

## Editorial

Heesoon Bai

Volume 18, Number 2, 2009

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1072327ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1072327ar>

[See table of contents](#)

---

### Publisher(s)

Canadian Philosophy of Education Society

### ISSN

0838-4517 (print)

1916-0348 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

---

### Cite this document

Bai, H. (2009). Editorial. *Paideusis*, 18(2), 1–2. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1072327ar>

---

© Heesoon Bai, 2009



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

## Editorial

HEESOON BAI

Editor

Here ends my singular editorship for *Paideusis*. This is the last issue that I will be editing and for which I write the Editorial by myself. That is, this is really the last issue of *Paideusis* that I am putting together. The next issue will be co-edited with Professor Hunter McEwen, and will be my assisted swan song as *Paideusis* editor inching towards the EXIT door. Perceptive *Paideusis* Readers would have also noticed that this current issue is launched a few months behind the normal timeline for the fall issue. My apologies for the disappointment you must have felt for not receiving your winter break reading materials and the customary warm greetings from the Pai. I confess: I took a winter break. And seeing how close I was to a breaking point, I made another exit decision too: to step down, one semester earlier (by end of August this year) from my current heavy-duty academic administration position. I *must* renew my physical and psychological energy. It is important to renew our selves, our practices, our tradition; renew our institutions, culture, society. No renewal, no life. But how painfully difficult such renewal and change process can be, as it requires a psychological and even physical life-and-death struggle with who we are, what we are, how we are, and why we are. Interestingly, and coincidentally, all the articles in this issue address these themes and variations, coming at them from different angles of intellectual and academic concerns.

The four authors of *Taking on the Traditions in Philosophy of Education*, David Burns *et al.*, address what many would see as *the* central concern in the field of Philosophy of Education today: struggling with and against “difficult inheritance” that philosophers of education, by virtue of entering this field of study, encounter. A field of study burdened for more than two thousand years by the tradition of battling (yes, this is *the* tradition) over views of how the world is, appears, should operate, and how humans ought to be and behave. Philosophy is a discipline of exhaustive study and can indeed leave one exhausted. My sympathies to the authors of *Taking on the Traditions* who state: “In recent years some philosophers of education, perhaps under the influence of such “difficult inheritance,” have turned away from the external or received knowledge of philosophical traditions to focus on the internal or subjective knowledge of personal experience.” Perhaps so! This turn towards subjectivity or subjective knowledge or personal knowledge, or however it’s been expressed, in short, the subjective turn is nothing new in the history of philosophy, East and West. Plato did it, Aristotle did it, Socrates sure did it, and a countless number of officially recorded philosophers, seers, and wise ones over centuries and millennia did it (another exhausting list). But most relevantly to us who are struggling with the difficult inheritance of modernity, it was René Descartes, sometimes known as Father of modern philosophy, who took the famous subjective or interior turn with his *Meditations* in order to demolish the oppressive and bankrupt intellectual traditions of his day—scholasticism—and to re-erect a new worldview and tradition of scientific and rational thinking. So, yes, Descartes too was struggling with the difficult inheritance of Aristotelianism, and his ‘solution’ was to be dispossessed of it, and to seek a new foundation of knowledge in the power of rational thinking, for which one has to take an interior turn.

The Cartesian impulse to turn away from the difficult inheritance, embrace innovation, and play a different academic *game* (*à la* Lyotard) is very much alive in Education, especially, the community of alternative schooling and critical theory pedagogues today. Carlo Ricci belongs here. His thrusts in the

Dialogue piece, *Philosophical Clashes: Rethinking Scholarship*, are quite relentless and should touch many tender nerves in us. He states: “I have often heard it said that individuals who had been frozen for 100 years would not be able to function in our world and that our world would be largely unrecognizable to them, but that as soon as they entered a school they would know exactly where they were. Academics need to be encouraged to embrace, create, and be at the forefront of innovations; unfortunately, instead, they are rewarded for conforming to a restraining structure.” Please read what he has to say about peer review: the sacrosanct hallmark of academy! I also wonder (this is no idle curiosity), given the very divergent and maybe even incommensurable views that the author of *Philosophical Clashes* and the four authors of *Taking on the Tradition* hold, if they could talk to each other? This leads to another article in this issue: *Epistemological Multilingualism*.

Indeed, as the author Charles Scott reminds us, we live in a globalized world of multiple and often incongruent traditions rubbing against each other uncomfortably. Insofar as there is necessity—and there sure is—for this kind of encounter in all discourse spaces, our classrooms included, we do need to figure out how to understand views different from one’s own, carry out respectful and productive dialogues, and even take concerted actions on issues that affect us all. Scott took on this difficult task, and *epistemological multilingualism* (“the ability to respect and understand multiple epistemic standpoints”) is his offering. Moreover, he shows us how to cultivate such ability: by building capacities in listening, suspending assumptions, respect, empathy, advocacy, and learning to stand on the “narrow ridge of paradox and nondualism.” What an imagery! Notwithstanding the sheer difficulty of such acrobatic feat, surely, our world would be a vastly different place if such capacity building can become central to our school curriculum and pedagogy. And something so important as this should not wait till children go to school: it should start at home in parenting.

This brings us to the Norwegian authors’ article, *The Child seen as the Same or the Other?* How do we practice epistemological multilingualism in this most foundational domain of education—childhood? My own sense is that we are not doing too well. There is altogether too much pressure (which is only mounting) on children to be socialized, that is, to conform to the conventions of ‘proper behaviour’. Part of the pressure lies in the fact that, most often, our attitude towards and relationship with conventions is that of unreflective compulsion. (Rightly we can argue and point out that all compulsion *is* unreflective.) I would like to propose that when we feel such compulsion, we stop, take a deep breath or two, and ask the questions that our Norwegian authors, Tone Saevi and Heidi Husevaag, put to us: “Can we in the pedagogical situation where the child is expected to perform a certain convention of proper behaviour, recognize and care for the child’s foreignness and uniqueness, especially when the child’s lack of conformity profoundly disturbs the usual conventional order? Can we somehow protect the pedagogical qualities in not making the child equal, the likes of me, someone I already know?”

In closing, I would like to comment on our Finnish colleague’s article on hermeneutics and phenomenology as educational qualitative research methods. My comments here should take us back to the beginning point of this editorial: the need to struggle with and against the difficult inheritance, including the difficulty of accurate understanding when we read philosophical theories. One of the messages I am taking away from the *Taking on the Tradition* articles is the need to understand accurately and deeply the philosophical traditions that have influenced, positively or negatively, our ways of thinking and acting in the world. Leena Kakkori tells us, through clear and accessible explanations, that mixing hermeneutics and phenomenology as one fused qualitative research method in Education does not work because these two traditions are concerned with fundamentally different things. Know your philosophical tradition; know your theory!

Yours editorially,

Heesoon