

Introduction: Philosophy of Education 2002

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Living in a world where the answers to questions can be so many and so good is what gets me out of bed and into my boots every morning.¹

Editors of this yearbook get a chance each year to say how they think the volume represents the state of the field, and the evolving nature of the Society. In looking at preceding volumes, as each editor makes clear they have done, I admit to some trepidation about offering my own installment in the wake of such titles as Randall Curran's, "Philosophy of Education at the Millennium"² and Lynda Stone's, "Post-Millennial PES."³ So, I begin here in search of the niche that this Introduction, and this volume, might fill.

My view of the 2002 Yearbook has been significantly shaped by the months of preparation that preceded the 58th Annual Meeting, including the eclectic reading and far flung discussions that went into building that program. My experience of the process emphasized (and, I hope, encouraged) a diversity in subject matter and methodology, as well as a diversity of experience and background among presenters, respondents, and panelists. Diversity and inclusion have been regular and important themes in introductions to past volumes and editors such as Frank Margonis⁴ and Susan Laird⁵ have offered powerful commentaries in this area. For my purposes, however, I want to do something less, rather than more, with the idea of diversity as a foundation for this volume. It's not that I think questions about diversity (methodological or otherwise), or the "fragmentation" that Margonis described in 1996, have been resolved by history or by subsequent volumes in this series. On the contrary, I think such questions, especially in relation to membership and audience, remain problematic for PES, despite concerted individual and organizational efforts to address them. What this year's collection suggests to me, however, is that there is less explicit conflict over questions related to diversity among research paradigms and perspectives, and more emphasis on working within and across traditions to develop insights that might improve schools and schooling. I believe there may be less anxiety about methodological differences because we have found that, when such divisions occupy the center stage of inquiry and dialogue, they tend to deflect the work at hand rather than focusing it or making it more productive. We have not left these antagonisms behind, nor do I think we should; we have, however, learned better how to live with and among them.

So, inspired in part by Sue Hubbell's ruminations on her Missouri farm and bee keeping operation, as well as the slowly emerging garden behind my own New England home, I want to resist the invitation to seek more general (or generalizing) prognostications about the direction of the field, in favor of looking a bit more closely at the pleurably mucky work of educational philosophy that has yielded this current crop of essays. I feel comfortable in this approach because what I think this volume represents is not a field in transition or transformation, nor one

preoccupied with the fetish and fashion of competing ideologies. Rather, it represents a field of inquiry that has, at least for the moment, become more comfortable with methodological diversity and more open to the possibilities of working across old barriers. The essays collected here draw widely and deeply on the intellectual roots of the field. The contributors take classroom pedagogy seriously, engage in well-informed debate over educational policies, and generally bring theory to bear on practice in ways that inform and extend our thinking about what schools should try to accomplish and how best to go about it.

Instead of announcing the birth of something shiny and new, or eulogizing the passing of something old and decayed, the story I want to tell in this Introduction concerns a diverse and highly talented group of philosophers struggling to ask and answer questions that might significantly shape the way we understand education. The approaches, topics, and conclusions offered here are diverse and the varied texture of the analyses splendidly contrasting. Regardless of the theoretical commitments and conceptually well-honed axes that one brings to this collection, I think you will find strength and rigor throughout the collection, and every reason to see the vibrancy of a field that has drawn significant talent in the pursuit of good questions. In what follows, I organize my comments on the essays collected in this volume around four areas of inquiry: (1) Learning to be moral; (2) Pedagogy as personal and political; (3) Educational theory, policy, and practice; and (4) Paradigms and perspectives. It seems to me that these are the fields that have been tilled by members of the Society this year, and I can report that the harvest has been a bountiful one.

LEARNING TO BE MORAL

This year's collection includes some outstanding work on the question of how we learn to be moral, especially in the face of everyday challenges to our awareness, judgment, and capacity to (re)act. Barbara Houston's Presidential Address, "Taking Responsibility," is an especially noteworthy example of such inquiry. In this essay, Houston examines the "the moral lethargy that can arise when we face taking responsibility for large-scale problems of social injustice." The analysis begins with a critique of what Houston calls "our default concept of moral responsibility," where complicity and guilt form the initial grounds for blameworthiness. Houston argues that this view "exacerbates the problems of resistance and stuckness," conditions that I believe most readers will find all too familiar in one context or another, whether personally, among students in the classroom, or strewn about media discussions of potential responses (or non-responses) to contemporary "social problems." Houston's essay is a careful and illuminating treatment of the philosophical and psychological challenges we face in responding to the moral demands of social injustice, and it opens up new strategies for how we might become more effective moral agents. As Houston says, "The main virtue of the strategy I'm suggesting is that it may make it easier for people to examine their own hostilities and resistances if they do so as a matter of being accountable to themselves."⁹ Houston acknowledges the potential liabilities of her approach and begins to work through some of the likely challenges. Wherever this line of argument ultimately takes us, my own experience suggests that it is a form of inquiry desperately needed in schools, where current efforts at

“character education” often ignore such hard questions or actively exclude them from the curriculum.

Cheshire Calhoun, in the 2002 Kneller Lecture, offers another interesting window on moral education in her essay, “Expecting Common Decency.” She begins by noting a kind of conflict that frequently emerges in her students’ intuitions about moral obligation:

The chafing tends to begin as soon as we start talking about socially conventional forms of kindness, thoughtfulness, mercy, forgiveness and the like, such as sending a parent a birthday card or congratulating a friend on an achievement or holding a stranger’s place in line. It seems odd to say they are just very nice things that we might elect to do or not. What my students see is that there is a whole range of things that we think we ought to do, not out of moral obligation, but simply because it would be the decent thing to do.

In what follows, Calhoun, like Houston, offers an exceptionally clear-headed analysis of the complex challenges that we face in working out our moral obligations and how these judgments are mediated by the social context in which they emerge. Arguing that “common decencies occupy a hybrid category, sharing some features of obligation and some of supererogation,” Calhoun shows how social conventions can transform supererogatory acts into the common decencies that we expect of all well-formed moral agents. When this process is not explicit, or when it is manipulated institutionally for other ends (for example, to reduce the cost of providing some social service), it can cause harm. Teachers, for example, and others who work in caring professions can find themselves subject to unfair and exploitative forms of moral criticism when supererogatory expectations masquerade as moral obligations. As Calhoun concludes, “Something is seriously wrong when institutions, legislators, and citizens take advantage of teachers’ decency (and thus their willingness to compensate for inadequate social support of educational institutions) to shirk their own responsibilities for seeing that children are decently educated.” Calhoun’s analysis is a provocative response to the current wave of teacher-blaming and the increasing popularity of punitive accountability measures as levers for improving schools. I think her work might also provide an interesting framework for looking at the mutually established (though frequently disputed) expectations of students and teachers in the more local context of the classroom, and the way these expectations are (or are not) cast in moral terms.

There are a number of other essays in this volume that profitably take up the question of learning to be moral, and these may be divided into two general subcategories. First are those that look toward the historical roots of the philosophy of education for ongoing insights about the challenges of moral education. These essays include Nick Burbules and Paul Smeyers on Wittgenstein, David Hansen on Montaigne, Natasha Levinson on Arendt, David Boote on Durkheim, and Shaireen Rasheed on the influence of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty on Maxine Greene. This is a strong and creative group of essays; they provide ample evidence that the connection to these philosophical roots is robust and productive. A second group of contributors, including Meira Levinson, Robert Kunzman, and Joseph Meinhart, address the problems and possibilities associated with instructional models that promote democratic deliberation, civic engagement, and dialogue as fundamental

aspects of educational practice. These essays challenge our understanding of current perspectives on this approach. Each raises and/or attempts to address criticisms that have been offered and each pushes for a deeper understanding, or for substantive revisions, in this way of looking at the goals of education.

PEDAGOGY AS PERSONAL AND POLITICAL

This category includes the largest number of papers in the volume and embraces the widest range of material. What holds this group of essays together, at least for my purposes, is a general commitment to exploring pedagogical approaches that foreground the relational qualities of pedagogy, often with a focus on the complexity of teaching or communicating across difference. Most of these essays also include, and some emphasize, the way that social or institutional contexts mediate the relationships in which pedagogical practice is rooted. Contributors in this category draw on various intellectual traditions and call for a wide variety educational reforms or experiments; they exemplify the healthy diversity to which I appealed at the beginning of this Introduction and their work opens up significant possibilities for future research.

Susan Laird's essay, "Befriending Girls as an Educational Life-Practice," is a good example of an inquiry deeply rooted in a concern for the pedagogy of relation, as well as an inquiry into its meaning within a patriarchal social context. Laird initially describes the practice of befriending girls through examples taken from literature: the relationship between Miz Blue Rain and Precious Jones in Sapphire's *Push*, between Uncle John and Indigo in Ntozake Shange's *Sassafras, Cypress, and Indigo*, and between Carrie and Betsey in Shange's *Betsey Brown*. The kind of friendship that adults offer to these girls is part of a (formal or informal) pedagogical relationship that builds collective bonds and empowers girls to seek and find answers to the questions that their lives press upon them. As Laird says of the fictional Miz Rain, "Rather than fixing Precious's problems, Miz Rain befriends her students by making her class an intimate circle of mutually devoted friends who help one another find the many resources they need for learning to love themselves and diverse others and to survive their many difficulties, such as domestic violence, homelessness, racism, rape, and HIV." Laird carefully charts the development of her conception of befriending girls through the various contexts in which it might be pursued (mostly outside of school), as well as the "miseducative" consequences that are likely to follow from more shallow or manipulative attempts at befriending. There is a clear political dimension to Laird's understanding of befriending girls and an understanding of the broader consequences that pursuing this strategy might have: "Thus any generously attentive partiality to girls in all their diversity can be political, especially within a society that empowers, enriches, and otherwise privileges straight white male adults as well as boys coming of age to claim such manhood, often at girls' expense." Laird's attention to the relationship between the personal and the political in her pedagogy of befriending is provocatively argued here and opens up, not least by naming it, a new and important idea for further inquiry.

In his essay, "What if Teaching Went Wild?" Anthony Weston argues that it is our disconnection from the fundamental processes of life and living that blunt our

moral awareness, especially in relation to the environment that surrounds us. He describes the “thoroughly humanized” spaces in which most of us live and work, and the barrier this creates to seeing ourselves as parts of a system of relationships. He says, “All of this sets a clear agenda for change. We must rediscover ourselves in connection with the rest of the Earth; we must reacknowledge ourselves as animals, come to *feel* ourselves as parts of larger living systems after all. The task of environmental education, then, very broadly speaking is to address our disconnection, reverse it, to re-situate us, to welcome us home.” Weston integrates the arguments he first makes for environmental education into a broader set of pedagogical insights that could equally well challenge most traditional classroom practices. He argues for an approach to teaching that encourages students “to notice that *we ourselves are actually present*, inevitably, in body as well as mind.” He describes enacting this strategy in the classroom through a series of playful provocations, inviting students to “go wild” in their pursuit of connectedness to the world around them. Students examine their hands closely while various paws and primate digits flash across a screen, they question the thoroughly human constructions that make up their classrooms, and they search for connections across the “human/other-than-human boundary” by using touch, taste, and smell. These are in one sense modest proposals, but Weston sees in them the possibility for much more. In this essay, he offers the reader an invitation to reconceptualize the sense of connectedness that underlies our thinking about teaching, and our thinking about ethics more broadly. As Weston concludes:

The invitation to environmental education in this key can end up spurring a re-vision of what it is to be a classroom teacher *tout court*. Environmental philosophers have long suspected that environmental ethics has the potential to remake all of ethics—so perhaps it is not so surprising that the same should be true of the relation between environmental education and education proper. Wildness tends to ramify—which is why the tradition looks upon it with such unease, and why, right now, we need it so very much.

There are a number of other fine essays that I would place in this category and a good deal of diversity among them. These might be helpfully separated into three groups. One group extends our understanding of the complexities that surround relational pedagogies. This group includes Sharon Todd on the pedagogical practice and value of “listening,” especially to those who have experienced suffering and injustice; Kathryn Pauly Morgan on what we can learn about a “pedagogy of the metaphysically personal” from the work of Alfred North Whitehead; Huey-li Li on the role played by alterity and hybridity in conceptions of multicultural education; and Chris Higgins on the dynamics of recognition in teaching. A second group of essays focuses more explicitly on the many ways that social context mediates educational practice, and thus how it shapes the outcomes of pedagogical relationships. This group includes Derek Rasmussen on the harm done to the Inuit of Nunavut by the introduction of Euro-American educational concepts and practices; Barbara Applebaum on the implications of situated moral agency, especially for dominant group members; Stephen Nathan Haymes on the relation of Paulo Freire’s liberation pedagogy to “the existential ontological situation of black people of African descent in the United States;” Clifford Falk on the “production of the (post) military/industrial subject;” Megan Boler on the problems posed by “disembodiment”

in online education; and Michael Gunzenhauser on Sharon Welch's "feminist ethic of risk." The third and final group in this category contains essays that challenge conventional ways of thinking about pedagogy, drawing on a variety of philosophical sources. This group includes: Stephanie Mackler and Doris Santoro on attending to the visible and the invisible in the "particular moments" that make up teaching; Nakia Pope on the pedagogical implications of the Jamesian notion of the vague; Fred Ellett, Jr. and David Erickson on misconceptions about motivation and value in a popular educational psychology text; Claudia Ruitenburg on what we can learn about teaching from experiencing works of art that are "unfamiliar and radically other;" and Margaret Latta on the pedagogical importance of aesthetic play.

EDUCATIONAL THEORY, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

In his essay, "Facts and Norms in Policy Scholarship," Francis Schrag reminds readers that, "Policy debates are fundamentally about what to *do* and so require both factual and normative premises."¹⁸ Schrag encourages social philosophers, whose attention is often focused on justifying normative claims, to spend more time making explicit the empirical claims on which their recommendations rest, as well as assessing the quality and appropriateness of the empirical measures employed in determining these claims. Schrag's general recommendations about the need to critically assess the underlying assumptions that guide policy research resonates throughout the essays included in this category. I'll focus briefly here on the exchange between Stacy Smith ("A Lower Wall Between Church and State: Vouchers or Charter Schools?") and Ken Howe ("School Choice Down in the Cave: A Response to Stacy Smith"), because I think it's a good example of the kind of critical dialogue about normative and empirical assumptions that Schrag advocates, and because I think there is good reason to encourage such conversations about educational policy in the future.

Smith expresses skepticism in her essay about the "high" wall that has been established between church and state, primarily through two prominent court rulings (*Pierce v. Society of Sisters* and the better known *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, source of the "*Lemon test*"). She argues that these cases have led to a policy of separation between public and private (especially, but not exclusively, religious) schools that is problematic on three grounds: first, school choice is limited to those who can afford it, and parents who do exercise this choice are doubly burdened by having to pay public taxes and private tuition; second, private schools are not held sufficiently accountable to the interests of the state, and public schools are not held sufficiently accountable to the interests of parents; third, the current arrangement "hinders a richer plurality of values that might benefit both [public and private] spheres." Following Tom Green's five conditions for social pluralism, and building on Schrag's arguments (elsewhere) in favor of school voucher plans, Smith recommends charter schools for their ability to "combine choice and heterogeneity without sacrificing public accountability."

Howe's response to Smith questions both the normative and empirical assumptions of her argument. First, Howe questions whether a policy of allowing religious charter schools can actually achieve a balance between choice and accountability. He offers Smith the following dilemma: either religious charter schools are "thickly"

religious and thus free to promote views that are widely considered undemocratic (e.g. intolerance toward gays and lesbians), or the state restricts such schools to a “thinner” sense of religiosity, in which case the need for them in the first place appears to diminish, or suitably reformed public schools appear able to achieve the same ends. Second, Howe questions whether, in appealing to the normative criteria of equal opportunity in support of charter schools, Smith has given sufficient attention to the market rationale that actually appears to drive these policies in practice, producing outcomes quite different from those that Smith predicts. In exploring this rejoinder, Howe considers his own study of school choice in Boulder, Colorado, where he found “charter schools...at the top of the stratified system in terms of test scores and at the bottom in terms of low-income, minority, and special education enrollment.”

Whatever position one ultimately takes in the debate over school choice, I think this kind of exchange is critical for philosophers of education, and it is critical for philosophers of education to make such work (and preferably more of it) accessible to people outside of the field. While the number of essays in this category is significantly smaller than in either of the preceding two, I highly encourage a close reading of the substance and texture of the exchanges within this group as a way of thinking about what it means to be a public intellectual, a philosopher engaged in debate over public policy. Ron Glass’s essay, “Reflections on the Justice of the Present War and Some Implications for Education,” and the response by Justen Infinito, could not be more timely or important works for this collection. Lynda Stone and Jim Garrison add a historical dimension to this discussion of war in their exchange on John Dewey, WWI, and the implications of “American hubris.” The three remaining exchanges that round out this category are John Petrovic and Kal Alston on bilingual education, Emery Hyslop-Margison and Daniel Vokey on character development in career education, and Suzanne Rosenblith and Al Neiman on the study of religion in schools.

PARADIGMS AND PERSPECTIVES

Essays that focus explicitly on broad methodological/epistemological issues in the philosophy of education make up the smallest of the categories represented in this volume, though elements of this approach can be seen in other essays. Here Stella Gaon critiques the role of rationality in modernist conceptions of emancipatory education, arguing that “a certain irrationality informs the emancipatory educational ideal” and that “what is most significant...is that this insight is not the result of a skeptical doubt about ends; it is the result, rather, of a logical inquiry into the rationality of reason to begin with.” In another essay, John Levisohn argues that interpretivist historiographer Hayden White’s “more relativistic conclusions are unjustified” and that, instead, history teachers might encourage “responsible storytelling” through teaching practices that promote “personal qualities that we may call the interpretive virtues.”

The essay that I’ll focus on briefly here takes a slightly different approach to these methodological questions and suggests a general strategy that I think is worthy of greater attention in the future. Benjamin Endres’s essay, “Critical Pedagogy and

Liberal Education: Reconciling Tradition, Critique, and Democracy,” is an effort to explore the common or complementary qualities of two traditions that promote “seemingly contradictory projects.” His objective is not to explain this tension away, but rather to find “a common educational and social concern” at the root of both approaches. Endres argues that misleading characterizations of both approaches not only obscure potential points of conceptual reciprocity between the traditions, but also underestimate the progressive political potential of a more synthetic approach. He concludes that we need not choose between oversimplified versions of either approach, nor see in one the unrelenting rival of the other. Instead, Endres concludes that,

The commonality of these projects is highlighted in a shared commitment to forms of social life and education that are not simply defined by the instrumental transmission of ideas or preparation for work. They both aspire to provide educational contexts that interrupt participation in existing social conventions and task-oriented work, however briefly, in order to cultivate reflection about aspects of our lives that are taken for granted.

I think there is much to recommend the kind of general approach that this essay represents, and a good deal more might be done to explore similar connections among the paradigms and perspectives that currently exist in the field. This is no mere plea to “get along;” it is, rather, to encourage a stance that seeks common ground at the expense of polemic, and shared political labor at the expense of ideological conformity. For philosophers who are interested in influencing the public dialogue over educational policy and practice, and especially for those who oppose the trajectory of current efforts, such explorations seem particularly important.

I offer my sincerest gratitude to all those who contributed to this volume, and to those who helped in its production.⁶ There is much to learn here, and much on which to build in the years to come.

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1. Sue Hubbell, *A Country Year: Living the Questions* (New York: Random House, 1986), 58.
 2. Randall Curran, “Philosophy of Education at the Millennium,” *Philosophy of Education 1999*, ed. Randall Curran (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 2000), ix-xiii.
 3. Lynda Stone, “Post-Millennial PES: Introduction to Philosophy of Education at 2000,” *Philosophy of Education 2000*, ed. Lynda Stone (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 2001), xi-xix.
 4. Frank Margonis, “Philosophical Pluralism: The Promise of Fragmentation,” *Philosophy of Education 1996*, ed. Frank Margonis (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1997), xi-xviii.
 5. Susan Laird, “‘Where’ are the Philosophers of Education in 1997?” *Philosophy of Education 1997*, ed. Susan Laird (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1998), xi-xvii.
 6. I had a lot of help putting this volume together and I’d like to say thanks (again) to the people who made it possible. First, thanks to members of the Program Committee, for their enthusiasm and expertise in reviewing submissions: Lanny Beyer, Susan Edgerton, Liza Finkel, Bob Floden, Maureen Ford, Ken Howe, Cris Mayo, Christine McCarthy, Aaron Schutz, Barbara Thayer-Bacon, and Daniel Vokey. Thanks to Suzanne Rice for sharing her knowledge and experience as last year’s Program Chair/Editor. Thanks to Barbara Stengel for getting (and keeping) the show on the road to Vancouver. Thanks to Heesoon Bai for warm and wonderful hospitality in Vancouver. Thanks to Todd DeMitchell, Ann Diller, Barbara Houston, and Mike Andrew for institutional and moral support at the University of New Hampshire. Thanks to Lisa Canfield for boundless office help. And special thanks and gratitude to Barbara Houston and Liza Finkel for coming to the rescue just when I needed it most. Thanks to Tim McDonough, Diana Dummitt, and Diane Beckett for editorial and production assistance.