



PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN ADVENTURE EDUCATION

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Scott D. Wurdinger



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FOUNDATIONS OF ADVENTURE EDUCATION



To locate the roots of adventure education one may look in the fields of philosophy and psychology. Philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Rousseau; and psychologists such as Freud, Erikson, and Maslow all have ideas which are useful to adventure education. Many of these ideas have become foundational to the philosophy of adventure education.

Whitehead once said that, "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato" (1929, p. 39). In many respects this is true. The field of adventure education is no exception in that it uses several Platonic ideals to strengthen its theoretical foundation (Skidelsky, 1969; Kraft, 1985; James, 1985; Hunt, 1991).

In the article, "Philosophy of Adventure Education" Hunt (1991) discusses Plato's contributions to the field. One of these contributions is that direct experience is important to the learning process. "It seems obvious to Plato that the best way to learn about what one needs to know for one's maturity, is to experience it directly as a young person" (p. 120). This idea can be found sprinkled throughout Plato's Dialogues. For instance, in the *Theaetetus* Socrates states the following: "The reason of this is said to be that Artemis-the goddess of childbirth-is not a mother, and she honors those who are like herself; but she could not allow the barren to be midwives because human nature cannot know the mystery of an art without experience..." (1949, p. 9). In this passage Socrates uses the practice of midwifery as an analogy to the learning process and is asserting that experience is vital when it comes to claiming knowledge. This idea is foundational to adventure education because the learning that takes place is primarily through direct participation. When one experiences something first hand, the level of understanding deepens. In adventure education it is impossible to master the art of rock climbing without experiencing it. One can learn about the equipment used and how to tie the various climbing knots, but to truly understand and



know rock climbing one must engage in the practice. This is why Plato suggests that to know the mystery of an art one must experience it.

Adventure education programs such as Ourward Bound and National Outdoor Leadership School continue to utilize Plato's idea of learning through experience, but their notion of experiential learning often means participating in risk-taking activities such as rock climbing, or kayaking. This notion may be one reason why the terms "experiential education" and "adventure education" are sometimes interchanged.

But learning through experience is a *process*, or one way in which we come to know ideas, whereas for adventure educators it is sometimes thought of as a *content* which revolves around adventure activities. Experiential education is a process of learning which can be used with a variety of subject matters: it is a theory which claims that experience is a vital component to the learning process. Adventure education may be thought of as a subset of experiential education because it utilizes this process, but there are many other subjects that use it as well. Sports activities and skills such as sewing, pottery, and painting require learning through experience. It is also used with more formal subjects like math and science in the form of labs, field trips, and internships.

A second fundamental idea which adventure education borrowed from Plato, is the importance of building moral character (Skidelsky, 1969; Hunt, 1991). In the *Republic*, Plato focuses on how to build a virtuous city and

The Umbrella of Experiential Education

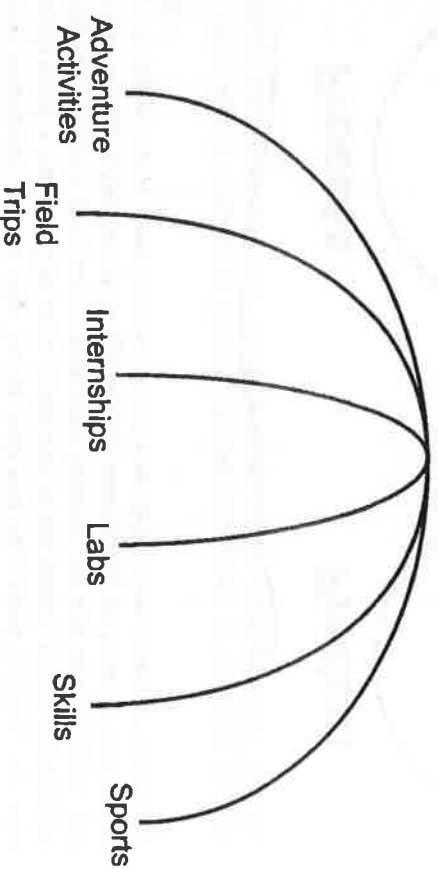


Figure 1.1 Various forms of experiential education that require hands-on learning.

concludes that, "each one of us likewise will be a just person, fulfilling his proper function, only if the several parts of our nature fulfill theirs" (1941, p. 139). For Plato, the individual is actually a miniature replica of the state and fulfilling our proper function means that we must rule our bodily appetites with reason, just as the philosopher king in the city state presides over the craftsmen and guardians.

This idea was first put into action when Kurt Hahn developed the first Ourward Bound school, and Hahn's techniques have been widely imitated. However, adventure education's notion of developing moral character has diverged slightly from Plato's. The ends are the same, but the means are different. For Plato, virtue meant fulfilling one's proper functions, which in turn meant doing the job to which one was naturally inclined, and doing it well. This is how a virtuous city state operates. Adventure education, on the other hand, does not assume that there are only certain people who are naturally inclined to do well in adventure activities. Everyone can succeed in adventure activities if they try. Therefore, adventure educators are trying to provide all people with experiences that can help them become better people. In short, they are trying to provide adventurous value-forming experiences using adventure as a vehicle. This way students may become not only more productive members of their work community, as Plato intended, but also

A third idea contributed by Plato, is the importance of taking risks. "From Plato the argument is put forth that no, all danger should not be avoided; the use of danger is justified by making better people; and care must be taken to rescue the young people if too much danger presents itself" (Hunt, 1991, p. 123). This idea is best depicted in the *Republic* where Socrates and Glaucon discuss how the young should be raised.

Socrates: What you say is true, I said, but do you think that the first thing we should aim at is to take measures to avoid danger?

Glaucon: Certainly not.

Socrates: Well then, if risks must be run, should one not run them where success will improve people?

Glaucon: Obviously.

Socrates: And do you think that it makes little difference, and is not worth the risk, that the children, who are the future warriors, should observe matters of war?

Glaucon: No. It does make a difference with regard to what you are mentioning.

Socrates: We must then make opportunities for the children to observe war while contriving to keep them safe, and all will be well, will it not?

Glaucon: Yes.

Socrates: Well, said I, in the first place their fathers will know, as far as men can, which expeditions are dangerous and which are not.

Glaucon: That is likely.

Socrates: So they will take them on some expeditions, but be cautious about others.

Glaucon: Rightly (1974, p. 128).

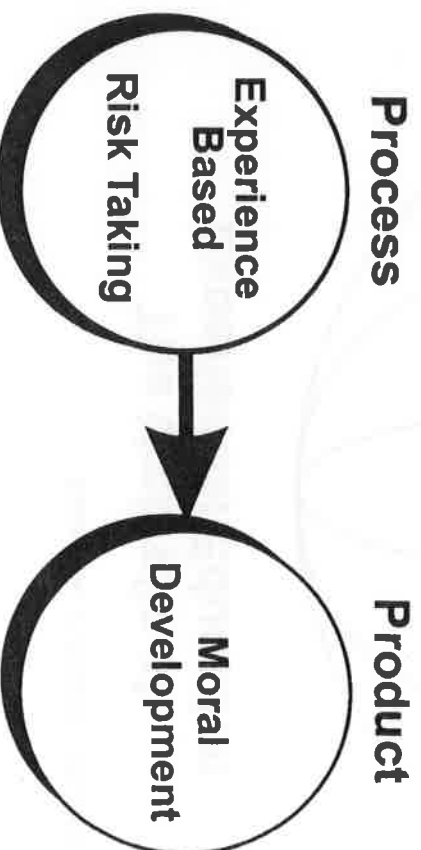
From this passage it is clear that Plato believes it is important to take calculated risks in order to better ourselves. This central tenet holds that in order to learn and grow people need to step beyond their comfort zones. Through this process people learn more about themselves and the world in which they live. Risks take many forms, but in adventure education they are obvious and well defined. Hahn used adventure as a tool to get at the values inherent in taking risks. He saw it as a unique medium which actually allows people to experience intangible ideas such as courage and compassion.

These presuppositions — knowledge based on experience, the aim of moral education, and the importance of taking risks — are at the heart of adventure education. They are, taken together, what differentiate adventure education from other pedagogical methods.

Aristotle also contributed several ideas which the field of adventure education utilizes (Kraft, 1985; Hunt, 1991). According to Kraft, Aristotle's philosophy has influenced educators to use an experiential approach to education: "in the debates over educational practice, it becomes a question of emphasis, with experiential educators taking their cue from Aristotelian metaphysics and decrying the lack of experience on the part of young people today, who spend thirteen to twenty or more years in a formal school setting mastering theories which are often unrelated to the 'real' world for which that education is supposedly preparing them" (1985, p. 10).

Hunt (1991) expanded upon this idea by suggesting that Aristotle's philosophy fits well with adventure education because one must experience the virtues in order to learn them. In *Nicomachean Ethics* (Translated by Ostwald) Aristotle states the following: "It is by playing the harp that men become both good and bad harpists, and correspondingly with builders and all the other craftsmen: a man who builds well will be a good builder, one who builds badly a bad one. The same holds true of the virtues: in our transactions with other men it is by action that some become just and others unjust, and it is by acting in the face of danger and by developing the habit of feeling fear or confidence that some become brave men and others cowards" (1962, p. 34).

This idea is similar to Plato's in that one must be exposed to risk-taking situations in order to learn how to act courageously. But for



Aristotle it is the action, not the idea, which helps develop habits, and virtue is a habit that must be practiced.

Adventure education embraces this idea by placing a strong emphasis on practice. In order to become more virtuous, one cannot just sit around and discuss ideas on how to become virtuous, one must go out and experience it first hand. People understand things better, and become good at doing different things by practicing them. Habit in the traditional sense means something fixed or routine, but for Aristotle it meant perfection, and therefore, in order to perfect virtue one must practice doing good things over and over.

Another foundational Aristotelian idea centers on choice. "In general, choice seems to be concerned with the things that lie within our power" (Nicomachean Ethics 1962, p. 59). This section discusses the role choice plays in making decisions. According to Aristotle, we must deliberate carefully about the things which lie within our power so that right decisions can be made. Adventure education uses this idea when it places individuals in problem solving activities that require careful deliberation. In fact, Project Adventure, a well known program, has adopted the slogan "challenge by choice" to assert that deliberation is an important element in the learning process. In this sense, the meaning of choice is very similar to Aristotle's notion, but adventure education has taken it a step further by stating that choice is the first step towards a meaningful learning experience. Adventure educators believe that in order for meaningful learning to occur students must determine that they want to participate, otherwise the activity is forced and may result in no learning at all. Therefore, choice is an important element not only in the midst of the adventure, but at the very outset as well.

Another philosopher who has influenced the philosophy of adventure education is Jean Jacques Rousseau. In fact Kraft suggests that, "the experiential education movement can trace its roots back to Rousseau's *Emile* or to the Progressive Movement of the 1930's in this country" (1985, p. 7).

One of Rousseau's ideas, which is found in adventure education literature, is that learning through experience in a natural setting is important. In *Emile* he states that, "If he knows nothing by heart, he knows much by experience. If he reads less well in our books than does another child, he reads better in the book of nature" (1979, p. 160). Rousseau wanted Emile to be outside where he could run, play, discover, and experience things first, before learning to read. In fact, he kept Emile away from "book learning" until late in his adolescent years.

Learning through experience in the outdoors is also at the heart of most adventure education programs. Mountains and rivers are often used as classrooms, and learning takes place through a variety of wilderness excursions. Rock climbing and mountaineering courses take place in the mountains, and canoe and kayak trips take place on rivers and lakes.

Even though Rousseau and adventure education hold much in common they diverge when it comes to using the urban environment as a classroom. For Rousseau, the city was filled with vice and was a place where children learn the evils of life. Adventure educators, on the other hand, are beginning to realize that urban environments provide unique risk-taking opportunities. For many, the city is an unfamiliar environment that offers a variety of learning experiences. This is why organizations, like Outward Bound, are taking their programs into the city. And even though the majority of adventure education still takes place in wilderness settings, adventure educators are tapping into the urban environment where most of the population lives and works.

Another of Rousseau's ideas, which is still common in the field of adventure education today, is that physical exercise leads to the development of a healthy body and a sound mind. "Thus, the more his body is exercised, the more his mind is enlightened; his strength and his reason grow together, and one is extended by the other" (1979, p. 118). This concept is central to many adventure education programs throughout the United States. Programs which offer adventure activities, such as mountain climbing, require a certain amount of physical endurance from their students. Some programs even have students running mini-marathons. The purpose of such activities



is not necessarily to promote competition, but to push students physically, which will in turn push them mentally and enhance their ability to overcome the stresses of life.

Rousseau also held that education requires both doing and thinking, often in that order. "To learn to think therefore, it is necessary to exercise our limbs, our senses, our organs, which are the instruments of our intelligence" (1979, p. 125). The field of adventure education agrees that learning is often more meaningful when the doing comes first. In adventure education the doing phase often involves physical movement for the purpose of mastering certain skills. The doing phase is then followed by reflecting upon what was done and why it was done. In a sense, adventure education has taken the traditional western learning process and turned it on its head. This is because hands-on experience stimulates the thinking process.

In *Emile*, Rousseau argued that this process was a natural fit for younger children. Children are more inclined to run and play than they are to sit and be passive. Book learning comes later in Rousseau's educational scheme. Adventure education agrees with this idea, but has broadened its application to include all ages. Human beings are active creatures—they do not like to sit passively for long periods of time and listen to someone dole out information. Adventure educators believe that people would rather take this information and put it to some use, thereby testing it in real life situations and drawing their own conclusions. In adventure education, a structured and intentional process helps people experience an activity and draw meaning from it. The information learned from the experience is not dictated by a book or another person, but is assimilated and synthesized directly by the individual.

Dewey has also contributed much to the theory of experiential learning, and therefore, the field of adventure education (Kraft, 1985, 1991; Wichmann, 1985; Crosby, 1985; Hunt, 1985, 1991). He built his philosophy based on a dynamic view of knowledge. In *Democracy and Education* (1916), one of his earlier works, you can hear echoes of Plato's *Republic*, and Rousseau's *Emile*, but Dewey believed that these two individuals built educational systems based on static ideals.

But progress in knowledge has made us aware of the superficiality of Plato's lumping of individuals and their original powers into a few sharply marked off classes; it has taught us that original capacities are indefinitely numerous and variable. It is but the other side of this fact to say that in the degree in which society has become democratic, social organization means utilization of the specific and variable qualities of individuals, not stratification of classes. Although his educational philosophy was revolutionary, it was none the less in bondage to static ideals (p. 90-91).

And later he states that Rousseau's philosophy is antisocial, and does not lead to educational growth.

"Nature" still means something antithetical to existing social organization; Plato exercised a great influence upon Rousseau. But the voice of nature now speaks for the diversity of individual talent and for the need of free development of individuality in all its variety. Education in accord with nature furnishes the goal and the method of instruction and discipline. Moreover the native or original endowment was conceived, in extreme cases, as nonsocial or even as antisocial. Social arrangements were thought of as mere external expedients by which these nonsocial individuals might secure a greater amount of private happiness for themselves (p. 91).

Rather than educate the individual solely for the individual's own sake, as Rousseau suggests, or educate the individual primarily for the purpose of enhancing society, as implied by Plato, Dewey believed that we should educate the individual by "widening the area of shared concerns, as well as, for the purpose of liberating greater diversity of personal capacities" (1916, p. 87). According to Dewey these two elements must be present in education, otherwise it becomes static because no new ideas can enter the system. We need contact with groups of individuals so that we can broaden our own personal ideas. Without this contact, personal diversity

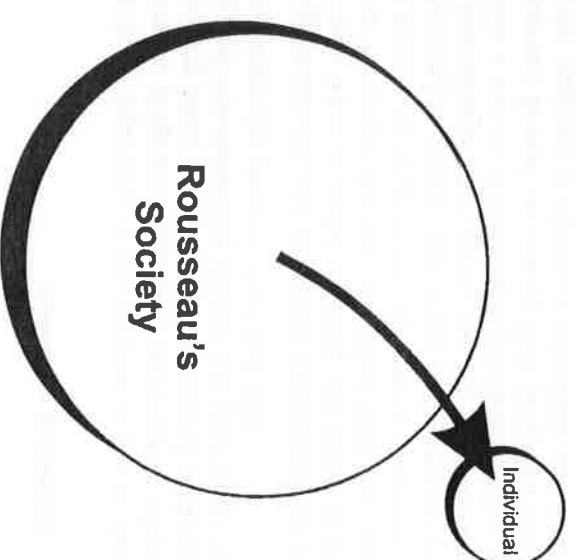


Figure 1.3 Rousseau's vision of education was to remove the individual from

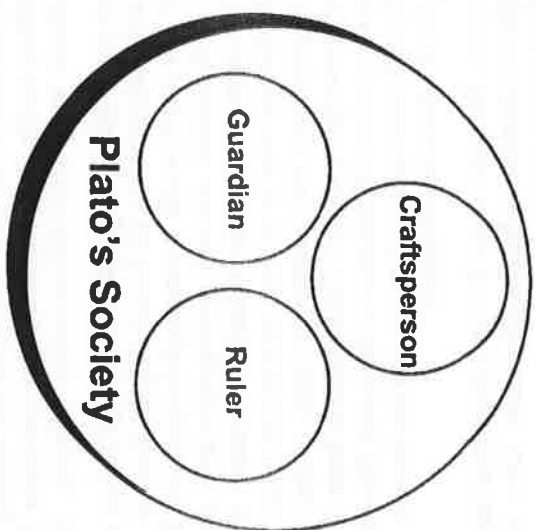


Figure 1.4 Plato's vision of education was to educate the individual for the sake of improving society.

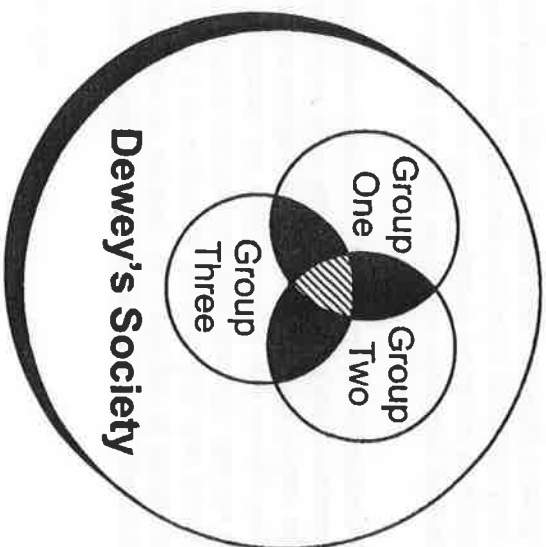


Figure 1.5 Dewey's vision of education was to educate Individuals to promote

becomes limited, as does the area of shared concerns. Eventually, if this were to continue, individual growth, and growth within the community, would cease.

This view of education has led to the assumption that participation and cooperation are important to the experiential learning approach utilized in adventure education. Building group cohesiveness is one of the primary aims in adventure education. In this field instructors often contrive activities so that individuals must work together as a group in order to solve particular problems. This leads to a sharing of ideas while working towards a common goal. From these experiences people learn that it is often easier and more efficient to work together rather than individually. They also realize that diversity contained within a group not only broadens individual perspectives, but can be used to their advantage while solving various problems.

Another common thread running throughout much of Dewey's work is the need for experience in education. This theme is clearly depicted in such statements as: "In what I have said I have taken for granted the soundness of the principle that education in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and for society must be based upon experience-which is always the life experience of some individual" (1938, p. 89), and "An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that theory has vital and verifiable significance" (1916, p. 144).

Experience, for Dewey, was the quintessential element of education. Although Plato, Aristotle, and Rousseau all mention this concept in their writings, Dewey pulls it apart and looks at its elements. Thus he arrives at a broader and fuller definition of experience, which has since been adopted by the field of adventure education.

According to Dewey, experience involves a cyclical process which has an active and a passive phase. The active phase involves trying or experimenting and the passive entails reflecting upon what was done. If reflection does not take place, then according to Dewey, it is a blind experience. For example, if an adventure education instructor runs a course in the same fashion every time, simply walking through the same motions, and does not take past experiences into consideration, then he or she is not learning. One must take past experiences and apply them to future experiences in order for learning to take place. Dewey makes this clear when he states that: "Experience as trying involves change, but change is meaningless transition unless it is consciously connected with the return wave of consequences which flow from it" (1916, p. 139).

Furthermore, he believes it is important to take experiences from one setting and apply them to another. In a critique of formal schooling Dewey mentions that, "It is to emphasize the fact, first, that young people in traditional schools do have experiences; and, secondly, that the trouble is not the absence of experiences, but their defective and wrong character—wrong and defective from the standpoint of connection with further experience" (1938, p. 27). We can gather from this passage that Dewey wanted students to have classroom experiences which could be applied to experiences outside the classroom.

This idea is central to many adventure education programs. They recognize that experiences must be of a quality which can be applied to other areas of life. For that reason, adventure education programs have developed various experiences which require taking risks, working in small groups, or solving problems. These skills can be readily used in a variety of situations unrelated to adventure education, and the goal is to learn and practice them for future application.

Another idea, introduced by Rousseau and developed by Dewey, is that individuals cannot be forced to learn. For learning to be meaningful, the motivation must come from within the individual. External force only works to control behavior, it does not work to control the learning process. "In the strict sense, nothing can be forced upon them or into them. To overlook this fact means to distort and pervert human nature" (Dewey, 1916, p. 25).

This idea has led to the assumption that in order for an experience to be meaningful individuals must not be forced to participate in an activity. Self initiation is the first step towards a meaningful experience. It gives freedom to the learners to determine, not only participation level, but what is to be learned from the experience. The individual is in control of his or her own learning, and determines what is of most interest and value. When individuals are forced to participate they sometimes resist, or may feel captive and obligated to learn what the instructor wants them to learn. Productive learning will surely go away when self initiation is eliminated. This idea adds strength to the commonly held assumption of choice, and has become an integral part of the philosophy of adventure education.

Plato's, Aristotle's, Rousseau's, and Dewey's theoretical ideas can be found trickling throughout adventure education literature. Over time, these individuals expanded upon the ideas of their predecessors, and in so doing, have added greater depth and meaning to the field of education as a whole. In adventure education they have helped clarify goals, make sense out of educational practices, and helped build a strong theoretical foundation. Individually, these ideas are powerful. Educational innovators like Kurt Hahn brought them together in a new way and created a new educational approach—adventure.

This new approach however, was based on some of Plato's fundamental principles (Skidelsky, 1969; James, 1985; Richards, 1990). In fact, Hahn was so intrigued with the concepts outlined in the *Republic* that he designed a school modelled on these principles (Skidelsky, 1969; James, 1985). Even though this particular school never came to fruition, Hahn did not lose sight of this goal and later implemented some of these ideas when he founded the first Outward Bound school.

The Salem, Gordonstoun, and Outward Bound schools were all based on the notion that educating for the purpose of building moral character was just as important as training the intellect (James, 1985). For Hahn, "effective leadership meant developing personal attributes such as, courage, humanity, compassion, resolution and moral strength" (Skidelsky, 1969, p. 188).

The goal of developing these attributes was not new to the field of education, but the way in which Hahn developed such character-building traits was new. Hahn would send people out on extended mountaineering and sailing trips for the purpose of enduring physical and mental hardships, which in turn would not only help individuals develop a strong sense of self but a strong sense of courage and compassion.

Building moral character by participating in adventure activities is still one of Outward Bound's main goals. Their schools, as well as those of numerous other adventure programs, have students participating in activities such as ropes courses, rock climbing, and kayaking for the purposes of developing better social skills and enhancing self esteem. Adventure is only the medium which aims toward the greater goal of character development. Although the roots of this idea extend back to Plato, Hahn must be credited for using adventure activities such as mountain climbing and sailing for the purpose of enhancing social skills and moral development.

He also used the idea that providing service to others promotes moral development. In *English Progressive Schools*, Skidelsky (1969) discusses some of Hahn's ideals upon which the Salem school was based. One such idea was that, "The training in leadership was a cross between the public school prefect system and the idea of service to others..." (p. 193). Providing service to others was important, not only because it promoted a community atmosphere, but because it also helped individuals become more well-rounded.

Older boys, for example, more adept at certain skills, were required to help the younger and less experienced boys. This meant that in the process of learning virtues such as patience and courage, individuals had to undertake actions which they might ordinarily avoid. Hahn would take the "bookworms and encourage them to engage in practical activities; and take the practical students and introduce them to the joys of the intellect" (1969, p. 194). He

was also known for turning extroverts "outside in" and introverts "inside out" (p. 93). For Hahn, the process of providing service to one another, as well as participating in numerous and varied activities, was crucial for developing moral character.

Finally, Hahn incorporated into his programs the idea that demanding physical exercise builds character. "The objective of the course was to build character by putting boys through testing physical experiences" (Skidelsky, 1969, p. 194). Endurance activities such as mountain climbing and sailing, which require physical strength and stamina, were the primary activities used at the first Outward Bound school. Hahn used these activities to test physical limits, which in turn helped develop such attributes as perseverance and confidence.

We can hear echoes of Rousseau in this statement, but for Hahn the course with its physical elements was not just a way in which to build a strong mind. According to James (1985), Hahn saw it as a way to control their activities, "From Salem onward he woke his students early, exercised them, controlled their activities. Even their time to relax and their time to be alone were strictly regulated" (p. 43). Hahn argued that by structuring their activities he could safeguard them from becoming lazy and apathetic. Group exercises and activities provided a way to promote proper social behavior and citizenship.

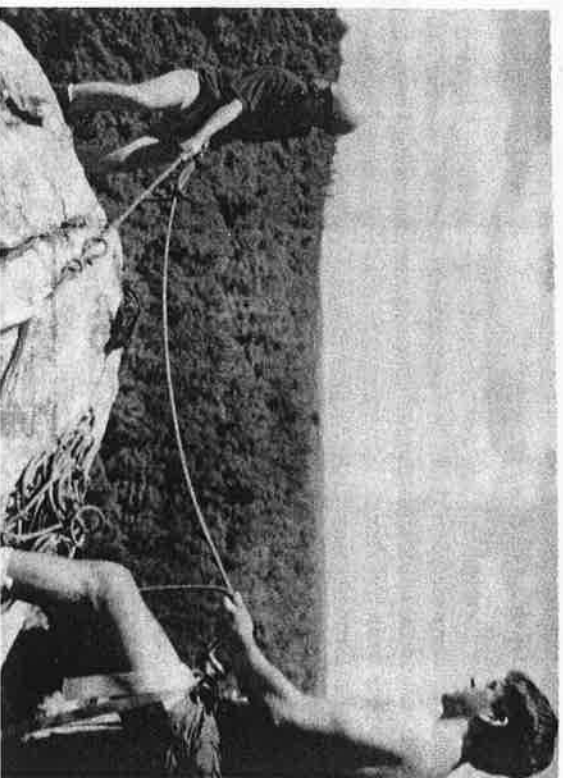
This view is still central today to many adventure programs. Many adventure courses are filled with nonstop activities which require a fair amount of physical exercise. Activities are both physically and mentally challenging, and promote endurance, motivation, and self esteem.

The field of psychology has also made contributions which have helped create and strengthen the philosophy of adventure education (Kraft, 1985; Sakofs, 1985). Freud, who developed a model based on the psychodynamic theory, suggests that thought and behavior are outcomes based on the emotional development of childhood (Cohen and Rac, 1987). According to Freud, healthy emotional development means balancing the desires of the id, the ego, and the superego. In achieving this balance one becomes more concerned with others, and less concerned with self. As a child we are more egoistic and become more altruistic as we move towards adulthood. As the superego develops, our level of maturity deepens, and we are able to focus more on the affairs of others. According to Kraft (1985), Freud's ideas have made an impact on adventure education. "Although most experiential educators would not see themselves as deterministic in their viewpoints as many Freudians, they nevertheless owe a debt for the insights gained about human behavior and motivation" (p. 21). Adventure educators have tapped into the

field of psychology because they realize that their programs affect behavior and motivation. Organizations such as Healthcare International, Psychiatric Institutes of America, Charter Medical, and Hospital Corporations of America now offer specialized treatment in experiential therapy (Weider, 1990, p. 44). They primarily use high and low element ropes courses to help individuals develop skills concerning leadership capabilities, communication, cooperation, and trust. Individual goals are often predetermined before encountering the ropes course and then are later discussed in individual and group discussions. The experiential therapy industry continues to grow.

Another psychologist whose ideas might be of use to adventure education is Erikson. In *Childhood and Society* he outlines the "eight ages of man." The first of these eight stages through which one must advance in order to develop a healthy personality is that of trust. Erikson describes it as follows, "It is against this powerful combination of a sense of having been deprived, of having been divided, and of having been abandoned that basic trust must maintain itself throughout life" (1950, p. 250). Developing trust is a key educational aim in adventure education for adolescents as well as adults. Activities such as belaying, trust falls, and trust hikes are used not only to develop trust in the younger ages, but to renew one's sense of trust with older individuals as well.

Trust is such an important issue in adventure education that program curricula often begin with a series of trust exercises which help individuals break down barriers so that they can begin working together as a group. These



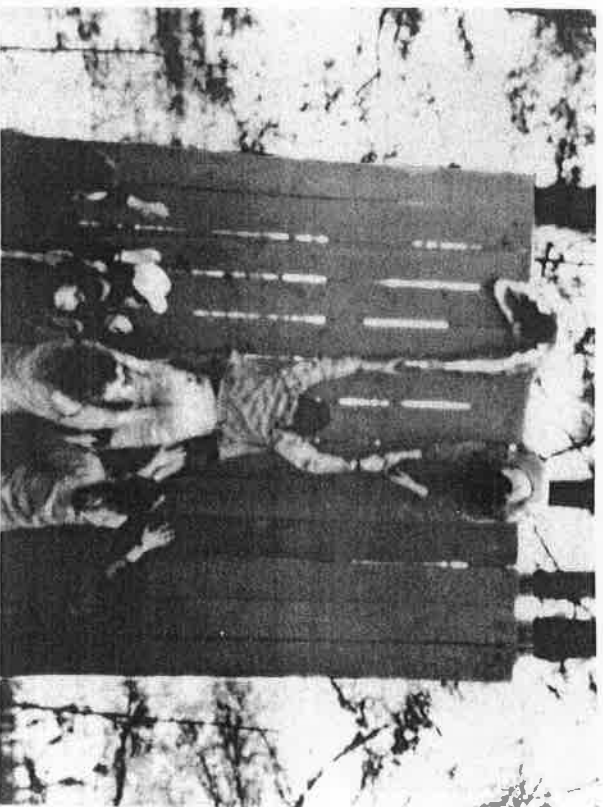
exercises are often used as a metaphor for life. For example, the fourteen foot initiative wall requires that individuals be lifted high above the ground and pulled over the top of the wall. This task is difficult and scary and involves trusting the entire group. In life there are also difficult and scary tasks we must complete and having accomplished the fourteen foot wall helps us realize that trust and support from others makes these tasks easier to accomplish.

Goldstein (1939) a psychologist who worked with young children stated that, "In the innumerable repetitions of children, we are not dealing with the manifestation of a senseless drive for repetition, but with the tendency to completion and perfection... The nearer we are to perfection, the stronger is the need to perform. This is valid for children as well as adults..." (p. 196). These ideas led Goldstein towards developing a theory based on self actualization. He may be credited for creating the concept of self-actualization, but it was Abraham Maslow who picked up where Goldstein left off and brought us a clearer picture of this theory.

Adventure educators have begun to incorporate some of Maslow's ideas into their theory of education (Kraft, 1985, 1991). In *Toward a Psychology of Being*, Maslow (1962) discusses several ideas concerning growth and self-actualization. One idea is that there are two forces which pull the individual in opposite directions. One force makes the individual "cling to safety and defensiveness out of fear, tending to regress backward, hanging on to the past..." and the other, "impels him forward toward wholeness of self and uniqueness of self, toward full functioning of all his capacities, toward confidence in the face of the external world at the same time that he can accept his deepest, real, unconscious self" (p. 44). The force which makes us cling to safety can at times deter us from growing.

In adventure education this force can easily be seen at work. For example, many individuals are afraid of the heights encountered in rock climbing or on ropes courses and these individuals tend to avoid such activities. If people can free themselves from this fear and overcome the challenge, they may discover new strengths. Growth takes place in new dimensions. The dichotomy between safety and risk coincides with the commonly held assumption, "people are more capable than they think they are." If we can free ourselves of this fear we can come closer to reaching our true potentials.

A second idea which stems from the self-actualization theory is that of personal growth. Maslow (1962) defined self-actualization as "an episode, or a spurt in which the powers of the person come together in a particularly efficient and intensely enjoyable way, and in which he is more integrated and less split, more open for experience, more idiosyncratic, more perfectly expressive or spontaneous, or fully functioning, more creative, more humorous, more ego-transcending..." (p. 100).



91). This process, which is one of developing personal growth, is foundational to adventure education, and often times is the result of overcoming certain challenges or risks. Maslow (1962) supported the notion that challenge can be a catalyst for growth when he stated that: "We learn also about our own strengths and limits and extend them by overcoming difficulties, by straining ourselves to the utmost, by meeting challenge and hardship, even by failing" (p. 187).

Choice is another component of the self actualization theory. Maslow (1962) believed that all individuals, including children must learn to make their own decisions. When others constantly make decisions for children it does not allow them to develop judgement and their own personal standards. If meaningful growth is to take place individuals must have the freedom to choose their own direction of travel. In adventure education this opportunity is provided when individuals determine their own level of participation.

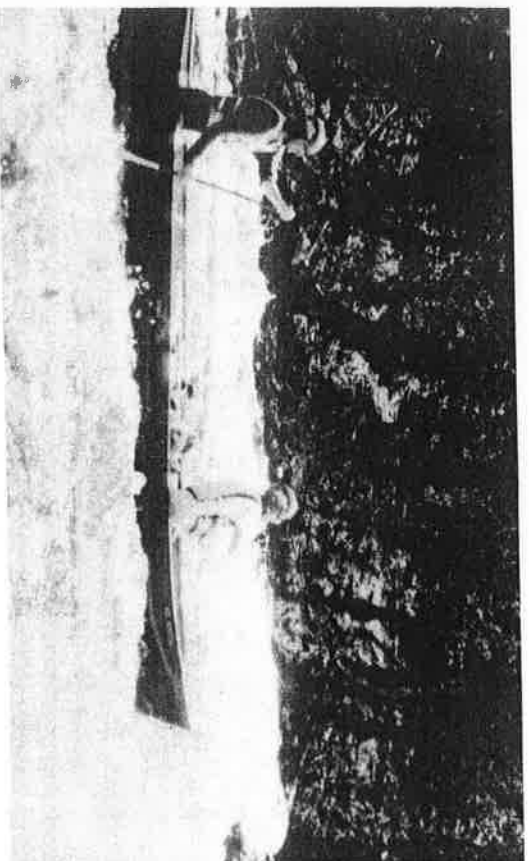
Another well known psychologist who took a humanistic approach to learning and developed certain ideas important to adventure education was Piaget (Sakofs, 1985; Kraft, 1991). Piaget's psychological schema on intellectual development consists of several stages of which formal operations is the last. During this stage, which takes place during adolescence, individuals develop the ability to reason in a complex fashion. Piaget drew his conclu-

sions about this stage from a number of empirical tests which were somewhat similar, at least in theory, to the problem solving initiatives in adventure education. For example, with "the pendulum problem" students were supposed to figure out what factors, or combination of factors, caused the pendulum to oscillate the fastest (Ginsburg and Oppet, 1969, p. 182). They were allowed to experiment and test out their ideas. From these tests Piaget realized that these children were able to make rational plans and carry them out in an orderly fashion, which led him to conclude that learning is a process of discovering, and that we learn best by exploring and experiencing our world.

The nature of human beings as seen by Piaget suggests that we are curious about things and are motivated to learn. We are eager to discover things about ourselves and the world we live in. Adventure education takes a similar view of human nature. Programs are designed to allow participants to discover more about their inner strengths. Adventure educators do not assume to know what is in the best interest of the student, and therefore, do not force individuals to participate. They assume that individuals have chosen to participate because they are motivated to learn. This view of human nature can be seen in several commonly used phrases such as, "learning by doing", "discover your inner strengths", and "discovery learning."³

Finally, Rogers has added depth to adventure education's theory (Kraft, 1985). His book *Freedom to Learn* was very important to nontraditional approaches such as adventure education. "To free curiosity; to permit individuals to go charging off in new directions dictated by their own interests; to unleash the sense of inquiry; to open everything to questioning and exploration; to recognize that everything is in process of change—here is an experience I can never forget" (1969, p. 105). This statement suggests that in order for education to be truly meaningful teachers must allow their students the freedom to pursue questions and problems which are most meaningful to their own particular lives. When this happens students not only learn formal academic information, but they learn about themselves. There is an emotional investment because it is a real problem which has bearing upon their life.

This is exactly what takes place in adventure education. Participants learn technical information, but they also learn about themselves. For example, on a canoe trip individuals learn about the canoe, how to carry it, how to use different paddling strokes, and how to steer; but they are also learning about leadership, endurance, communication, and cooperation. They are faced with real problems on a day to day basis which affects their safety and comfort. The field of adventure education agrees with Rogers and is trying to educate the whole person which includes both intellectual and emotional development.



Current psychologists continue to develop and expand upon the theories and ideas mentioned above, but it was individuals such as Freud, Erikson, Goldstein, Maslow, Piaget, and Rogers whose work contributed most directly to adventure education. Their early psychological writings helped create and strengthen some of adventure education's foundational ideas. The construction, and ongoing reconstruction, of these ideas have helped develop and strengthen the philosophy of adventure education.

From Plato and Aristotle, to Dewey and Rogers, thinkers have examined how people grow mentally, physically, and morally. We have seen in this chapter that adventure education has clear foundational principles drawn from the long history of Western philosophical thought. Assertions containing these principles will be examined in chapters three, four, and five by using a method called the critical analysis.

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