

## Editorial

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## Editorial

HEESOOON BAI

Editor

This semester I am leading a graduate seminar in the history of educational thought. Amongst the intimates of the program this course is also known as 'From Plato to Playdough'. Who is Playdough? This "philosopher" could be Richard Rorty or Nishitani, but more likely Foucault or Heidegger. Where we end the breathless and heady tour depends on how many *seminal* thinkers we get to visit and whether there will be the next bus waiting to continue the tour into the both eagerly anticipated and (to some) dreaded POMO times. An Education course like this is, most often, not only forgotten in the graduate curriculum, but also when it is offered, as in my Faculty of Education, its importance is sometimes not properly or adequately appreciated. Why bother reading dusty (or, now from the dustless online libraries) philosophical texts? Surely, we have moved well beyond Plato and Descartes in all ways: intellectually, culturally, scientifically, and technologically. Yes? With advances like genetic engineering, cell phones, internet, and brain stem cell transplant, we must have left far behind ancient Greece of the Homeric times when Olympic gods were cavorting around and Socrates was worrying about the end of the oral and beginning of the literate culture; or from the days when Galileo had to stand trial on suspicion of heresy for his heliocentric ideas, and Descartes was researching the soul's contact point with the body and came up with the theory that the contact point was the pineal gland in the brain! So why do educational philosophers continue to invoke the ghosts of the past and pour over their inscriptions almost chiseled in stone in search of what--wisdom?

I confess that I myself get frustrated and discouraged sometimes in the company of educational philosophers who endlessly spout Aristotle saying this, Kant saying that. I suppose I am equally guilty of this kind of authoritative discourse as I am fond of quoting Lao Tze and Siddhartha! Moreover, I suppose that my frustration is not really about citing the long-dead (white or coloured, male or female) philosophers since I get equally discouraged with folks around me who seem to practice the same kind of devotional scholarship dedicated to their favourite contemporary or living theorists. Call this kind of academic ancestor worship an abuse of scholarship. Perhaps, what happens is that we feel important about what we do and who we are through becoming an expert on eminent scholars and theorists. A case of "borrowed glory," which is, of course, not confined to the workers in the academy: we just have to take a look at the celebrity culture around us. But, in all seriousness, surely we have more important reasons than the case of borrowed glory to invoke such illustrious names as Socrates, Aristotle, Locke, Kant, Rousseau, or any number of these key thinkers from the annals of world philosophies.

In this particular issue alone, the readers will find many articles that speak of Plato and other seminal thinkers from the Western intellectual tradition. For instance, Howard Cannatella revisits Plato and Aristotle to make insightful observations and arguments about the role of art in intellectual and moral development. Today, lamentations and fury are aired over the lack of adequate and deserving support for the arts in public schooling. To know something about the ancient animosity between the (rational) philosopher and the (muse-inspired, "irrational") poet, as portrayed in Plato's *Republic*, may help us realize anew just how foundational the division is between reason and emotion in Western thought, and how deep-seated is the privileging of activities associated with the former over the latter.

This being the case, to challenge the privileging of the science and math over the arts and humanities, we need to look at such constructs as reason and emotion, and how we have reified them. Our intellectual and cultural traditions are full of such reifications, which have colossal consequences on how we conduct every aspect of education, from child rearing to formal teaching in school.

Similarly, in another article, Thayer-Bacon critiques the work of Locke and Rousseau, the Founding Fathers of modern social contract theory that is core to classical liberalism. Thayer-Bacon exposes the three foundational assumptions in classical liberalism -- namely, rationalism, universalism, and individualism--to pave the way to an alternative conception of democracy based on a relational ontology, which, she (and others) argues, is more adequate for the pluralistic world in which we live today. My point is that one of the most important functions of philosophy of education is to identify the prevailing habits of the mind and heart that are problematic or unsatisfactory and trace them to historically deep-seated worldviews, assumptions, biases, and values. Not only do we educational philosophers do the tracing, but also we would have to wrestle with these worldviews and so on, and even battle them, insofar as they prove to be very deeply entrenched in our individual and collective consciousness, and we see the need to confront, challenge, and replace them with different conceptions. In short, critique and reconceptualization are our main business. This does not mean that philosophers of education do not concern themselves with the practical side of education; namely, working with the minds, hearts, and bodies (and whatever else we have) of people -- students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Our work is both theoretical and practical.

All the articles in this issue are involved in reconceptualization, or assessment of reconceptualization, of certain norms, values, and practices that the authors see as problematic or unsatisfactory. In their article, M. Ayaz Naseem and J. Hyslop-Margison examine Martha Nussbaum's influential conception of cosmopolitanism that was advanced as a model of global citizenship in response to the limitations and problems of nationalism, notably, growing international conflict. The authors contend that Nussbaum's conception of cosmopolitanism is untenable as it runs into too many philosophical and practical difficulties, and they urge us to come up with a more viable model of global citizenship. Speaking of global citizenship, I have been noticing an explosion of research interests and activities, as well as educational programs, in global citizenship and democracy. World peace and survival is on everyone's anxious mind. It is the job of educators to help and facilitate people to live ideas, as opposed to just learn and talk *about* them, be they cosmopolitanism or democracy. And the educational project of living the ideas is indeed full of challenges: we run into all kinds of practical and theoretical details that need to be worked out before the implementation of big visions is possible. One such important detail that I have noticed previously and am glad to see addressed is the alleged conflict between self-interest and the common good. In their article on Thomas Hill Green's vision of educating democratic citizens, Darin R. Nesbitt and Elizabeth Trott focus on the productive tension between individual interest and common good as an integral and important part of citizenship education. They argue, through Green's philosophy, that if individual interest and common good are seen as opposite forces in conflict, then there is little chance of developing democratic moral and social agency. I concur!

Paralleling Nesbitt and Trott's effort to reconceptualize opposition and conflict as productive tension, Valda K. Leightizer offers a reconceptualization of student resistance as a form of engagement, using Foucault's relational approach to understanding power. All too often student resistance is perceived in a negative light as a problem behaviour, and resisting students, as "bad" and not engaged with school. Yet, seen through Foucauldian relational lens, student resistance offers another understanding that opens up the possibility of productively engaging with these students. Again, I couldn't agree more. Next, we have Mordechai Gordon's article on reconceptualizing student resistance that valorizes confusion and uncertainty. But the confusion and uncertainty that Gordon wants to see positively and productively is no garden variety: namely, the kind that arises when we are not fully awake, mindful, and competent. There, confusion and uncertainty yield no insight and further learning, but lead to more of the same. The positive kind of 'confusion' and 'uncertainty' arise from our

apprehension of the full complexity of the world, and our knowing clearly that we don't know enough, adequately, and so on. This kind of (reconceptualized) confusion and uncertainty is a source of further inquiry, hence, knowledge and wisdom.

Chris Martin's article on the tension between utopianism and anti-utopianism in the critique of educational discourse is a capping piece that addresses, and acts as an antidote in many ways to, the tendency of the reconceptualization projects. I again confess that this tendency (even if subtle) is my own, but I suspect that many others in Educational Philosophy share it or can relate to it in varying degrees. We get very fired up with a new vision, propose a reconceptualization, and then despair (and be scornful) that the world is not taking us seriously: "If only the world could see it *this* (read: "our") way! Why don't they?" We lament (to put it mildly) at "their" short sightedness, lack of intelligence, moral weakness (remember *akrasia*?), or whatever else. But by definition, utopianism of philosopher kings and queens is not meant to be real or realizable, and if we are truly interested in getting others on board, we need to do *more* than draw an idealistic picture (in the air). Martin's notion of "pragmatic utopianism," among other things, addresses this "more."

Above, I was not summarizing the articles, and I did no more than pull out an idea or two from each article that personally resonated with me as I was thinking about reconceptualization as a key task for philosophy of education. As an editor who oversaw the process of most rigorous peer review, I can say with confidence that these articles represent the finest scholarship in Philosophy of Education, and heartily recommend them to readers. Each article is an incredibly rich resource for scholarship and teaching. I would like to personally thank the contributors for the wonderful articles in this issue. And I also wish to add another note of gratitude for working so graciously with us, the editorial and review team, through the exacting revision process. I have seen in the past, elsewhere, authors being resentful and even irate with the editor and anonymous reviewers for requiring revisions, but all our authors were so gracious and helpful to work with! By the same token, I am awed by our reviewers who performed the most careful, exacting, and helpful job of giving scholarly feedback on the articles they reviewed. What exemplary review work! I have heard from our authors that they found the review feedback to be extremely helpful to their revision. So, three wild cheers to both our authors and reviewers for this issue of *Paideusis*! And last but not least, three deep bows of thanks to Managing Editor, Thomas Falkenberg; Book Review Editor, John Portelli; Associate Editors, Don Kerr, and Don Cochrane; Editorial Assistant, Johanne Provençal; and Copy Editors, Peter Kovacs, Charles Scott, Don Nelson, and Buddy Young.

I am also very excited to introduce you to a new section that was added recently to our journal: "Philosophical Fragments." (Amongst some of us, this section is also known by a longer title: "Philosophical Fragments and Experiments.") In keeping with the journal's editorial mandate to promote a wider range of philosophical scholarship, methodologies, sensibilities, and temperaments, folks on the "Pai" editorial board decided to create an additional section for submissions that are peer-reviewed by different criteria of evaluation. For submissions to this section, we are looking for shorter essays or other literary expressions that, by virtue of their content, intent, tone, expression, and length, do not quite fit the "standard" academic scholarship in philosophy of education but are equally, if not more, challenging, provocative, and catalytic in a deeply philosophical way, and thus merit to be widely shared amongst lovers of wit and wisdom. Having added it so late in the production process, we were not sure if we would have any piece to show, but I am absolutely delighted that one submission came through the review process just in time, and it is a selection of poems by Daniela Elza, a burgeoning philosophical poetess who is the winner of many poetry contests, international and local. Enjoy the poetic provocation to philosophical musings!

This being November, only a month to go till the end of the year, I wish, on behalf of the Paideusis Editorial Team, to express and convey in advance our warmest and happiest winter holiday and New Year's greetings to you all!

Yours philosophically and poetically,  
Heesoon Bai

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