

Pedagogical Disagreements and Public Possibilities

Winston C. Thompson
The Ohio State University

To write that the scope and salience of the various social, political, and even factual disagreements of our time loom large in the public mind feels so obvious as to be trite. That acknowledged, one might nevertheless hold ground in defending the action through a recognition that these disagreements – their contexts, causes, and consequences – may well multiply if attention to them lapses. This perspective may prove especially intriguing for philosophers carefully studying new and longstanding disagreements about education in and about contested and controversial matters. Taken in sum, this third issue of *Philosophy of Education* Volume 77 represents a fine collection of scholarship that aims to address aspects of public disagreement and education.

In some instances, this orientation draws attention to many of the ambient matters perceived as most controversial in the educational context. Here, one might attend to questions regarding the nature of these disagreements and the ways in which they might be overcome in the service of clear direction on the way forward in pursuit of less controversial educational aims. In other instances, the very questions of what constitutes an appropriate educational aim seem to be the matters most in dispute. Here, the community of philosophy of education might be driven to return to first principles in navigating seemingly new contexts with a mind to connections to established and accepted truths. Of course, in quite a number of important cases within the spectrum anchored by these positions, the questions posed might rightfully wonder what education can offer to the social and political context of these disagreements themselves. That is, how might education prepare persons for attempts to, or itself constitute a process by which one might, address even the most challenging conflicts? The range of these considerations may be particularly attractive in a time seemingly marked by the felt omnipresence of divisiveness and discord. In this issue, the authors provide quite meaningful steps towards greater clarity.

For instance, Allison Stevens turns attention to school shootings in the US in order to analyze the ways in which the systemic causes of these tragic events create obligations to protect the essence of student interests, creating far-ranging normative implications for American adult society. Douglas Yacek confirms a shared commitment with Stevens, even as he questions the underlying framings of the questions the project aims to address. In the exchange, a deeper understanding of the impediments to, and possibilities for, student safety emerge.

Kanako Ide offers a fine analysis of the relationships possible under circumstances of rather deeply held disagreements. In an exploration of friendship amidst political discord, Kanako provides a pedagogical view of friendship that may motivate self-study of shared characteristics and dissimilarities even as it promotes a specific form of silence. Ana Martinez Aleman addresses Ide's perspectives, providing the reader with a view of the messiness of political friendship. In this, the account raises questions about the desirability of silence in those contexts of friendship across, likely fundamental, political divides.

Barbara Applebaum squarely recognizes the ways in which white virtue signaling might offer a generative context for education and analysis. By engaging with the performative dimensions of virtue signaling around matters of race and antiracism, Applebaum finds a path for greater awareness of racial complexities that might cut through some firmly held disagreements. Dana Miranda balances an appreciation of Applebaum's views with hesitation regarding some of its conclusions. In this, Miranda provides a view of white virtue signaling that compliments Applebaum's and also provides guidance for the people of color and/or members of dominated groups in learning valuable insights about the persons with whom they might be interacting (i.e., the white virtue signaler).

Identifying a sense of relativism and pessimism, Ilya Zrudlo puzzles over a set of disagreements regarding the Romantic impulse in North American education. In this, Zrudlo presses against an individualist focus that might subvert education's most essential activity. Megan Laverty responds to Zrudlo's assessments in order to reposition Romanticism, suggesting that it might offer

more than Zrudlo admits. In this, Lavery points towards a vision of learning with, from, and in relation to others that might prove attractive for educators – perhaps especially so in times of fierce divides.

Dale Brown probes education at the margins of society by way of a studious engagement with education in carceral settings. Brown argues that educational aims for justice-involved students might clarify disagreements regarding educational aims more broadly. Namely, Brown locates humanization as a revealed aim for education, both inside and outside of prisons. John Fantuzzo turns attention to the dehumanizing nature of US prison systems to push for structural and systemic responses that might more holistically align the educational aims of humanization with the contexts enconcing that activity. Across the pages of the response, Fantuzzo makes clear the urgency and importance of this project.

Lauren Bialystok focuses on an area of education often subject to public disagreement and debate: sex education. Bialystok argues that much of the disagreement is owed to superficial expressions rather than deeply held and carefully pursued fundamental commitments. This approach aims at resolving much of the apparent controversy regarding these issues. Joshua Corngold extends Bialystok's interpretation of the public's potential for locating "common ground" in sex education initiatives, noting that it requires careful and intentional positive action. Corngold asserts this following a richly detailed historically-based observation that the appearance of deep and divisive disagreement regarding sex education stems from intentional propagandistic political incitement. This account might serve as a broader cautionary commentary on how sustained public disagreements might manifest.

Guoping Zhao reflects on multiple national contexts in order to interrogate education for life lived amongst persons with diverse commitments and values. This project locates portions of the philosopher's disciplinary practices as desirable to the student on their path towards becoming a citizen-scholar. Liz Jackson reflects on Zhao's meaningful examples of circumstances in China and the US, suggesting that a more nuanced view of the differences and similarities within and across these contexts proves useful in refining understandings of

what members of a public owe to one another.

Samatha Ha's timely article wrestles with questions at the very core of this issue's work on public forms of disagreement and education. Ha explores tensions of safe spaces and free speech within the university setting. Ha is precise and thoughtful in examining the ways that preparation for the potential tumult of public life might be balanced with the need to protect against toxic speech that might interrupt that preparation for vulnerable students. Sigal Ben-Porath is direct in addressing group-identity-based concerns that follow from Ha's analyses. Ben-Porath provides expert conceptual work in the service of practical guidance on these matters, suggesting a way forward for the essential civic work that ought to be available to all students. In this, Ha and Pen-Porath nicely tie together many of the ideas that run through the articles within this issue.