
Introduction

EDUCATION AND THE SUFFERING OF OTHERS IN AN ERA OF SPECTATORSHIP

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One of the delights of being a program chair is that you get to ask your colleagues to answer some of the questions that keep you awake at night. As we prepared the call for papers for OVPES 2018, President Jessica Heybach and I had monsters on our minds. It was the 200th anniversary of *Frankenstein's* publication, and bookstores, theaters and university symposia were filling up with reminders that the margins of humanity haunt us still. Widely read as, among other things, a response to the revolutions in America, France, and Haiti, *Frankenstein* at 200 also aligned perfectly with the 50th anniversary of students filling the streets of Prague, Paris, Chicago, and Mexico City to protest the imperialism, the hot wars of the Cold War, capitalist greed and Soviet repression. Yet political change that seemed at hand 50 years ago seemed now . . . more distant than ever? It could even seem to have returned from the grave as a monstrous permutation of itself, in the Charlottesville rally of white nationalists for instance. The spring of 2018 marked the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King's assassination, and now white supremacism was on the march again. On our watch, the US Department of Justice was enforcing its new policy of separating migrant children from parents at the southern border, and from the vantage point of university campuses in the upper Midwest, day after day we saw reports of this policy unfolding. Less obvious was what kind of response was called for. As we saw pictures of crying children and despondent parents behind bars, and heard fellow citizens tweet and tell reporters that they had no obligation to care, Jessica Heybach and I hoped that a call for papers to address education and the suffering of others in an era of spectatorship would encourage the OVPES community to think our moment through.

The word "monster" is derived from the Anglo-Norman and Middle French "monstre", related etymologically to the modern French "*montrer*", to show. As words go, it has an impressively long and consistent usage in English, easily legible in Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*, where the narrator recounts Hercules slaying "manye monstres." Monsters, in earlier times, were believed to show divine displeasure with human sin and vice; they were visible evidence—*demonstrations*—of human moral failure, and, at the same time, retribution for it. This etymological connection between monstrosity and visibility gives extra depth to the passage from *Frankenstein* that framed the OVPES 2018 call for papers.

Frankenstein is told as a set of nested stories. The Arctic explorer Walton writes to his sister Margaret about a strange encounter with Victor Frankenstein, who recounts his story, which includes a long passage in which Frankenstein’s monster recounts yet another story: that of his education. After having been violently attacked by hostile villagers, the monster hides in a “hovel” near the home of the DeLacys, a family of political exiles who have settled in rural Switzerland. By observing their interactions, he learns language, literacy, history, and the value of mutual care. The monster decides that this family might take a fellow refugee in. One afternoon when the younger DeLacys are out, he knocks on the door and is invited in by the father. As Shelley tells it,

I entered; ‘Pardon this intrusion,’ said I. ‘I am a traveler in want of a little rest; you would greatly oblige me if you would allow me to remain a few minutes by the fire.’”

‘Enter,’ said DeLacy, ‘and I will try in what manner I can relieve your wants; but unfortunately my children are far from home, and as I am blind, I am afraid I shall find it difficult to procure food for you.’

The monster, who fears that he will be turned away again, tells DeLacy that he needs not food but rather companions. Without them, he says, “I am an outcast in the world forever.” Tragically, only the blind father recognizes the monster’s humanity. On returning home, his son “dashed [the monster] to the ground, and struck [him violently] with a stick.”

Millions of immigrants and refugees are knocking on the doors of nations viewed as bastions of democracy and human rights, but the response to them is often as hostile as young DeLacy’s. Those on the “inside” can be equally hostile to fellow citizens who come looking for basic healthcare, help fighting opioid addiction, safety in public spaces, reproductive rights, respect for religious beliefs, or any number of other needs. And, like the monster in his hovel, many persons stand on the margins, their status as insiders or outsiders unclear. Furthermore, while the distinction between sight and blindness is rendered in Shelley’s novel in literal terms, the present offers far more ways of “seeing” and “unseeing” than 1818 did—with the 24/7 news cycle bringing new images of suffering constantly to viewers’ fickle attentions, only to cycle them off again. Social media makes it both easier to become aware of suffering and to fall into passive modes of spectatorship. Political polarization and the multiplication of news sources make it harder for readers, listeners, and viewers to sort out which of the alternative stories presented are facts, which are fictions, and how to draw the line between fact and fiction.

Several of the articles presented in this volume of *Philosophical Studies in Education* address this theme directly. Other articles represent excellent work across a range of philosophical questions, which is, as always, a central aspect of both the Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society’s annual conference and the volume of *PSIE* that follows. Each paper in this volume was presented

at the conference and then submitted to this journal for a rigorous process of peer review. Readers and writers owe a debt of gratitude to the review committee, whose members committed time and intellectual energy to upholding this journal's high standards and helping authors refine their work: Jane Blanken-Webb, Lindsey Cowles, Craig Cunningham, Tony DeCesare, Dan Mamlok, Stacy Otto, and Austin Pickup. A. C. Nikolaidis and Annie Schultz managed the volume's publication.

Jessica Heybach's Presidential Address, "Resisting the Apartheid of Knowledges: Borderlands and Busy Intersections in Philosophy of Education," points out problems with letting a politics of purity divide theory from practice in philosophy of education. Those of us who work in Schools of Education, with practitioners, who as Heybach reminds us are also thinkers, cannot but work in the "borderlands." Among those whose work she cites is Cris Mayo, whose response further explores questions Heybach raises.

Randy Hewitt's Phil Smith lecture tells the story of his high school wrestling career and, most importantly, of the wrestling coach/science teacher whose unflinching commitment enabled an unmoored, self-doubting adolescent boy to become the athlete and person he wanted to be. Hewitt's engaging narrative stands as the perfect complement to Heybach's address, demonstrating to the reader how philosophical ideals can be lived in high school gymnasiums as well as articulated in Plato. What does it mean to say that Coach Sloan "loved" his students? Becky Noel Smith's response to Hewitt addresses this question.

Jennifer Logue's paper was one of two (Cris Mayo presented the other) in a General Session at OVPES 2018. "Teaching Ignorance," included in this volume, "advocate[s] for teaching about varieties of ignorance with a psychoanalytic sensibility as one strategy with which to engage the emotional investments that sustain apathy and the ignorant refusal to care in this new era of suffering and spectatorship." For readers unfamiliar with epistemologies of ignorance, Logue's piece is a fabulous introduction to its relevance to education; for readers well-versed in this conversation, it is a novel and engaging contribution.

There are monsters of the creepy crawly, spectator-inviting, keep-you-up-at-night kind in John Buethe's "A Strange Critique: What Demogorgons Tell Us About the Educative Power of Risk." Buethe uses the Netflix show *Stranger Things* to explore neoliberal school policy, through the lens of Gert Biesta's ideas about education as a necessarily risky business. In "An Educational Question Via Rabbit Hole: What Is an Educational Question?" Megan Brindley jumps into the shape-shifting challenge of defining the parameters of our field. To give you her answer here to her title's question would be to deprive you of the pleasure of reading her account of a journey through the wonderland of philosophy of education journals. Buethe's and Brindley's papers shared the prize for Best Graduate Student Paper at OVPES 2018.

A number of the papers in *Philosophical Studies in Education 2018* work in some version of the mode that Heybach's Presidential Address called for: thinking at the intersection of theory and practice. Kelvin Beckett's "Dewey

Online: The Communities of Inquiry Approach to Online Discussions” argues that so-called communities of inquiry “misrepresent Dewey’s analysis of the concept of education.” Annie Schultz takes up the controversy over an educator’s call to Yale students to decide for themselves about Halloween costumes (more monsters!), especially in its gendered implications. In “No Place Like Home: The Gendered Consequences of Outrage on University Campuses,” she “seeks to investigate the continued expectation of women to do the emotional homemaking in the academy as in all spaces, and, further, to explore the gendered dimensions to the safe space debate.” Paul Geis, in “Has Student Voice Been Eliminated? A Consideration of Student Activism Post-Parkland,” uses the case of student activism to explore the space available to student voice in contemporary schools, an important aspect of democratic education. Jennifer McCloud and Angela Hurley also bring philosophy to bear on schools’ responses to gun violence in “The Peacemaker as ‘Outsider’ in a Coarsened Culture of Fear.”

In “On Democratic Accountability in Education,” Derek Gottlieb turns to tensions between the demands for accountability and for democracy. Ordinary language philosophy, he argues, “offers a way out of the false choice between a publicness conceived as objective universality and a privacy conceived as subjective and unshareable particularity.” Spencer Smith turns to the ideas of AnaLouise Keating to give fresh consideration to George Counts’s call to the schools to build a new social order, in “Inviting a Change to the Status Quo in Education: Using Keating’s Pedagogies of Invitation.” Slavoj Žižek’s writing is at the heart of Benhur Oral’s “Absolute Knowing.”

Sight itself is the metaphor that drives Oded Zipory’s “Why Plain Sight is Never Plain,” which begins with the story of an unseen graveyard: *there* yet invisible for reasons Zipory carefully considers. Collectively, the articles that comprise *Philosophical Studies in Education* represent some of the best philosophical work about educational policy and practice. It has been a pleasure to serve as Program Chair of the 2018 OVPES conference and Contributing Editor of this journal. If I have one regret, it is that even as these papers have provided thought-provoking answers to so many questions, they have left me with even more to stay up past my bedtime wondering about.
