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IMPROVING EDUCATION BY TALKING: ARGUMENT OR CONVERSATION?

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Abstract

There is no direct route to knowledge or social action, no route that can steer clear of what people say and believe. Thus talking about the theory, practice, and goals of education can be helpful and appropriate. Talk can bring the context-bound, partial, and tentative nature of educational knowledge claims to light and make participants aware of their commitments to manifold and often conflicting goals. If people put aside attempts to eliminate fallibility or bolster credibility, everyone can be enlightened. The discourse approach to knowledge use in education and other areas of public concern thus fits with both the uncertainties of knowledge and the fact that social and individual action proceed from beliefs and conflicting interests. But political uses of language tend to ignore the uncertainty of knowledge, and, where interests conflict, there are few incentives for giving up increments of power and status that come with experience and expert knowledge. To think of knowledge use as discourse, involving, for instance, educational researchers and teachers and not favoring either may be desirable and fitting, but is this conception likely to be realized? This question can be examined by comparing argument and conversation as discourse models of knowledge use, identifying the presuppositions and limits of both approaches. This essay considers the nature, posture, process, and outcomes of argument and contends that conversation as a way of using knowledge is less restrictive, less competitive, and more egalitarian.

IMPROVING EDUCATION BY TALKING: ARGUMENT OR CONVERSATION?[1]

Margret Buchmann[2]

There is no direct route to knowledge or social action, no route that can steer clear of what people say and believe. Knowledge or action cannot be determined simply by impartial adherence to rules of scientific method. Although better checks against false claims are built into the system of science, laypeople and researchers are not very differently placed as long as knowledge is considered as loosely tied to evidence and likely to change. Thus talking about the theory, practice, and goals of education can be helpful and appropriate. Talk can bring the context-bound, partial, and tentative nature of educational knowledge claims to light (and this holds for practical, personal, and theoretical knowledge alike); talk can make participants aware of their committments to manifold and often conflicting goals; and talk can remind people of the fact that educational research itself often aims to persuade and to change beliefs (Floden, in press).

People talk because knowledge is uncertain, because the outcome of action is ambiguous, because their interests and beliefs differ--and because they

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like to talk. With different stakes in the outcomes of social action and a sense that inferences from the data are rarely clear, people speculate on the course of events after the fact, offer comments on a plan, question supposed proofs, and dispute the relevance and value of evidence. The discourse approach to knowledge use in education and other areas of public concern fits with both the uncertainties of knowledge and the fact that social and individual action proceed from beliefs and conflicting interests. If people put aside attempts to eliminate fallibility or bolster credibility, everyone can be enlightened (Cronbach, Ambron, Dornbusch, Hess, Hornik, Phillips, Walker, & Weiner, 1980).

People thus have ample reason to talk, but discourse can serve those in power as well as clarify the limits of knowledge. Discourse "legitimates educational, social, and political activity by creating a sense that something is being done by people who know what they are doing" (Apple, 1981, p. 420). In the context of education, this can mean that those with high status and specialized knowledge (e.g., administrators and researchers) can use talk to force their opinions on those with less status (e.g., teachers and students). When such political use of language ignores the uncertain character of knowledge in education, it is neither rational nor equitable.

If knowledge use in education is to be a form of discourse that contributes to reasonableness and does not perform social and political functions alone, the social organization of discourse must be democratic. "All interested parties must be able to initiate discussion, to establish or influence the rules of conversation, to put forward statements, to request elaboration and clarification, and to call other statements into question" (Cohen & Garet, 1975, pp. 42-43). The requirement for a democratic organization of discourse can more easily be met where all participants

distance themselves from authoritative views of knowledge, whether based on science, personal experience, or social lore. Still, epistemic and ethical requirements for justification must also be met (Buchmann, 1984). Thus it is not helpful to say that, "whether it is true or false, knowledge is knowledge to anyone who takes it as a basis for some commitment or action" (Lindblom & Cohen, 1979, p. 12). It is the justification of beliefs rather than their mere contents that must be of concern.

In groups with diverse participants, however, merely recognizing the uncertainty of knowledge or the necessity of justification will not make discourse equitable or rational either. For the processes and outcomes of discourse can drift away from what is true, right, or better. Where people do not appeal to such standards, discourse may simply reinforce existing inequalities. Yet, where interests conflict, there are few incentives for giving up increments of power and status that come with experience and expert knowledge. The cumulative effects of past patterns of participation are resistant to change. And even a democratic organization of discourse cannot make people equally good at talking, let alone arguing. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the ends and commitments that govern action and thought will surface in debates with diverse participants. It is difficult to explain what one takes for granted to an audience that may be puzzled or incredulous.

Therefore, people aiming to improve education by talking also need to have particular dispositions and attitudes; they need to be well-intentioned (almost high-minded), reasonable, and to some extent detached from immediate and particular interests. All have to be patient, and some courageous. In addition, people need to share or come to share rules governing what sorts of talk are appropriate in what contexts. Such norms of communication flow from the goals people have for their work and the way talk typically serves those

goals. Talk works differently in different groups, is about different things, and aims at different outcomes--to either clarify things or to get them done.

The general notion of improving education by talking depends on a belief that one can do things with words, a belief not all people share and that is only partially true. Words do not get everything done and worrying too much about definitions may be a waste of time. The trust in language, clarity, and the purifying effects of public debate that some theorists have is rather romantic. Can criticism, for instance, be free entirely and blind with regard to authority and personal interest? Though rightly unwilling to make the pursuit of truth depend on the personal dispositions of scientists alone, Popper (1971, 1975) seems to believe this. But the willingness to be proven wrong over and over again and a faithful attention to the merits of a case, no matter where it comes from, presuppose a distinctive purity of motives. Mill (1840/1963) was less sanguine about the process and outcomes of debate among people who differ:

> In truth, a system of consequences from an opinion, drawn by an adversary, is seldom of much worth. Disputants are rarely sufficiently masters of each other's doctrines, to be good judges of what is fairly deducible from them, or how a consequence which seems to flow from one part of the theory may or may not be defeated by another part. (pp. 130-131)

To think of knowledge use as equitable discourse, involving, for instance, educational researchers and teachers and not favoring either, may be desirable and fitting, but is this conception likely to be realized? I will examine this question by comparing argument and conversation as discourse models of knowledge use, identifying the presuppositions and limits of both approaches. I will consider the nature, posture, process, and outcomes of argument and contend that conversation as a way of using knowledge is less restrictive, less competitive, and more egalitarian.

Changing the World Through Arguments?

Some social scientists see arguments and rationally motivated consensus as the best way to legitimate and successful reforms. They believe that arguments can also uncover assumptions and values that shape and distort the production and use of knowledge (Dunn, 1982). The success of reforms, however, depends only in part upon rationally motivated consensus and formal knowledge: Networks of power and authority, practical and political know-how, and moral frameworks are at least equally important (Holzner, 1983). Nor does consensus in itself make things true, right, or better; for people can agree to believe or do things that are wrong and misguided (Scriven, 1972). And does the better argument have a peculiar force? Perhaps, but so have the beliefs and personal experiences of people and the anecdotes they hear (Nisbett & Ross, 1980).

Arguments at their best move critically and efficiently in the realm of conceptual images within theories as systems of deliberated thought. They involve contestants and claims that are tested by standards of truth and logic. Social reforms, however, have to do with practical imagining that aims to fill the world with things we both desire and approve (Oakeshott, 1962). Moral sentiments are established by custom and tested by time (Campbell, 1975), while individuals are supposed to mind them--take care to remember, for instance, the kinds of behaviors and dispositions students and the public have a right to expect of principals and teachers. Thus we cannot account for the improvement of education by arguments alone, role orientations are also necessary (Buchmann, 1983).

People determine and decide what to do about problems of individual and social life based on values (duty and enjoyment), ends, and commitments. Nothing has changed in this regard since Locke (1690/1959) asked,

> Who almost is there that hath the leisure, patience, and means to collect all the proofs concerning most of the opinions he has, so as safely to conclude that he hath a clear and full view; and that there is no more to be alleged for his better information! And yet we are forced to determine ourselves on one side or the other. The conduct of our lives, and the management of our great concerns, will not bear delay: for those depend, for the most part, on the determination of our judgment in points wherein we are not capable of certain and demonstrative knowledge. (p. 371)

Locke concludes that our mutual ignorance calls for "friendship, in the diversity of opinions" and "the gentle and fair ways of information" (p. 372). Arguments can help, though, in the sifting of claims and criticism of proposals.

Where people argue for the sake of winning alone, arguments can distort the facts and mislead intentions, just as unexamined personal experience or communal beliefs can. Moreover, though some consensus is necessary for social reform, it is not true that arguments make their distinctive contributions to the agreement of people with one another, enabling them to act. Other limitations of argument as a model of knowledge use derive from the influence of the rules governing the interaction on its subject mater (not everything worth knowing or doing is discussable), the mutual relations of participants (differences in power and status count in argument), and the outcomes one can expect when people argue with one another.

Argument is a dress-rehearsal of speech with its own dramatic purposes. Its requirements for performance and competence determine who will do well in arguments. But differences in power and status also count when people settle what should be discussed; not every group has what it takes to make a social problem an issue of public debate (Gusfield, 1981). Arguments favor some groups, and it is useful to recall that disputation flourished most at times when important issues--such as what is true and right or who is entitled to power and rewards--had already been settled, as it were, out of court. In the

Middle Ages, the heyday of dialectics, who had a say in things was predetermined; social predestination and unequal patterns of participation are factors still potent today.

Yet some contemporary philosophers and social theorists show great faith in the redeeming power of argument. I have already mentioned Dunn's (1982) claims. Habermas (Habermas, 1973; Habermas & Luhmann, 1971)[3] posits an "ideal speech situation" undistorted by power and interest; he makes the surprising claim that beliefs capable of legitimating action can only be formed under conditions of absolutely free and unlimited debate. If one took this claim seriously, one would have to write off most actions as either unjustified or unjustifiable. And why is it that unlimited debates should fix all social problems? Arguments can make adversaries out of people, rather than bringing them together as equals in the quest for right action.

Argument as an Adversarial Paradigm: The Process and Its Purposes

Everyone is more just to their own, whether kith and kin or ideas. Interest in ideas is not inherently fair and unrelated to personal commitments or social hopes. This imposes strict limits on the viability of an argument model of knowledge use when people differ not only in opinion, but in power, status, and argumentative ability as well.

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[3]Habermas provides the clearest exposition of the term "ideal speech situation" in works that are not yet available in English. These works, as well as Habermas' views on language use and its preconditions, are, however, discussed in a monograph by Geuss (1982).

For argumentative fencing depends on verbal agility. The use of words is strategic and tactical, and the name of the game is war (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Arguments among different people draw on different kinds of knowledge; yet the person or group winning the argument may not have the best knowledge: most relevant, well-grounded, or defensible. Levels of sophistication shape argumentative outcomes, and the possession of a special or technical vocabulary strengthens one's position--regardless of whether this vocabulary is informative or vacuous and ornamental. Meehl's (1971) hierarchical example makes this point vivid:

> The parish priest can refute the theological objections of an unlettered Hausfrau parishioner. The priest, in turn, will lose a debate with the intellectual village atheist. C.S. Lewis will come out ahead of the village atheist. But when C.S. Lewis tangles with Bertrand Russell, it gets pretty difficult to award the prizes. (p. 71)

All down the line, sound ideas or ways or acting do not guarantee winning a dispute. Thus failure to win is not necessarily a reason to give up practices or beliefs.

It seems a mistake to tie the search for knowledge, and ways of diffusing and using it, to argumentation. There is no reason to assume that premises that need to be guessed at, terms without clear definitions, oblique references, and beliefs that are not debatable must be associated with wrongheaded ideas or indefensible lines of action. As Scriven (1973) put it, there "is no magic about explicit inferences" (p. 449).

Argument models of knowledge equate the pursuit of wisdom with the love of argument. This stems from the beginnings of philosophy in its confused combination of the love of argument and the love of wisdom (Rorty, 1982). Trouble arises when this mistaken equation determines conceptions of what legitimates action.

The genuine continuity of argument models of knowledge use with the classic and medieval practice of disputation is a continuity, too, in that the way of argument is seldom that of the mother tongue. People can be shrewd and, for that matter, right without mastering argumentative moves or necessarily feeling confined by them. Actually, an absence of intellectual curiousity is compatible with verbal fencing. And some commitments are both too elusive and firmly engrained for argumentation. Still, they can steady people in their pursuit of virtuous action (Buchmann, in press).

On the other hand, the public accepts science not because it shares the scientific conception of reality, but because of the authority of science. Scientific knowledge and judgment are opaque and indisputable for most of us. Neither is public debate likely to expose scientific error. Laypeople find it difficult to understand why scientists take some evidence seriously but dismiss other claims, and scientists sometimes have little patience with arguments they find lacking in rigor (Polanyi, 1967).

There are two reasons for seeing argument models of knowledge as a special constituency's definition of the rules governing what diverse people should talk about and how they should talk. First, to see knowledge as the director of practice and change is a partial, if not partisan view. People whose lives are tied up with knowledge will value knowledge; if they are part of a culture that sees utility as a measure of what is good, they will be disposed to regard knowledge as useful (Buchmann, 1984). Since, second, people whose lives are tied up with knowledge also value argument and tend to be good at it, they may see this way of talking and all it entails as the best way to learn and to get somewhere in social action.

Some contemporary philosophers (Nozick, 1981; Rorty, 1982) see similar problems in analytic philosophy, to which most Anglo-American philosophers are

socialized. They note the difference between the love of argument and that of wisdom and wonder whether the adversarial model of discourse tends to substitute the goal of winning for that of understanding. Professional philosophers are "exceptionally good at putting together arguments and pulling them apart" (Rorty, 1982, p. 220). That does not, however, qualify them as sources of wisdom.

In the argumentative mode, thought turns upon itself with little mercy; this is the proof of its quality. In the mode of action and creation, thought takes wings; it is decisive and confident. Thus, in his historical work on the discipline of psychology, Boring (1963) concludes that progress toward truth needs effective prejudice--vision and batlike blindness--as well as controversy and judiciousness. He warns that a scientist must not "be the judge too often, for then the assured, prejudiced, productive personality might get 'squeezed out,' and science would be the loser" (p. 83).

The process of argument does bring values into play, such as being clear, logical, and hardheaded. But it is restrictive, almost punitive; besides, people who are tough-minded can be obtuse. What gets edited out by argument and for its purposes may be central for action and understanding.

Outcomes of Argument

If conviction is the aim, argumentation is often a poor means. For one cannot convince a person of something without knowing their way of thinking, including how they have reached their conclusions. These matters are found out by listening, not by talking, and may require a delayed response or no response at all.

In Kennedy's (1936/1981) novel, *Together and Apart*, two young people talk. Here the young man speaks first:

> "Plenty of the men have most interesting minds, and lots to say that is worth hearing. Of course none of them could get a Balliol scholarship to save their lives, but that's only one way of judging people's minds. And a rather narrow way. . . ."
>
> "Yes," said Eliza eagerly,
>
> "I mean . . . my education was all a preparation for a certain mental virtuosity, a very hard, clear, reasoned way of thinking, and examining evidence, and defending a logical position. I was taught to regard anybody who didn't bear the hall-mark of this training as wooly-minded and half-educated. It's a useful training in its way as far as it goes. . . .
>
> "But," he continued, "if you really want to find out what other people are thinking, and how they've reached their conclusions, it's no use at all. You can argue the hind leg off a donkey, but that won't teach you any more about donkeys. Whatever method you may have used in forming your own opinions, you must understand other people's methods before you can hope to get anyone to agree with you. You'll never induce a man to change his mind by making him look silly. You merely put his back up." (p. 300)

Talkers often delude themselves about what success in argument entails. If their listeners cannot answer them, this need not mean that they have given way or changed their minds. No one can feel concerns or act on principles that they have not made their own. On the other hand, if one is busy finding holes in what other people are saying or is eager to score a point, what one can learn from the encounter is restricted by these purposes. Thus one is also not likely to change one's mind. In either case, if the knowledge offered is valuable and unequally shared, these outcomes are disappointing. They also throw doubt on the belief that arguments will uniquely contribute to individual and collective learning. Related to this, one must ask whether arguments can promote emancipation--making people more equal as rational agents--as theorists like Dunn and Habermas hope.

Far from representing an undistorted speech situation, the concept of argument is an emblem of group differences. Argument has no particular enabling or purifying force but imports its own distortions (adversarial

attitude, goal substitution, censorship) into discourse. Arguments, though sometimes necessary, are not always useful or nice.

To advocate the practice of argument means at best to endorse the pursuit of knowledge in one of its forms--the other being bold hypotheses held lightly. At worst, argumentation among diverse participants (e.g., researchers and teachers, scientists and lay-people) encourages borrowing the authority of science to promote special interests. Merton (1942) believes that "the possibility of exploiting the credulity, ignorance and dependence of the layman" (p. 125) is greatly reduced when scientists and the public keep well apart. For scientists called upon to speak to issues of public concern may find it hard to begin every comment outside their specialty by saying that they really know very little about the topic. At the same time, the public finds it impossible to decide which claims, all spoken with suitable conviction, the scientist speaks as scientist and which as (possibly) informed citizen (Buchmann, 1984).

And it is not only laypeople who can be duped by discussions in the social and political arena, where manipulation of beliefs and obfuscation of issues are seen as permissible tactics in the fight to swing beliefs. Scientists may be naive and unaware of the uses to which their pronoucements are put.

Utility as the Saving Virtue?

It is important to reduce people's overconfidence in data, to point out that data interpretation makes heavy use of theory, and that data seen from different points of view may support mutually inconsistent theories. Truth is difficult to come by.

It does not follow that knowledge is "whatever works for me" or what people have decided to call knowledge. For sociologists, suspending the question whether knowledge claims are valid is a methodological move, which does not imply that all knowledge claims are of equal merit or that all social constructions of reality are true. Hence Merton (1976) attempts to correct for overinterpretations of the statement, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" by adding, "And if men do *not* define real situations as real, they are nevertheless real in their consequences" (p. 178).

Clearly, not all knowledge claims are of equal merit, nor all personal and social constructions of reality true. Not all views of teaching and teacher education are defensible images of professional work and equally capable of sustaining good practice. Nor do sheer power and strength of persuasion make changes in the moral framework surrounding the profession of teaching--such as the recent and historically recurrent call for excellence in education--defensible. We must still ask, What is happening to all children in schools? Failing to uphold the distinction between descriptive accuracy and persuasive bias means eroding the basis for reasoned talk and decision in education.

An equity problem that arises through suspending standards of truth and rightness stems from the fact that, apart from their intrinsic value, such standards have worked for disadvantaged groups. On occasion, people who hold stakes but little power have been able to get a hearing by appeals to the facts of the case (Campbell, 1982). It is the difference between persuasive bias and accurate description that allows one to criticize "false consciousness, exploitative mystification, unwarranted reification, and the like" (Campbell, 1982, p. 329).

Emancipatory reform therefore depends in significant part on a rejection of the dialectical tradition, at least insofar as it involves the language of persuasion rather than that of experiments. Emphasizing the interactive, rhetorical elements in knowledge use can reinforce existing inequalities in social and educational institutions. In the attempt to be even-handed about knowledge claims, we may actually do away with an ultimate resource of the disadvantaged, that of speaking truth to power.

In what follows, I will explore a discourse model of knowledge use that involves a different general posture, is less subject to the distortions associated with arguments, and is more liable to promote equity. Provocatively, this approach might be called the gossip model.

For knowledge to be useful, people must be able to grasp it. This is no small matter, as it presupposes either that knowledge already fits the understandings they possess, or that, in learning, people change their minds. But to be usable, knowledge must furthermore be (or become) close to people. This is where biography and good-natured gossip come into their own (Johnson 1750/1968; Bok, 1982). In attending to specifics and human complexity, such sources of knowledge--including whimsical and ribald jokes--supply the finer and often ephemeral points that solemn generalities miss.

Knowledge Use as Conversation: Or Is It Education?

Argument involves contestants; conversation involves partners. In conversation, ideas (where they exist) collide and mingle with one another and are diluted and complicated in the process. The pleasant tone of conversation is inimical to doctrinaire notions. In conversation, one may differ and still not disagree (Oakeshott, 1962); the defensive, corrective, and didactic aspects of rhetoric are out of place. People do not insist that partners

follow; it is enough that they enter into conversation. Thus conversation respects great differences and ranges easily over different "provinces of meaning" (Schutz, 1962): dreams, play, science, and action.

Conversation can enlarge one's conceptual repertoire and imagination, bringing a sense of new alternatives and contexts. Its teachings are tactful and can be intoxicating. To draw still another example from fiction, in *Old New York*, Wharton (1924/1978) has a young and unsophisticated New Yorker of the mid-nineteenth century "do" his grand tour of Europe. Somewhere in the mountains he meets an Englishman. They settle down to an evening of talk:

> When Lewis joined his host it had been with the secret hope of at last being able to talk; but when the evening was over (and they kept it up to the small hours) he perceived that he had chiefly listened. Yet there had been no sense of suppression, of thwarted volubility; he had been given all the openings he wanted. Only, whenever he produced a little fact it was instantly overflowed by the others' imagination till it burned like a dull pebble tossed into a rushing stream. For whatever Lewis said was seen by his companion from a new angle, and suggested a new train of thought; each commonplace item of experience became a many-faceted crystal flashing with unexpected fires. The young Englishman's mind moved in a world of associations and references far more richly peopled than Lewis's; but his eager communicativeness, his directness of speech and manner, instantly opened its gates to the simpler youth. (p. 395)

As they go on talking during this journey, Lewis learns to see art in a completely new way; he honors this vision by his whole life. This encounter exemplifies conversation at its best: its charm and intoxication, its reciprocity even in the face of differences, its openness and freedom compatible with tact and respect, and its power to move and expand the mind.

Conversations can be long, life-long, inconclusive as in marriage, and are continued in the absence of the partner. Arguments have an inherent drive toward conclusions, but conversations are not driven at all. As intellectual adventures, they begin with differences or notions often vaguely apprehended

and, after a while, do not so much end as are abandoned. Arguments favor the here and now, but conversations assign importance to history.

Oakeshott (1962) conceives of education as a conversation in which a variety of voices speak through history. This conversation goes on in public and within ourselves. Neither education nor conversation can be identified with argument. In argument, the contributions of various participants may be included, but only contributions that fit the argumentative mold are taken on their own strengths. Others are accepted only insofar as they resemble arguments. In the field of education, this gives dominance to researchers, attending to and judging the comments of practitioners as if they were also trying to put forth arguments.

In conversation, however, practice has its own voice, which need not be assimilated to the voice of argument nor requested to seek its guidance.

> Practical enterprise is recognized not as an isolated activity but as a partner in a conversation, and the final measure of intellectual achievement is in terms of its contribution to the conversation in which all universes of discourse meet. (p. 199)

Science likewise need not be anything other than itself: It can speak to the mind and about truth with the understanding that meaning in the context of science is not that of ordinary intentional discourse.

In conversation, people of thought and people of action can please themselves and be true to type. But, self-constituted elites or self-important individuals will not fare well in conversation. Here one comes close to people, to what they know, desire, imagine, and believe in. Conversation need not be competitive; it is, however, an exchange in which the power of mind, good sense, and moral sentiments of a person come to be revealed. As Johnson said, "men might be very eminent in a profession, without our perceiving any particular power of mind in them in conversation"

(Boswell, 1791/1966, p. 1078). In this sense, conversation is a more stringent test than argument.

What makes conversation attractive is its reciprocal quality, breadth of subject matter, the room it gives to different voices, and the delightful turns it may take. Conversations have flexible rules of relevance and evidence. All manner of impressions, ideas, and experiences can enter. In argument, people restrain themselves and say what they can get away with. But conversation thrives on communicativeness, even volubility; tentative notions and allusions are all right.

Conversational exchanges are thus not disconcerted by ideals of perfection in clarity and coherence. One may get answers to questions one never thought of asking (but ought to have asked) or have one's answers answered. Yet conversation is not mere talk; it can include argument and has its own logical postulates. The conduct of conversation presupposes good faith, some common purpose or willingly accepted direction, the assumption that participants say things they believe to be relevant, and that they will attend (in some fashion) to what their partners say (Grice, 1975).

Conversation can yield insights and suggest surprising practical and theoretical connections; it can, however, not *establish* knowledge. "The foundation," as Johnson stressed, "must be laid by reading. General principles must be had from books, which, however, must be brought to the test of real life. In conversation, you never get a system" (Boswell, 1791/1966, p. 624). But practice always needs revision, and most of our theories are false anyway.

Hence, conversation may be the ideal of *active* knowledge, but it is not the context or process by which people come to know things accurately, as part of formal systems that combine efficient expression with generality of

application. Everyone can engage in conversation, but it is not everything. And conversation is educative only where people already know something: themselves, their subjects, a poem, or the way to prepare a lesson in fourth-grade mathematics.

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