



Modes of Learning: Whitehead's Metaphysics and the Stages of Education

George Allan

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A highly accessible reading of Whitehead's writings on education and their connection to his metaphysics. Educators are familiar with Alfred North Whitehead's three stages of education: romance, precision, and generalization. Philosophers are familiar with his metaphysical theories about the primacy of temporal processes. In *Modes of Learning*, George Allan brings these two sides of Whitehead's thought together for the first time in a book suitable for both those initially approaching Whitehead's metaphysics and experts. Allan develops a series of analogies between Whitehead's ideas about how we learn and key concepts in his later metaphysical writings, demonstrating that both how we learn and how the world changes involve a tension between open-ended exploration and systematic organization. Novel ideas free us from the blinders imposed by old habits and beliefs. Yet only when these ideas are integrated with the old ways are we able to improve our individual and collective lives—until changing circumstances call for further new ideas and fresh integrations. Using a rich variety of examples, Allan illuminates the metaphysical ideas he explores by tethering them concretely to the educational practices in which they are rooted. This shows a key but neglected feature of Whitehead's thought: his pragmatic theory of truth, with its functionalist approach to experience and its humanistic appreciation of the frailty of all human endeavors. "The book is highly recommended for, as Allan says, professional educators—and all 'intelligent readers,' which 'include[s] parents.'" — CHOICE George Allan is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Dickinson College. He is the author of many books, including *The Importances of the Past: A Meditation on the Authority of Tradition*; *The Realizations of the Future: An Inquiry into the Authority of Praxis*; *The Patterns of the Present: Interpreting the Authority of Form*; and *Higher Education in the Making: Pragmatism, Whitehead, and the Canon*, all also published by SUNY Press.

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