

A photograph of a brick wall with a circular window and ivy. The wall is made of red bricks with some mortar missing. The window is circular and has a metal grille with a geometric pattern. To the right of the window, there is a stone plaque with text. Green ivy is growing on the right side of the wall.

EDITED BY

HARVEY
SIEGEL

≡ The Oxford Handbook of
PHILOSOPHY OF
EDUCATION

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The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education, Harvey Siegel, Oxford Handbooks Online, 2009, 0195312880, 9780195312881, 548 pages. Philosophy of education has an honored place in the history of Western philosophical thought. Its questions are as vital now, both philosophically and practically, as they have ever been. In recent decades, however, philosophical thinking about education has largely fallen off the philosophical radar screen. Philosophy of education has lost intimate contact with the parent discipline to a regrettably large extent--to the detriment of both. The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education is intended to serve as a general introduction to key issues in the field, to further the philosophical pursuit of those issues, and to bring philosophy of education back into closer contact with general philosophy. Distinguished philosophers and philosophers of education, most of whom have made important contributions to core areas of philosophy, turn their attention in these 28 essays to a broad range of philosophical questions concerning education. The chapters are accessible to readers with no prior exposure to philosophy of education, and provide both surveys of the general domain they address, and advance the discussion in those domains in original and fruitful ways. Together their authors constitute a new wave of general philosophers taking up fundamental philosophical questions about education--the first such cohort of outstanding general philosophers to do so (in English) in a generation..

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Critical Conversations in Philosophy of Education , Wendy Kohli, 1995, Education, 394 pages. In this collection of papers the contributors address the challenges of philosophy of education from a whole range of stances, expressing differing positions without engaging

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Theory and Practice of Education , Turner, May 15, 2007, Education, 180 pages. Professor David Turner presents a compelling and controversial book, showing how game theory and mathematical models can be used to develop a deeper understanding of

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Philosophical Topics, Volume 18, Issue 2 , , 1990, Philosophy, . .

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Mixed methods, Volume 4 , Alan Bryman, Aug 7, 2006, Social Science, . .

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The Philosophy of Education: An Introduction , Richard Bailey, May 4, 2010, Education, 184 pages. This textbook seeks to explore the purpose and values of the philosophy of education, and specific issues of contemporary relevance..

Christian theism and the problems of philosophy , Alvin Plantinga, 1990, Religion, 380 pages. .

Wonderlust ruminations on liberal education, Michael Davis, 2006, Education, 194 pages. "At a time when the cost of undergraduate education is soaring, it is worth attempting to gain some clarity about what liberal education is really for. Wonderlust attempts to

Philosophy of Education Second Edition (Large Print 16pt), Nel Noddings, 2010, , 558 pages. Acclaimed as the "best overview in the field" by the Teaching Philosophy and predicted to "become

the standard textbook in philosophy of education" by Educational Theory

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"[T]he collection has notable strengths. The essays cover a wide range of interesting topics from a variety of philosophical perspectives. They are uniformly well-written and accessible to readers without a prior background in the philosophy of education.... As a collection of papers likely to advance research in the philosophy of education, the collection contains many essays that directly take on issues in the area and make important contributions to on-going debates."--Peter J. Markie, BNotre Dame Philosophical Reviews

"The Handbook delivers twenty-eight substantial, carefully wrought, informative chapters treating such topics as indoctrination, fallibility, empathy, values, skepticism, imagination, stereotypes, and many others. The chapters try to extract the good from the bad in debates about critical thinking, constructivism, multiculturalism, religious toleration, moral and

civic education, parents' rights, and curriculum design. Some of the chapters are quite original (e.g., Philip Kitcher's and Elijah Millgram's); some ought to go on required reading lists (e.g., Nicholas Burbules's and Meira Levinson's); all make important distinctions and clarify contemporary debates. There's not a clunker in the lot." --Social Theory and Practice

The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education, edited by Harvey Siegel and recently brought out in a softcover edition, is a testament to the vitality of philosophy of education as an integral branch of philosophical study in the contemporary milieu. Its pages are graced by a succession of insightful essays on the various features of educational endeavor - features lending themselves to philosophical penetration - authored, for the most part, by some of the most prominent figures in present-day academic philosophy. These writers stand out for their willingness, nay eagerness, to treat education as a subject worthy of critical philosophical attention. Little wonder that the volume's total impact is to cast philosophy of education in a light favorable to its inclusion in the scope of ongoing philosophical undertakings taking place inside the corridors of academia.

Emily Robertson, for example, who is very well known to scholars working inside the confines of philosophy of education, is also a professor of philosophy at her home institution, Syracuse University. And in her contribution to the Handbook, she does a really fine job of outlining the steady progression of efforts to apply work in epistemology to educational phenomena from mid-twentieth century onward, a progression studded by such towering figures as Israel Scheffler, the late William Frankena, and several others. Her piece is to be especially noted for its emphasis on the issue of the epistemic status of testimonial evidence and its bearing on the delineation of educational aims - an issue that receives a lot of attention in the writing of another contributor to this volume, Jonathan Adler.

But it is not only Robertson's contribution that is to be commended. Comparable accolades go to the piece provided by the University of Wisconsin's social-political philosopher Harry Brighouse, which succinctly but meaningfully lays out the contours of the landscape of problems of a socio-political nature affecting the domain of education in its myriad manifestations and, also, relates to these problems treatments from the philosophical literature that apply to them directly, such as those emanating from the work of the late John Rawls. And venturing beyond epistemology and social philosophy, there is also aesthetics to think of. In this regard, the essay by Catherine Elgin, Harvard's resident philosopher of education and a leading epistemologist in her own right, stands out perspicaciously. As does the piece included from the famed Martha Nussbaum on Dewey and what she forebodingly claims is the imminent demise of liberal education. The nice thing about the Nussbaum chapter is that it summarizes very effectively the dominant theme of her book-length discussion in *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, published but a short while after the appearance of her piece in the Handbook.

To the list must be added the contribution of the Rochester epistemologist Richard Feldman, acclaimed for his riveting insights into the dynamics of the critical thinking process and optimally efficacious strategies for inculcating the knack for engaging in critical thinking in a new generation of students. Feldman courageously takes the view that critical reasoning is about uncovering a narrative's argumentative structure and tackling its purport as thus exposed. This is not the place to enter into a sustained discussion of Feldman's position, but it is instructive to note that it segues directly into a consideration of the points brought up in another of the Handbook's important constituents, namely, the selection on indoctrination by Eammon Callan and Dylan Arena of Stanford University's School of Education. Callan may not be too well known outside educational philosophy circles (and Arena, who at the time of publication was a graduate student in education, even less so); but he has certainly made a name for himself within philosophy of education, especially as it concerns the social, political, and moral dimensions of education. His book *Creating Citizens: Political Education and Liberal Democracy* (published, like the Handbook, by Oxford), published in 1997 and brought out as a paperback in 2004, was quite a hit and continues to be tracked in the literature. Like Feldman, Callan promotes critical thinking; but he outdoes him by contending that it trumps pursuit of truth. As far as Callan is concerned, better to let a student incapable of apprehending the truth on her own decide for herself (on what belief to adopt in regard to some matter of interest) than to deny her the chance to figure it out and tell her what is the case and why. To do otherwise would be to be guilty of indoctrination. Besides, who does the teacher think he is, professing to know where the truth lies! I don't want to spoil the fun; so I'll let you find out how Callan is led to this conclusion by reading his piece (among the Handbook's other excellent, intriguing pieces) yourself.

But lest you think that this is the sole rationale for checking out this book, let me alert you to the fact that in it is, also, contained an essay by Meira Levinson who, perched on Harvard's education faculty, is fast gaining prominence amongst theoreticians in the study of socio-cultural aspects of education. Writing on multicultural education, she attempts to disentangle the various strands of motivation favoring making education multicultural and, also, the corresponding ways in which a multicultural department would manifest itself. I'll leave it to you, dear reader, to ascertain the direction in which she is ultimately led.

Another inclusion, highly worthy of mention, is the one by the famed Amy Gutmann, president of the University of Pennsylvania and author of, among others, the acclaimed *Democratic Education*, in which she casts the notion of educational authority front-and-center and views it as a basis for resolving an open-ended range of educational issues, on both the policy and the practice level. Her nuanced discussion of, in her nomenclature, the family state, the state of families, and the state of individuals makes for enthrallingly absorbing reading, exceeded in profundity only by her concomitant elucidation of three principles of a properly democratic education, to wit: the principle of democratic participation, the principle of nondiscrimination, and the principle of non-repression. Anyway, her contribution to the Handbook expands on her already well articulated argument and position, and adapts it specifically to the consideration of multicultural education, making her piece a neat complement to Levinson's.

I could go on: all twenty-nine of the contained entries merit serious attention, not least the introductory one contributed by the editor to put in perspective the need for a volume illustrative of the exemplary work conducted at the portals of philosophy in behalf of the lofty aspirations of education. Alas, space considerations prohibit me from indulging my urgings and discoursing on, for example, the late Gareth Matthews paper on Piaget or Michael Slote's (and, also, Nel Nodding's) on femininity and caring - among the myriad other notables. I'll content myself with saying that Prof. Siegel, a star past-student of the progenitor of philosophy of education as carried on today, Israel Scheffler, and an eminent philosophy of education scholar in his own right, has done us a distinct service and put his admirable analytical talents on display in affording us this superlative intellectual achievement. Read more ›

The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education is advertised as having a complex purpose: to provide readers with a general introduction to key issues in the field, to advance the philosophical discussion of those issues, and to bring the philosophy of education back into closer contact with general philosophy. There's a strong revivalist hope here. Siegel points out in his introductory essay that, from the 1950's through 1970's, major philosophers with established reputations in other areas made significant contributions to the philosophy of education, but such contributions have been rare in the last three decades. As he sees it, "the time is right for philosophy of education to regain its rightful place in the world of general philosophy", and this collection is intended as a major step in that direction (p. 7). It is intended to help end "the benign neglect of philosophy of education by the general philosophical community" (p. 5). Toward that end, its twenty-eight essays are authored by philosophers with established reputations in epistemology, ethics, the philosophy of science and the history of philosophy, as well as specialists in the philosophy of education. The essays are grouped into six sections: The Aims of Education; Thinking, Reasoning, Teaching and Learning; Moral Value and Character Education; Knowledge, Curriculum and Educational Research; Social and Political Issues; and Approaches to Philosophy of Education and Philosophy.

As a general introduction to the field, the collection has notable strengths. The essays cover a wide range of interesting topics from a variety of philosophical perspectives. They are uniformly well-written and accessible to readers without a prior background in the philosophy of education. The collection contains little, however, to help readers appreciate the general nature and structure of current debates in the philosophy of education. Those looking for a "handbook" in the sense of an overview that defines the main issues in the field, explains their relations to one another and to issues in other areas of philosophy, and presents the main competing theories on those issues will be somewhat disappointed.

As a collection of papers likely to advance research in the philosophy of education, the collection contains many essays that directly take on issues in the area and make important contributions to on-going debates. In several cases, excellent essays from different parts of the collection play off of one another in important ways. Nonetheless, the collection also contains several essays that present interesting results from other areas of philosophy but make only a passing attempt to relate them to the philosophy of education. Others make interesting points in the philosophy of education, but it is unclear just how those points advance any wider discussion.

As a display of the intimate connections between the philosophy of education and other areas of philosophy, the collection is again uneven. Some notable successes bring results from other areas of philosophy directly to bear on issues in the philosophy of education, but some notable failures, as already noted, seem to make only a passing attempt to do so.

In all, the collection of essays is a bit uneven in a way that may go back to a tension between the components of its complex purpose. Insofar as a collection of essays is intended to introduce readers to the general issues and debates in the philosophy of education, while making substantive contributions to those debates, the essays will ideally be written by experts in the philosophy of education. Insofar as the collection is also intended to display the connection between the philosophy of education and other areas of philosophy, the essays will ideally be written by philosophers who couple their expertise in the philosophy of education with a specialization in those other areas as well. Insofar as the collection is intended to counter a thirty-year trend in which

experts in other areas of philosophy have ignored the philosophy of education, it will be very hard to find such a group of philosophers.

The collection has many notable highlights, however, and they outshine its deficiencies. The first section of the collection, devoted to the aims of education, contains fine essays by Emily Robertson and Harry Bridgehouse. In "Moral and Political Aims of Education", Bridgehouse provides an excellent survey of different positions on three topics: the proper goals of education based on a conception of an educated person, the appropriate distribution of educational opportunities, and the appropriate limits on government action to advance those goals and distribute those opportunities. His account of both parent- and child- centered constraints and the associated trade-offs between educational and other social values is particularly insightful. Robertson's discussion in "The Epistemic Aims of Education" concerns the epistemic aims of education in terms of knowledge, justified belief and understanding, and the proper role of testimony in advancing those aims. It should be read in conjunction with David Carr's contribution in the fourth section, "Curriculum and the Value of Knowledge". Carr surveys past and present answers to the question of what should be taught and why, and traces a movement away from the epistemic dimension of the curriculum, considered by Robertson, to political concerns.

The third essay in the aims of education section is Martha Nussbaum's "Tagore, Dewey and the Imminent Demise of Liberal Education". She claims that citizenship in a pluralistic democratic society requires the capacity for Socratic self-criticism, the ability to see oneself as a member of a heterogeneous nation and world, and a narrative imagination that enables one to put oneself in another's place. Education in art and the humanities is crucial to the development of these abilities, according to Nussbaum, but that education is "on the ropes" in universities outside the United States and in K through 12 education everywhere. Nussbaum does not consider the relative importance of other abilities, e.g. economic and scientific literacy, to democratic citizenship, and the reasons for the neglect of art and the humanities get little attention from her, beyond passing references to a preoccupation with economic success. This last issue is addressed in an excellent essay by Philip Kitcher in the fourth section of the collection, however. In "Education, Democracy and Capitalism", he considers the relation between John Dewey's view of education and Adam Smith's economic analysis and finds that the latter poses a threat to the former: "societies that invest in systems of education that aim at Dewey's preferred goals will lose out in economic competition to societies that adopt more efficient systems of education" (p. 308). Kitcher suggests a response on Dewey's behalf. He would have us "change economic conditions so that democracy and Deweyan education both become possible" (p. 314). Kitcher does not indicate how this economic change is to be accomplished, especially in the current global economy.

The second section contains a series of diverse essays grouped under the broad heading of "Thinking, Reasoning, Teaching and Learning". A notable entry here is Richard Feldman's "Thinking, Reasoning and Education". He presents three points that are important to the development of students' thinking and reasoning skills: they must come to see arguments as a tool for increased understanding, they must come to see moral claims as objective and so as proper objects of reasoning, and they need not learn the traditional informal fallacies. Feldman's essay is especially worth considering in conjunction with Amélie Rorty's essay, "Educating the Practical Imagination: A Prolegomenon", from the same section. Where Feldman emphasizes the need for students to see normative claims as objective if they are to engage well in practical reasoning, Rorty adds that imaginative thinking is also an essential ingredient within practical reasoning and considers how strategies for imaginative thinking can best be taught. Also notable in this second section of the anthology is Eamonn Callan and Dylan Arena's essay, "Indoctrination". They present a careful analysis of indoctrination in terms of close-minded belief, explain the moral failing indoctrination involves and address the Platonic challenge regarding the potential benefits of indoctrination, especially for those with limited cognitive skills.

In the third section (on moral, value and character education) Graham Oddie, in "Values Education", presents the fundamental question that needs to be addressed: What values are to be taught, in what context and how? He argues, with regard to the question of how, that students need to be presented with more than moral principles and supporting arguments; they need to be presented

with values experiences to promote the refinement of their emotions. Michael Slote continues this theme, arguing in "Caring, Empathy and Moral Education" for the importance of empathy for an ethics of care and considering how it can best be developed in students.

The collection's fourth section, on knowledge, curriculum and educational research, contains the already noted essays by Carr and Kitcher. It also contains a careful discussion by Robert Audi on how the value of religious toleration and a liberal neutrality toward the good should play out in the design of science education. Audi's essay is a fine example of how the methods of philosophical analysis can be brought to bear on a complicated and often confused debate.

The highlight of the fifth section, which is devoted to social and political issues, and one of the best essays in the collection, is Meira Levinson's "Mapping of Multicultural Education". Carefully examining the views of various philosophers, educational theorists and education practitioners, she shows how the notion of multicultural education is muddled and self-contradictory. While reaffirming many of the values that are attached to calls for multicultural education, she shows that those values "neither derive from nor are clarified by the concept" of multicultural education itself (p. 428). She properly warns us that the use of the term 'multicultural education' "as an umbrella term that fosters warm and fuzzy feelings of unity (at least among certain groups) shouldn't be confused with its theoretical coherence, of which there is little to none" (p. 446).

In the last section, Randall Curren and Nicholas Burbules provide careful discussions of the particular implications, if any, of pragmatism and postmodernism, respectively, for the philosophy of education. Nell Noddings surveys the history of feminist philosophy in terms of three centers of concentration and ends with some quite brief remarks about their relation to philosophy of education.

Harvey Siegel is Professor and Chair of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Miami. He is the author of many papers in epistemology, philosophy of science, and philosophy of education, and of *Relativism Refuted: A Critique of Contemporary Epistemological Relativism* (1987), *Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking, and Education* (1988), and *Rationality Redeemed? Further Dialogues on an Educational Ideal* (1997).

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