universities](#) circa 1100–1500, and a program of employing that method in articulating and defending orthodoxy in an increasingly pluralistic context.

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#### ■ Educational perennialism

[Perennialists](#) believe that one should teach the things that one deems to be of everlasting importance to all people everywhere. They believe that the most important topics develop a person. Since details of fact change constantly, these cannot be the most important. Therefore, one should teach principles, not facts. Since people are human, one should teach first about humans, not machines or techniques. Since people are people first, and workers second if at all, one should teach liberal topics first, not vocational topics.

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#### [John Dewey](#)

**Date:** 1859-1952

In [Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education](#), Dewey stated that in its broadest sense education is the means of the "social continuity of life" given the "primary ineluctable facts of the birth and death of each one of the constituent members in a social group". Education is therefore a necessity, for "the life of the group goes on."<sup>[13]</sup> Dewey was a proponent of [Educational Progressivism](#) and was a relentless campaigner for reform of education, pointing out that the [authoritarian](#), strict, pre-ordained knowledge approach of modern traditional education was too concerned with delivering knowledge, and not enough with understanding students' actual experiences.<sup>[14]</sup>

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#### [William Heard Kilpatrick](#)

**Date:** 1871-1965

William Heard Kilpatrick was a [US American](#) philosopher of education and a colleague and a successor of [John Dewey](#). He was a major figure in the [progressive education](#) movement of the early 20th century. Kilpatrick developed the [Project Method](#) for early childhood education, which was a form of [Progressive Education](#) organized curriculum and classroom activities around a subject's central theme. He believed that the role of a teacher should be that of a "guide" as opposed to an authoritarian figure. Kilpatrick believed that children should direct their own learning according to their interests and should be allowed to explore their environment, experiencing their learning through the natural senses.<sup>[15]</sup> Proponents of Progressive Education and the Project Method reject traditional schooling that focuses on memorization, rote learning, strictly organized classrooms (desks in rows; students always seated), and typical forms of assessment.

## Educational Theorists

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- [Michael Apple](#)
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