

Editorial

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[See table of contents](#)

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Editorial

HEESOOON BAI
Editor

I grew up in a culture with an immense pressure towards normalization. Otherness was not well tolerated in most areas of life. Of course, at the time I was growing up, I did not realize this, and, consequently, there was no possibility of articulation. I simply did not see much of otherness around me precisely because it was so marginalized that it was invisible, implicitly and explicitly. For instance, I never saw anyone around me who wrote with their left hand. Now that I look back, I can see the invisibility and its effect. If a Korean child tried to use her left hand for writing, she would have been very firmly discouraged with respect to such “deviant” behaviour. This is just one small example that a culture, especially a strongly homogenizing culture, creates in the name of social cohesion and personal survival. However, such survival is often purchased at a tremendous cost to the self, as normalization compels one to internalize and “forget” the culture’s otherness through the process of repression. This is not the space to explore in any substantial way the connection between culture and repression (instead, please read Robi Kroflic’s tract in this issue), but what I wish to comment on is philosophy’s role in this connection.

Philosophy has always had a radical presence in culture precisely because it has been the time-honoured role of philosophy to encounter and to counter the dominant culture’s content and process of normalization. In my view, being a philosopher equates with being a radical, that is, being a person who questions and resists cultural normalization. For students of Western philosophy, the figure of Socrates is almost an archetype of such philosopher. He questioned and went against the grain of Athenian culture that worshipped the Olympian gods and supported sophistic education with its instrumentalist aims of achieving wealth, status, and fame through knowledge and skill acquisition. Moreover (and this is an important detail for us educational philosophers), Socrates’s resistance to his cultural norms took the pedagogical form of living philosophy with students and fellow citizens. One of the two charges brought against Socrates was, as we know, *corrupting the youth*. Be aware, Educational Philosophers, lest ye be offered the Hemlock! Ben Dupré quips: “Not many of today’s philosophers are executed for their beliefs, which is a pity—to the extent, at least, that it is a measure of how much the sense of danger has ebbed away.”¹

The lesson I learned from the case of Socrates is that being an educational philosopher requires a strong measure of courage. Recall how Socrates was known for his courage. Indeed, without courage Socrates could not fulfill his calling as a radical philosopher. This understanding makes me ponder on my own pedagogy as a teacher of philosophers of education in the making. How do I encourage courage in my students? Long ago, Aristotle observed that we “become just by doing just acts . . . brave by doing brave acts”² Commonsensical, yes? Yet the primarily didactic mode of teaching and learning persists at every level of schooling, and we do not pay enough attention to the embodied, often non-discursive, and community aspect of learning, grounded in the *Lebenswelt* of the learner.

¹ Dupré, B. (2007). *50 philosophy ideas you really need to know*. London: Quercus Publishing Plc., p. 3.

² <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.2.ii.html>, accessed November 20, 2007.

I am pleased to present this new volume of *Paideusis* that addresses in diverse ways both the content and process of philosophy of education as a radical presence in education. What can be more radical today in education than the suggestion that we form communities of wonder between teacher and student (see the tract by Finn Thorbjørn Hansen), and to center-stage the neglected Being-dimension of humanity? I am enthusiastically in agreement. The Being-dimension of humanity is the most marginalized aspect in education today that is hell-bent on instrumentalist learning in the service of the Having-dimension. Similarly, education today in this information age is dominated by the rationalist paradigm and its privileging of conceptual learning that “thinks” it can name and label anything and everything, and goes on as if this naming and labeling is the consummate experience of learning. Such learning gives us the illusion that reality is completely knowable—it is a matter of time!—and thus we can have a mastery over reality. Within this paradigm, when we encounter something that resists our knowing and mastery, and we come face-to-face with Otherness, we are assailed by fear and loathing. Robi Kroflic’s tract on domestication of otherness spells out different ways that the European cultural tradition grappled with Otherness, and argues for a radically different relationship to otherness (“we are. . . equal in our difference”) and a change of discursive practice in the educational processes. I find his argument most compelling.

The dominant educational discourse and practice today (demonstrated in, for example, standardized testing, accountability, and other such measures) comes out of the mechanistic and technocratic civilizational worldview and aims to *produce* (note the language here) a workforce that will fit the industrial-consumer society. Characteristically, what is missing from such education is attention to students’ lived reality of everyday life that manifests ills of this civilization, such as poverty, discrimination, inequity, violence, and increasingly serious environmental degradation. In response to this malaise of education, Sean Park supports the “curriculum of life” that turns students’ everyday experience into the very content of learning, and suggests the practice of deeply listening to one’s and each other’s “inner life” as the foundational educational practice. In another context, Darren Stanley examines the notion of health from the viewpoint of lived-experiences. Traditionally, science—including health science—has devalued the first-person (subjective) perspective, and privileged the third-person and impersonal (objective) standpoint. Again, formal educational practice has been supporting this state of the art in a number of ways, from the way we write to the way we hierarchically rank the value of school subjects. Could the epistemic divide between the subjective and the objective, and privileging of the latter over the former—so trenchant in the modern mindset—have implications for health issues we face today? In his tract, Stanley teases out the lived meaning of health and shows, using complexity science, the inadequacy of the traditional understanding of health based on the subject-object dualism and the attendant notions of what it is to be a healthy or ill human being.

The abovementioned epistemic divide is at the heart of the currently much-discussed notion of disembodiment in education with respect to how we relate to ourselves, each other, and to our environment. Despite the fact that we are so completely embedded in the materiality of the world, and therefore are profoundly affected and shaped by our embeddedness, we, operating within the paradigm of epistemic divide, continue to think and act as if we are essentially separate from our physical environment. Neil Gislason examines the educational implication of such disconnects in terms of the little acknowledged understanding that school as architectural space “teaches perception and behaviour.” Today, environmental issues are perhaps the most urgent educational challenge facing us. Are our school buildings teaching students ecological awareness and sensibility? The answer is a strong negative. How can a school building with classrooms without windows, desks and chairs in rows, with no gardens, composts, kitchens, and animals, and buzzing with bells that continually segment time, fracture consciousness, and interrupt the flow of learning teach ecological awareness?

I am delighted that our *Paideusis* is publishing its first photo essay on medieval architecture by Stuart Richmond in our “philosophical frag” section. This is yet another daring foray into traditional academic philosophy of education that privileges analytic understanding of truth over poetic understanding of resonance. In Richmond’s essay we learn that his key notion of expressive

understanding, *resonance*, comes from Wittgenstein, who drew a parallel between philosophy and poetry. Resonance as an epistemic notion should be particularly helpful in our search for greater receptivity of and participation in the world and cosmos. Here we can say, “Stones speak, and I listen. . .”

Leaving the Tracts and Fragments sections, I now wish to call our *Pai* readers’ attention to an essay in the Dialogue section by Emery J. Hyslop-Margison from the University of New Brunswick. Hyslop-Margison wrote this in response to the recently released report by the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick: *Final Report—Advantage New Brunswick: A Province Reaches to Fulfill Its Destiny*. (Note the language of “destiny” and “fulfillment”!) Hyslop-Margison speaks out as an educational philosopher and takes on his province’s neoliberal vision of education and its human capital enterprise.

Finally, I am also pleased to present a wealth of book reviews (and a response from an author to a book review) that will keep us well-informed of significant publications in our field. Our conversations over the texts continue through these book reviews and responses.

Seeing that the end of 2007 is just over a month away, I shall take this opportunity to wish you Great Holidays and Happy New Year! Thank you all--Authors, Readers, various Editors—for your continued interest and support for *Paideusis*. We appreciate.

Yours . . . resonantly,
Heesoon