

Post-Millennial PES Introduction to Philosophy of Education at 2000

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Between the writing and presenting of essays for this “yearbook 2000” of the Philosophy of Education Society, the millennium took place. As such auspicious dates seldom occur, this particular moment marked for individuals all over the world a time for celebration (just to be alive!?) and for taking stock. It seemed a time to write something of significance about PES and its present state, except that Randall Curren had beat me to it in his introduction to *Philosophy of Education: 1999* entitled “Philosophy of Education at the Millennium” — and indeed so had other editors since 1995!¹ Thus the task of this introduction, in the spirit of the larger intellectual age, is to offer an assessment “post millennium.”

Assessing philosophy of education, offering one interpretation, after the turn of a new century suggests not only a looking forward but also an “after.” This is entirely appropriate as the field, in my view, exhibits a new vitality after a time of some and a sometimes acrimonious unsettling. This new PES is different, however, from other “new” configurations over the past half-century.² Rather than a different kind of philosophy of education emerging to dominate its predecessors, it is a time of a healthy and “accepted” diversity of approaches and interests. In pointing to the future, a *post-millennial PES* thus promises something new from its historical past — or at least so it now seems. In the vernacular, not only is there variety, vigor, and rigor in the field, but also “something for everyone.”

Recent introductions to the yearbooks have indicated this diversity but with less health than is the present assessment. As Alven Neiman noted in 1995, to introduce these collections of the craft is itself a relatively new project. Following the lead of Nicholas Burbules in 1986 and Hanan Alexander in 1992, Neiman began a continuing tradition of introduction and assessment just a half-decade ago.³ Since then, each editor has suggested a moment of the field built on its history and portending its future. Just prior to the millennium, previous characterizations indicate a diverse field of scholarship in search of a unifying identity.

PRE-MILLENNIUM IDENTITY

Diversity within PES during the past half decade or so, as a “pre-millennial” identity, is perhaps delineated from the present “post” by a seeking of some form of unification within the field. Today, in my view, this is no longer the case. The pre-period might be called, to borrow from feminist and other debates over racial, ethnic, and sexual diversity, one which emphasized identity politics: What was PES to be?

Consider some indicators of this era in the past yearbook introductions: From 1995, Neiman, citing Burbules, asks about “coherence” of the field of philosophy of education, and turning to Alexander, raises the question of stance toward coherence. He points to a then-prior coherence within philosophy and philosophy of education based on an enlightenment epistemological standard that is threatened by “arrival of

the posties.” Such a threat, as Neiman writes, “may or may not be taken as salutary, depending on whether the prior unity...is seen to have been good...or bad.”⁷⁴ In the mid-nineties the response at its best of PES membership to a lack of unity is “a shared conscious effort to enact inclusion.”⁷⁵ If Neiman’s “field” is defined as one formerly unified but threatened, that of Frank Margonis in 1996 is one of “fragmentation” that he asserts “has been accompanied by a degree of apprehension.”⁷⁶ This is because multiple perspectives raise fundamental questions about the field — questions that as I indicated are about “identity.” These well-named by Margonis are of “the mission of the field, the standards by which work should be judged, the possible recommendations that educational philosophers might pass on to educators.”⁷⁷ His own interpretive stance is to select possible syntheses in writings from the 1996 volume by Betty Sichel and Burbules that “start from the assumption of disagreement...[but also entail] the confidence that divergent perspectives embody important understandings and the humility needed to recognize the limitations of any one theoretical vantage point.”⁷⁸ For Margonis, fragmentation holds “promise.”

Even more than her two predecessors, in the 1997 yearbook editor Susan Laird focuses on the content of “inclusion.” She does this by asking “where” (and indeed “who”) are philosophers of education and thus what are their interests. Philosophy of education for her and for the field, significantly, is virtually always normative, and laden furthermore with specific values — and it is quite different from the earlier “unity” Neiman describes.⁹ Laird’s own challenge to the field is to further “identify” in my term, to “write consciously” from locations that are gendered, racialized, sexualized, and so forth.¹⁰ Part of her call is for conscious educational identity (especially as philosophers of education in institutions of higher education). This concern for “educational” identity is also taken up by Steve Tozer in 1998. His introduction frames the volume by listing the five purposes of PES that highlight education: promoting philosophical treatment of problems, clarifying agreements and disagreements among philosophies of education, advancing and improving teaching across the education institution, cultivating relationships with philosophers more broadly engaged, and encouraging promising students of the field.¹¹ His own call is for PES members to “show strong evidence that we are listening to the concerns of practitioners and other educators...[and] to go to where their conversations take place.”¹² For Tozer, I believe, the implication is that “thoughtfulness” about education offers promise of unification. Finally in the 1999 yearbook edited by Curren, another form of unity is described and touted; this is to reassert ties with the parent discipline of philosophy. Curren’s argument is that the field’s future depends on its traditional philosophical roots as well as its engagement in contemporary educational debates. He concludes, “Without...[both connections,] it will fail to earn and maintain the respect it must have as a domain of practical philosophy, an intellectual enterprise aimed...at the guidance of educational practice.”¹³

NO UNIFICATION

Implicit if not explicit in recent yearbook introductions and continued herein are two contemporary premises about the state of philosophy of education — at least in North America. One is that the field is diverse, about this my editor-predecessors and

I agree. The other, perhaps a belief I hold most strongly, is that there is no possible unification of the field, in the foreseeable or even far-ranging future. From my perspective, I emphasize, diversity is a *strength* and not a detriment. There is no need for unification. There is no need for coherence or common ground, called for by Neiman and Tozer respectively, save for attention to issues of education as a central part of the work.¹⁴ Further, “inclusion” — desired by Neiman and Laird — is reconceptualized since a strong diversity means that there is no dominant tradition that ought to “include” others. Indeed Margonis’s “promise of fragmentation” is being realized in a society whose philosophical work exhibits a kind of “disciplinary” professionalism. But, from a position contrary to Curren, in my view today there is no one tradition, even that of a parent, to which philosophy of education is or ought to be connected; there are instead many intellectual roots and lineages.

However, a question still might be asked: if there is no field unification, what then characterizes philosophy of education? What is its diversity like? Offered at this point is one possible conception as a frame for essays to follow. It extends the intellectual base but works from the same spirit as the stance offered by Laird, one taken from the writings of pragmatist Richard Shusterman. For him, philosophy is “a special way of living” with insights for philosophy of education.¹⁵ Sources for Laird are cultural identities and social locations, popular cultures, arts and social ethics, interrogation of traditional dualisms arising out of a tradition of philosophical reason, critiques of modernism, and reconstruction of pragmatism.¹⁶ What I now suggest turns more generally to development of a “post-philosophical tradition” that arises in a broad American and Continental social theory. The resource is one of my favorite texts, *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?* edited by Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy published in 1987. It is primarily composed of reprinted essays, with introductions for the volume, from the following philosophers: Rorty, Lyotard, Foucault, Derrida, Davidson, Dummett, Putnam, Apel, Habermas, Gadamer, Ricoeur, MacIntyre, Blumenberg, and Taylor.¹⁷ Surely this listing includes most of the men if not women who have significant philosophical influence today.

Inspiration specifically is found in the general introduction to the volume from McCarthy, a noted critical theorist, with expertise especially on Habermas. Two initiating points are pertinent: One is that for all contributors to the volume, philosophy is anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist. There is no one conception or framework by which to judge human thought and life and there is no “theory” that is not laden in contexts that include cultures, histories, and subjectivities. The other is that theory has undergone the linguistic turn and is therefore anti-representational. This means that there is no truth beyond that which can be stated in linguistic terms, however weak or strong one takes the specific influence of language on the composition of thought and action. These premises, one notes, have longer histories than in the writings of authors just named. McCarthy claims their roots in Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Quine, to which in varying ways Marx and Dewey among others might be added. Writing for his colleagues, McCarthy asserts that a contemporary discipline is perhaps best characterized as sets of “family resemblances” engaged in what one hopes is “a meaningful dialogue concerning the

options for doing...philosophy today.”¹⁸ As well, this seems a sound characterization of and for philosophy of education.

McCarthy proposes three themes that describe the content of this philosophical dialogue; turning to them here does not commit each author in the yearbook to similar themes but I think it does so commit the field overall. The first theme is critique of a traditional conception of reason that emphasizes contingency and conventionality of rules of speech and action, and positionality and plurality in use of varying forms of rationality. Responding to a Kantian necessity, universality, and sovereignty that is also the basis for the first theme, the second is critique of the autonomy of person that emphasizes the social, the economic, the bodily, and the unknown. McCarthy sums these two thusly: “the epistemological and moral subject has been definitively decentered and the conception of reason linked to it irrevocably desublimated. Subjectivity and intentionality are not prior to but a function of forms of life and systems of language.”¹⁹ The third theme concerns representation from above in which subjects and their forms of reasoning belong to a world already existing, functioning, and influencing thought and action. This is critique of truth that emphasizes a semantic and often sentential non-correspondence. This last theme refers also to Laird’s use of Shusterman and to a blurring of traditional boundaries between philosophy and poetics and rhetoric.

Under a banner of “a rhetorical revolution for philosophy of education,” I have been very interested in this last theme.²⁰ As McCarthy puts it, this is the question of where the linguistic turn leads. His answer is to the pragmatics of natural languages, to the politics of language utilization, and to rhetorical and poetical aspects of language itself.²¹ Overall this means an undermining of traditional oppositions “between logos and mythos, logic and rhetoric, literal and figurative, concept and metaphor, argument and narrative.”²² For me the rhetorical dimension of philosophy — and philosophy of education — today encompass the emphasis on language itself, its pragmatic function, its societal context, its historicity, and importantly, its basis as ethical. As I put it, in contemporary philosophy “there is no neutrality...[and] this non-neutrality...[is tied to a timeliness within a cultural space in which] change is pervasive.”²³ This last is most important as philosophy of education is a practice of “human relation and participation...[that entails] workings-though in which there is both potential and actual benefit and harm.”²⁴ Too, I believe that a current interest in ethics is profound: what is occurring around this millennial era is a revolutionary blurring of epistemology and ethics. This will continue post-millennium.

THE YEARBOOK

While it is neither practical nor particularly useful to analyze each and every contribution to this yearbook in terms of McCarthy’s three themes, it is instructive to connect the two. This requires a very brief turn to the writings of American neo-pragmatist philosopher, Richard Rorty, whose work is the inspiration for *After Philosophy*. As is well-known, in his essay “Pragmatism and Philosophy” published as the introduction to the 1982 collection, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Rorty overviews his now long-standing campaign for recognition of the end of *Philosophy* (with a capital P). This has taken place in the “gradual ‘pragmaticization’” of modern philosophy, occurring in traditions that are both Anglo-American and Continental.²⁵

For him the key is the issue of representation, that is “how language relates to the world;” for him, the shift has been to anti-representation because to step out of language for any use to something absolute is “impossible.”²⁶ Elsewhere in his project, in an essay on the contributions of Heidegger and Dewey, he names “Philosophy” as “the Tradition.” Providing his own take on the themes of McCarthy above, Rorty incorporates attention to four elements: first, problems of Cartesian-framed philosophical skepticism, and then three distinctions — between contemplation and action, philosophy and science, and between both and “the aesthetic.”²⁷

To organize the essays of the PES yearbook for 2000, I want to adopt and adapt Rorty’s concept of Tradition and suggest a classificatory distinction for today’s philosophy of education that is “Traditional” and “post-Traditional.” In what follows I offer a logic that begins with ties to Anglo-American “Philosophy,” to “Tradition,” and that moves in a number of ways away. Tradition in the field operates in two senses, first in utilizing content of the discipline and then in employing method. In terms of content, essays are categorized in these ways: First is work from philosophical masters, those classical and more so those contemporary. Second is presentation of traditional conceptual and “analytical” topics both from philosophy and from philosophy of education. Third, essays take lead from several lines of scholarship and of topics that have not been traditionally part of the field. I note for the reader that several of these categorizations have sub-sets. Less prevalent than the Tradition of content is one of method: offerings are primarily analytical with some examples of rhetorical and stylistic variety. About this, space permitting, I would have enjoyed focusing more attention. Overall for philosophy of education, in my view, what emerges is diversity in an increasingly “post-Tradition.” In suggesting this logic, I emphasize, I am in no way making a judgment about what is good philosophy but rather pointing to general scholarly undertakings in the field related to those of a present broadly defined intellectual moment.

In the first section of the volume, Jim Garrison’s Presidential Essay compares Dewey and Derrida on human development and is part of his long-term project in the new scholarship on Dewey. Respondents James Giarelli and Mary Leach evoke Heidegger and Vonnegut, and Derrida respectively.²⁷ Scholarship herein is “post-Tradition” in Rorty’s sense although Dewey scholarship has certainly been a “tradition” of its own in philosophy of education over the past century. As addresses, the three are somewhat rhetorically informal; methodologically too, Giarelli turns to literature for his frame, a move outside the analytical tradition until relatively recently.

The next section, following the Presidential Essay and the two responses, consists of “Featured Essays,” a set of exemplary essays, first by a distinguished invited speaker and its response and then for the three “general sessions,” voted by the program committee as the best submissions for 2000. In many ways, this initial set exemplifies the range of work being done by members of the field. The invited address is from Douglas Kellner on technology and education and the response from Nicholas Burbules.²⁸ These essays are conceptual analyses as is the contribution from David Hanson on ideals in teaching along with Emily Robertson’s response.

The topic of the latter pairing is more in keeping with the Tradition than is the former. In the next set, Patricia Rohrer writes on the self from Rorty and Taylor with Neiman responding in a highly poetic form; and lastly Ann Chinnery utilizes Levinas on moral education, responded to by Gert Biesta. Here while essay topics and much of the writing style is traditional, post-Tradition is represented both in selection of philosophers and in using literary content in response.

The large section entitled “Essays” is comprised of twenty-six essays and critiques, these representing overall the “craft-work” of philosophy of education in North America today. In category one, a first group of essays turn to “the masters” of various eras in philosophy to explicate, extend and apply “the Tradition.” David Ericson contributes a Plato-influenced essay to which Rob Reich responds that includes work from educational philosopher Thomas Green to consider philosophy’s therapeutic purpose. Next, Walter Okshevsky reprises and delineates Kant’s moral catechism with a response from Thomas Fuhr; further Tapio Puolimatka draws on Spinoza and his concept of the “learned multitude” — the critic here is Paul Smeyers — and, finally, Gayle Turner takes up Sartre in a provocative essay on sadism and teaching responded to by Ann Diller.

Next are a set of Dewey essays: The first is a kind of intellectual history on Dewey, Rugg and others on early corporatism from Kathleen Knight Abowitz and Deron Boyles with John Covalleskie offering remarks. Then comes Matt Pamental’s essay, an interpretive interconnection of Dewey’s science and ethics to which Eric Bredo responds. Last in this sub-group, Naoko Saito analyzes Dewey’s naturalism and concept of growth critiqued by David Granger. One other essay, that from Greg Seals, utilizes Dewey’s laboratory school as a frame to consider dimensions of group beliefs and what he terms “doxastic freedom;” a highly formal response is from David Carr. While most of the essays in the Dewey sub-set are written in standard analytical style, they do demonstrate a rhetorical range that includes intellectual history and symbolic argument.

Other important philosophers are fronted as a next grouping of essays draws primarily on contemporary writers. First, in a essay responded to by Emanuel Shargel and Michael Dwyer in which they turn to Heidegger, Eduardo Manuel Duarte compares Husserl with Freire on “intention” and pedagogy. The next offering from James Palermo utilizes Barthes to “read” Mann and Cubberley on equal opportunity; his critic is Inna Semetsky. Then Julian Edgoose along with commentary from Denise Egéa-Kuehne offer their take on Levinas’s ethics for teaching. This is followed by two essays of important philosophical contributions by noted women, Murdock and Nussbaum. The first is from Susan McDonough on moral life in teaching, responded to by Suzanne Rice; and the second is from Anna Fishbeyn on self-improvement, responded to by Zelia Gregoriou. Interestingly, McDonough uses Murdock to critique Nussbaum and she also offers an illustrative narrative; Fishbeyn in her turn draws on examples from literature in discussion that connects to teaching.

The second general category of essays employs “Tradition” in a different way, here in terms of analytical arguments and presentations. A first analyzing the

concept of transformation is contributed by Estelle Jorgensen with Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon responding. Two others in this set move first to education and then to philosophy of education for their analyses. Hunter McEwan considers learning and is responded to by Robert Floden; Chris Higgins takes up recent debates on what constitutes the field, among them a significant effort from Harvey Siegel who is his critic.

In the third general category, Tradition in content is extended in four essays based largely in legal and political theory and/or current connections to issues of justice in education. One is Charles Howell's explication of "educational adequacy" based in court decisions and discourse; his respondent is A.G. Rud. A second essay by Michele Moses and responded to by Michael Katz utilizes contemporary liberal political theory to discuss identity and choice. Her media frame concerns racial discrimination, a theme central to a third essay from Barbara Applebaum and Erin Stoik that presents recent delineations in race and whiteness theory on identity; they are critiqued by Cris Mayo. The last essay takes up the contemporary topic of hate speech within university pedagogy; this is from Megan Boler who is responded to by Suzanne deCastell.

A final sub-set demonstrates still more the post-traditional range of interests and scholarly traditions for PES members. Three essays utilize a variety of feminist theorists and positions related to ethical educational life. Theodore Klein writes about teaching caring drawing from sources across the feminist caring literature. His critic is Susan Verducci. Then teaching as desire is the topic of an essay from Hilary Davis; her sources are psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, radical and feminist pedagogy; the discussant is Maureen Ford. The third essay that draws on similar sources takes up the issue of guilt in educational responsibility. Here Sharon Todd also turns to Levinas; her respondent is Mary Bryson. The final three essays in the collection concern science education, cultural studies, and global education as newer, post-Tradition topics. The first, from Christine McCarthy and Evelyn Sears, considers the present constructivism debate and is responded to by Jayne Fleener. Following this is a contribution built upon several narrative vignettes from Jaylynn Hutchinson to define and position cultural studies in education; she is responded to by Kathy Hytten. Last but surely not least in the collection is an essay from Huey-Li Li taking up connections between diverse conceptions of bio-regionalism and their place in global education today. The respondent is Dilafruz Williams.

AN INVITATION

This yearbook exemplifies important craft-work of philosophers of education at 2000 in which several trends are apparent. First there is a healthy and very stimulating diversity of philosophical and educational content pointed to above; less prevalent but still present is diversity of method. As the field diversifies, it uses Tradition but increasingly turns to and creates post-Tradition, in a general move away from what were once strong ties to a unifying Philosophy and a strongly analytical style. The identity of Philosophy of Education at 2000 is diverse, to repeat, and non-unifying. Indeed philosophy of education at 2000 offers "something for everyone." With this, an invitation is extended to readers within the field, in

professional education, and beyond to sample the best of work being done by members of PES today, by scholars whose significant vocation and passion is to write philosophically to effect educational change. This yearbook is the first post-millennial collection.²⁹

1. See Alven Neiman, "Introduction Coherence, Inclusion, Prognosis: Remarks on the State of the Philosophy of Education Society at 51 Years Old," *Philosophy of Education 1995*, ed. Alven Neiman (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1996), xi-xvi; Frank Margonis, "Introduction Philosophical Pluralism: The Promise of Fragmentation," *Philosophy of Education 1996*, ed. Frank Margonis (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1997), xi-xviii; Susan Laird, "Introduction 'Where' are the Philosophers of Education in 1997?" *Philosophy of Education 1997*, ed. Susan Laird (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1998), xi-xvii; Steve Tozer, "Introduction," *Philosophy of Education 1998*, ed. Steve Tozer (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1999), xi-xv; Randall Curren, "Introduction Philosophy of Education at the Millenium," *Philosophy of Education 1999*, ed. Randall Curren (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 2000), ix-xiii.

2. My own analysis of the field of philosophy of education, its membership and participation, is "Philosophy of Education as Guild-Work," *Futures of Educational Foundations*, ed. George Noblit and Beth Hatt (Garland, in press).

3. See Nicholas C. Burbules, "Introduction," *Philosophy of Education 1986*, ed. Nicholas Burbules (Normal, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1986), vii-xi; and Hanan Alexander, "After the Revolution: The Normative Revival in Post Analytic Philosophy of Education," *Philosophy of Education 1992*, ed. H. A. Alexander (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1993), 1-4.

4. Neiman, "Coherence, Inclusion, Prognosis," xiii.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Margonis, "Philosophical Pluralism," xi.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, xvi; Betty Sichel, "Beyond Moral Stories," *Philosophy of Education 1996*, ed. Frank Margonis (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1997), 1-11; Nicholas Burbules, "Deconstructing 'Difference' and the Difference this Makes to Education," *Philosophy of Education 1996*, ed. Frank Margonis (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1997), 114-23.

9. Neiman, "Coherence, Inclusion, Prognosis," xii.

10. Laird, "'Where' Are the Philosophers of Education in 1997?" xi.

11. See Tozer, "Introduction," xi.

12. *Ibid.*, xiv.

13. Curren, "Philosophy of Education at the Millennium," xii.

14. See additional reference to Tozer on "common ground," "Introduction," xi.

15. Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1, cited in Laird, "'Where' Are the Philosophers of Education in 1997?" xiii.

16. Laird, "'Where' Are the Philosophers of Education in 1997?" xiii.

17. Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy, eds., *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987). Essays in the collection were written beginning in 1965.

18. See Baynes, Bohman, and McCarthy, *After Philosophy*, 18; McCarthy, "General Introduction," *Ibid.*, 3.

19. McCarthy, "General Introduction," 4.

20. See Lynda Stone, "A Rhetorical Revolution for Philosophy of Education," in Margonis, *Philosophy of Education 1996*, 412-20.

21. McCarthy, "General Introduction," 5-6.

22. *Ibid.*, 5.

23. Stone, "Rhetorical Revolution," 417.

24. Ibid.

25. Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism and Philosophy," in Baynes, Bohman, and McCarthy, *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?* 31-32.

26. Rorty, "Pragmatism and Philosophy," 33.

27. Rorty, "Overcoming the Tradition: Heidegger and Dewey," *Consequences of Pragmatism (Essays 1972-1980)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 42.

28. At the annual meeting in Toronto, April 2000, Virginia Held was also a distinguished invited speaker; Randall Curren and Barbara Houston responded in a lively session.

29. Publication of this yearbook has been invaluablely assisted by significant contributions from many persons. First is outstanding service from the program committee of the PES annual meeting, 2000: Gert Biesta, Eric Bredo, David Carr, James Giarelli, Denise Egéa-Kuehne, Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon, Kathy Hytten, Cris Mayo, Stephen Norris, Nel Noddings, and A G. Rud, with special recognition to the international members. Second has been general assistance from Jim Garrison, Barbara Stengel, and Nicholas Burbules. Third has been exemplary program and editorial work from Elizabeth Becker, Assistant to the Program Chair, Amy Anderson, Assistant to the Editor, and Tim Simpson, Managing Editor, as well as editorial direction from Diana Dummitt and Diane Beckett. A special thanks to Anderson for assisting with this introduction and especially to Nel Noddings for her participation and conversation.

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