

Introduction: Perennial Questions for the Present Age

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The March 2008 annual meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society was held in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at a historical moment barely imaginable only a generation ago, let alone when the elders of the Society came of age in the period between the twentieth century's major World Wars. As we discussed philosophy, the Republican Party was presiding over the (un)intended consequences of its policies and ideology: a global war without end, a collapsing economy, a public education system eviscerated of meaning, a political culture fractured and subverted by lies and media manipulation, a public sphere undermined by privatization and narrowed self-interests, and a proliferation of work without significance or living wages. These realities extended worldwide, forcing their way into regional and local cultures increasingly transformed by the needs of capital. At the same time, the Democratic Party was providing only meek resistance, yet surprisingly was on its way to nominating the first African American to be a major party candidate for president of the United States.

Standing on a platform of change that nonetheless leaves many of these developments unchallenged, Barack Obama embodies contradictions that confront those who seek more humanistic, democratic, and just societies. A man beyond race — because “mixed” — who still is seen through the prisms of the given racial order; a man of humble beginnings whose legitimacy is still assessed through the credentials of his Ivy League education; a man whose eloquent calls for hope and renewed civic action are dismissed through the cynical derision of utopian visions and a hardened indifference to suffering that portrays efforts at deep social transformations as naïve and useless.

But the outpouring of energy and votes for Obama and his challenger for the Democratic nomination, Hillary Clinton, demonstrate that we stand at a historic pivot point. A global movement is emerging that seeks to reclaim the public sphere and to recreate it to serve values that prioritize community needs. This emergence marks both the persistence of perennial questions — about what is right and good, what is warranted and true, what is fair and just, what is education's aim — as well the importance of particular responses to those questions as grounded in specific times and places. What becomes clear are the dialectical relationships in global and local contexts and in perennial questions and specific answers, and that this interplay precisely marks the distinction of the present age, the particular moment of our own reflections, writings, and dialogues.

Given this context, it is not surprising that the themes of this year's essays are heavily weighted toward moral and political issues, though epistemological and ontological concerns also receive due attention. Leading off this volume, Michael Katz's Presidential Essay, “Teaching with Integrity,” draws us into the complexities

of the ethical relationships at the heart of teaching and learning and at the core of one's own self-understanding. Katz highlights the sometimes conflicting demands made by a commitment to integrity, and he uncovers some of the ways that ideologies of race and gender intersect with these conflicts to place additional ethical burdens on the people negatively marked by those ideologies. Katz argues that even more troubling for anyone seeking to live and teach with integrity is the problem of self-deception. Katz calls on us to develop a greater sense of humility, a deeper recognition of our moral limitations, and a stronger commitment to processes of moral formation in relationship with others. Deborah Kerdeman, in her commentary, similarly urges an ongoing hermeneutic of understanding that maintains our openness to new learning and further moral development; Nel Noddings also concurs with Katz, emphasizing the relations of care on which such development depends.

The dangers of public forms of self-deception were also reflected in a conference dialogue on Evil and Education between Richard J. Bernstein and Nel Noddings, and Bernstein again cautions against moral hubris in his "lay sermon" that comprises the 2008 Kneller Lecture. In his Kneller essay, "Democracy and Education," Bernstein reflects on persistent themes in John Dewey's thought in order to illuminate some of the central issues facing us in these "dark times." Trying to counter the assault of "mere talk" in public affairs and the dominance of an "overwhelming triviality" in the activities of schooling, Bernstein resuscitates Dewey's notion of democracy and its intimate association with a form of education that grapples with the challenging realities of everyday life. Only through learning processes that are also public moral and political processes can an engaged democracy be forged that draws out the active participation of its citizens. As Emily Robertson notes in response to Bernstein, such "lay sermons" call us to a moral and political commitment, and surely this is needed in the present age; but at the same time, as Walter Feinberg cautions, these commitments must be founded upon an embrace of diversity so that democratic publics do not erase difference.

The particular difficulties that educators face in fostering engagement with moral issues, especially those that emanate from deep ideological divides, are central to a number of the essays included in this Yearbook. The two featured essays, by Ann Chinnery and by Jennifer Logue, explore moral dimensions of the efforts by dominant-group members to know the experience of ideologically demeaned others, or even to grasp the operations of such ideologies in the structural dynamics of everyday life. Noting the power of books to "throw" us, Chinnery examines the ways that "resistant texts" invite moral insight even as they keep dominant-group readers at a distance, and block efforts to fully know the inside experience of the other. Logue investigates the tensions between knowledge and ignorance, and argues that disclosing the dynamics of how ignorance structures knowledge can make antiracist, social justice pedagogy more effective. Both Chinnery and Logue make clear that these pedagogies demand that teachers and learners reside in the liminal spaces between self and other, the known and the unknowable.

A group of essays in this volume take up antiracist, social justice pedagogy from a variety of perspectives. Steven Mather worries that these pedagogies can constitute

a kind of social experiment without adequate protections for the participants; Barbara Stengel, in her response to Mather, speaks for many by recognizing that deep self-understandings are at stake and that care is needed in relation to the students in these settings, but at the same time, she rejects Mather's analysis of whiteness studies. Larry Blum also raises questions about white privilege analysis, arguing that its normative foundations need strengthening and that its limited examination of the actual structures of racial inequality and of the variances in the experiences of the major racial groups translates into limited conceptions of the ways that whites can contribute to racial justice. Barbara Applebaum argues that whites must face the difficult task of connecting the ways that white privilege entails white complicity in racial injustice, and that this starting place for ethics can lead to an engagement with the disturbing kinds of knowledge necessary to address racism. Cris Mayo examines the possibilities within humor's pedagogies of signification, which are both "funny and very much not so funny," to dislodge the passivity of spectators and draw them into critical engagements with their self-understandings and the social realities in which they live. Audrey Thompson calls all this theory and pedagogy into question by asking, "where are the sheep?" focusing our attention on the unspoken assumptions that make notions of race, gender, class, and other social justice categories seem familiar. Invoking the centrality of sheep for the Diné (Navajo) as a starting point, Thompson argues that paths setting off from that point might take us into new regions of understanding, perhaps not just of race but even of the temporal and spatial relations within which race resides. Similarly, Helen Anderson unsettles the racial foundations of our philosophizing by underscoring its performative whiteness, and, in his commentary, Stephen Haymes situates this form of reliable narration in the white identity born out of the European experience of colonization, slavery, and conquest.

While contemporary theoretical lenses bring these persistent issues into a new focus, there is much still to learn from perspectives drawing on historical treatments of ethical issues. Daniel DeNicola sheds light on moral psychology and stage theories of moral agency by revisiting work by Adam Smith. Chris Martin attempts a "rescuing critique" of R.S. Peters's classic study of ethics and education in order to argue that a worthwhile education must be grounded in a "universally valid and impartial moral point of view." What these traditional lines of argument make clear is that ethical concerns remain at the core of educational aims, and, in fact, they also preoccupy educational philosophers grappling with the emergent sociocultural, economic, and political formations of globalization. Thus Megan Laverty rightly notes that these developments highlight the normative force of dialogue in education, and place identity and human solidarity in the foreground of efforts to make learning serve wisdom-seeking. Similarly, David Hansen explores a notion of educational cosmopolitanism with roots deep in the origins of Western thought and branches that bring learners into engagement with the horizons of their experience. To facilitate encounters with difference, Ryan Bevan argues that "liberal (rationalist-based) and nonliberal (tradition-based) values" are both necessary for an affirmative approach.

Of course, it is not straightforward how one should fashion classroom experiences in order to foster fruitful dialogue, cosmopolitan outlooks, or model liberal-democratic citizens. Sheron Fraser-Burgess details experiences that can promote the kind of citizens required by a moral deliberative democracy and argues that experiences grounded in specific group memberships (such as racial groups) need not weaken the foundation of epistemically normative deliberation. To throw a critical light on conceptions of citizenship that can obscure relations of domination, Lyndsay Spear revisits Jean-Jacques Rousseau's classic work, *Emile*, to argue that Sophie's education provides a more suggestive model if it is augmented by supports that facilitate full participation in society. Kathy Hytten warns that a justice-oriented notion of citizenship is crucial to counter the negative dynamics of globalization; indeed, without a critical skepticism about the portraits of cosmopolitan citizenship often painted by neoliberal discourses, only the already privileged will benefit from globalization.

Taking a different tack, Trent Davis deploys the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas to reconceptualize the challenges of educating the virtues for democratic citizenship. He argues that Levinas's utopian vision suggests cultivating a "democratic pathos, with a tinge of melancholy" that can enable citizens to realize themselves as "beings that weep" who also are called to bear witness to the weeping of others. James Stillwaggon and David Jelinek embrace a similar understanding, arguing that "melancholy provides a description of how the other, as the new, enters into a discourse and changes the way we describe the world" and thus opens up liberatory spaces that more fully escape the dominations and determinations only seemingly overcome in critical pedagogies. Gert Biesta also seeks to think about emancipation differently, and he draws on Michel Foucault and Jacques Rancière to position agency in visible "power/knowledge constellations" without reinscribing their hierarchies of dominance and mastery.

Power and knowledge are intimately connected in both macro and micro structures of schooling. Charles Howell explores the dynamics of classroom discipline and argues that some ways of demanding compliance from students invite them to develop their moral agency, thus avoiding paternalistic and manipulative forms of authority. However, Jason Blokhuis argues that in some regards children's autonomy can only be developed and protected by means of paternalistic authority exercised by state-run schools as a necessary balance or counter to the authority of the children's families. Of course, the line between state and private interests is notoriously difficult to specify. This is revealed again in Erik Owens's critique of arguments for the privatization of public schooling that draw on an analogy to the constitutional disestablishment of religion, or separation of state and church. Owens argues that the logic of these arguments valorizes individual conscience over the common good, and he thinks it suggests a deeper stratum of problems in liberal pluralism. Similar concerns are interwoven in Randall Curren's analysis of equal opportunity and outcomes assessment. As Curren shows, the complex interactions of luck, responsibility, and authority illuminate the moral choices that schools make

in the design and implementation of curricula and in the (un)intended consequences of their assessment of children.

Related to these broader policy matters and their classroom manifestations is a set of questions about the moral qualities of teaching and learning dynamics. Chris Higgins takes up some of these questions in his examination of whether a teacher's or a student's knowledge and interests should lead learning; he complicates this dichotomy and suggests that *Zen koans* and the Socratic *elenchus* offer a third way that gives each side its due. The teaching and learning challenges that inhere in the moral demand to be sensitive to the life and perspectives of others also preoccupy Michael Surbaugh in his exploration of the possibilities of fostering a disability consciousness for all students. Surbaugh argues that by valuing "art and literature and the sensory-aesthetic dimension of bodily experience" in curricular experiences, teachers and students can be drawn into moral engagements that embrace differences. Margaret Manson similarly draws upon the moral and epistemic possibilities of literary and aesthetic approaches, and she argues that using these approaches in teacher education can cultivate the "disjunction and dissonance" needed to enable preservice teachers to develop a more critical grasp of their own experience and that of their students.

Philosophic analysis and investigation have much to offer in the resolution, or at least illumination, of many of these questions about policy and practice. Yet, many scholars, policy makers, and practitioners are convinced that social science research is a more appropriate discipline to bring to bear on these matters. But social science also benefits from philosophic inquiry. Jonathan Dolle looks at educational research in the policy arena and questions whether the "value-neutral" approach advanced by D.C. Phillips can clarify these contested dynamics. Dolle asks, "what role (if any) should moral and political values play in research?" and he argues that such values can have a wider scope than Phillips allows without thereby undermining the epistemic warrants of the research. Phillips forcefully disagrees, and fears that Dolle has gone too far and become lost to the "dark side" without any way to adjudicate between warranted and unwarranted claims; as part of that same discussion, Emery Hyslop-Margison chides Dolle for not having gone far enough in accepting the implications of his argument, and he suggests that social science research has "precious little" to offer to the solution of educational problems. Indeed, the limited contributions of educational research may have root causes in some unexamined superstitions, as argued by Ray McDermott. With the provocative observation that "test results can deliver an ironic inversion: *those who have learned do not know, and those who have not learned do know,*" McDermott deploys arguments from John Dewey's early essays on logic to deconstruct learning theories that separate knowledge from practice, thereby calling into question a vast domain of research on "learning."

Just as attention to the knowledge-practice relationship can benefit educational research, a similar attention to practice can benefit the philosophy of education. Nicholas Burbules and Kathleen Knight Abowitz argue that the "how, when, where,

and who of philosophy of education ought to be matters of more serious and sustained attention” not only in order to strengthen and define the field, but to bring it into a more relevant relationship to the other scholars concerned with educational institutions and practices. Burbules and Abowitz call for a “more engaged, collaborative, and interdisciplinary understanding of what it means to *do* philosophy of education today,” and it seems clear from the essays in this volume that such an understanding is already at work. In fact, even if not in their theoretical outlook, philosophy and philosophy of education have always been situated practices. Eduardo Duarte reminds us that the publicity of thinking that marks philosophy (and is represented in dialogical encounters, publications, conferences, and the like) is both a long tradition that covers familiar ground and a way into an as yet unknown terrain. It offers us “a new path for exploring education as the practice of freedom, where dialogue is understood as the liberation of thought, the freeing of ideas from their captivity in singular minds, or singular conversations,” so that all those who take up this public thinking become opened to an encounter with the unexpected, with the strange, and thereby are transformed. Troy Richardson takes direction from the need for a “pluralized self” that Duarte identifies in the publicity of thinking and settles us on the ground of the philosophical insights of the First Nations peoples of North America. On this hallowed ground, we rediscover that human thinking exists within a network of relations with nonhuman others, with the world and worlds around us.

So it is that the philosophical work of these many authors is situated in this present age, situated in thinking through perennial questions in light of what is happening around and through us, and in light of who, where, when, and how we are now.

As I close this introduction, I would be remiss not to express my deep appreciation for the essays in this volume. I have learned so much from them; in reading them, I have been humbled again and again by my encounters with the horizons of my knowledge and experience. Of course, there is no way for a brief essay to exhaust these complex and contested topics, and so each essay calls forth additional thinking, dialogue, and writing. This is part of the pleasure of engaging with them, of dwelling in open terrains at the crossroads of many different paths. I know the readers of this volume will find themselves similarly drawn in, challenged, renewed, and brought to new places in themselves, in their thinking, and in the world.

I would be remiss also not to acknowledge the 75 essays that were *not* accepted for inclusion in this volume (only 29 percent of the submissions were selected). Each submission was triple-blind reviewed, read with care and empathy, by the Associate Editors; I cannot thank these editors enough for their thorough and mindful work and for their supportive feedback for me and the authors. After reading their reviews, I then faced the agonizing decisions to choose among many very high-quality essays whose range and power were impressive and certainly worthy of representing the field. It was an enormous privilege and honor to have this responsibility for the Philosophy of Education Society, and I simply did my best, knowing full well that at a different moment I might have decided differently about particular essays. I also

need to mention my deep gratitude for the fantastic back-office and editorial support from Liz Jackson, Joyce Atkinson, and Jeff Thibert; without them, it would not have been possible for me to do my job.

I believe that the essays submitted for inclusion in *Philosophy of Education 2008* reveal that our field is at a pivot point in its history, just as the present age is at a pivot point in a larger history. We continue to grapple with perennial questions — about how to live and how to facilitate the moral becoming of another person; about what is important to know, and how that should be taught; about what it means to be a good member of a democratic community, and how that form of life can be established; about how we can understand those who are different from us, and what it means to demonstrate respect for them; about the proper aims of public schooling, and how schools can provide equal opportunity for all; and even about the nature and purpose of thinking itself — yet they take on new meaning and urgency as social, cultural, economic, and political conditions change. It can be seen that schooling more than ever before shapes one's future beyond school, but also that the aims, structures, processes, and outcomes of schooling continue to privilege the already privileged and disadvantage the already disadvantaged. Thus, moral, epistemic, and ontological matters are not mere fanciful topics of intellectual discussion, abstracted from the world, but matters of real consequence in real lives. The truth is that some people unfairly suffer both in schools and after because of how other people think, talk, and determine educational research, theory, and policy. As philosophers of education, we are part of that same world, and what we say and do matters. This is reflected in the essays in this volume. I sense an urgent need in this moment to draw on diverse sources for our philosophizing, so that our public thinking might open new vistas and cultivate the kinds of transformative actions so desperately needed by the many people who remain at the margins of global capitalism, by the many children who remain unfairly judged and punished by the ranking and sorting regimes of neoliberal schooling policies. By situating our philosophic practice in the context of education, which means situating it in the social, cultural, economic, and political realities of our time, we declare our recognition that we too are defined by this network of relationships. I believe that honoring those relationships, even as we seek to alter them, distinguishes our work, and makes possible a tomorrow that is more just and democratic than today.