

BOOK REVIEW

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION: LEADING VOICES FROM THE FIELD

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Kerry T. Burch and Leslie A. Sassone (Eds). *Contemporary Philosophy of Education: Leading Voices from the Field*. Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2026. XXVII, 307 pp. ISBN: 978-3-032-10032-0

Abstract: *Contemporary Philosophy of Education: Leading Voices from the Field* offers diverse perspectives on education amid epistemic fragmentation, democratic uncertainty, technological transformation and the marginalization of philosophy. Emerging from the *Merritt Lecture series*, it explores post-truth, democracy, artificial intelligence, spirituality and educational praxis. It also highlights the continuing need to place philosophical reflection at the heart of educational life and human formation. Its central achievement lies not in providing definitive answers but in reopening fundamental questions about education and human flourishing. The book's lasting significance will depend on whether its philosophical insights can move beyond diagnosis toward institutional renewal and transformative Pedagogy.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Democracy, Educational Philosophy, Educational Praxis, Philosophy of Education, Post-Truth, Spirituality.*

Kerry T. Burch and Leslie A. Sassone's edited volume, *Contemporary Philosophy of Education: Leading Voices from the Field*, is a substantial contribution to contemporary debates on the meaning and purpose of education. Published in the series *The*

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Cultural and Social Foundations of Education, the collection brings together eighteen essays, largely originating in the James and Helen Merritt Lectures, and presents a wide range of voices within philosophy of education. Rather than treating the discipline as an isolated academic specialization, the editors situate philosophical inquiry within the wider crises confronting education: epistemic fragmentation, democratic instability, technological acceleration, commercialization and the growing dominance of instrumental measures of educational success. The volume consequently asks not merely whether philosophy remains relevant to education, but what kind of philosophical thinking is required when the very conditions of knowing, teaching, learning and human formation are undergoing profound transformation.

The five sections of this volume establish a discernible intellectual progression. Part I, "Situating Philosophy of Education Within the (Perennially) Perilous Present," examines post-truth, spectacle, democracy, and global responsibility through A. G. Rud Jr., James M. Giarelli, and Martha Nussbaum. Part II, "The Need for Spiritual and Existential Adventures in Philosophy of Education," turns to inquiry, intellectual courage, commercialism, pedagogy, and philosophical agency in the contributions of Nicholas C. Burbules, Barbara S. Stengel, Deron Boyles, and Lewis R. Gordon. Part III develops questions of compassion, spirituality, artificial intelligence, and educational technology through Jim Garrison, Angela Hurley, Sheron Fraser-Burgess, and Cris Mayo. Part IV revisits John Dewey through David T. Hansen, Wilma Miranda, and Sarah M. Stitzlein, while Part V turns explicitly toward children and youth through Thomas E. Wartenberg, Barbara Thayer-Bacon, Lynda Stone, and Megan Laverty. This structure gives the volume a broad thematic range while preserving a common concern with education as a profoundly human and public undertaking.

Part I establishes the political and epistemic urgency of the collection. Rud's treatment of the "post-truth infosphere" draws attention to the proliferation of information, misinformation and distorted forms of knowledge, while Giarelli considers the relationship between education, democracy and spectacle.

Nussbaum extends these concerns toward liberal education and global responsibility. Together, the essays expose a fundamental vulnerability of contemporary education: democratic life depends upon capacities for judgment and collective inquiry at precisely the moment when the conditions supporting those capacities are becoming increasingly unstable. Education, therefore, cannot retreat into technical neutrality when the distinction between knowledge, manipulation, and belief has itself become contested.

The second part moves from the external conditions of education to philosophy as a mode of intellectual and pedagogical existence. Burbules presents philosophy as inquiry; Stengel's use of Don Quixote foregrounds intellectual courage and the willingness to move beyond familiar conceptual boundaries; Boyles interrogates commercialism, reductionism and the pursuit of certainty; and Gordon explores pedagogical possibilities for liberating educational thought from restrictive assumptions. The strength of this section lies in its refusal to reduce philosophy to the transmission of doctrines. Philosophy appears instead as an activity of questioning, risk, imagination and critical self-examination.

Part III represents perhaps the most provocative expansion of the volume. Garrison's reflections on compassionate, spiritual and creative listening, Hurley's attention to what remains unseen, Fraser-Burgess's analysis of artificial intelligence and instrumentarian power and Mayo's examination of relationality and educational technology introduce dimensions frequently marginalised within rationalist accounts of education. The juxtaposition of spirituality and artificial intelligence is particularly fruitful. Both compel reconsideration of human agency, attention, relationality and formation.

The return to Dewey in Part IV demonstrates the continuing vitality of pragmatism. Hansen's concern with education and the public interest, Miranda's dialogue between Arendt and Dewey on teacher authority, and Stitzlein's emphasis on hope and democratic renewal reaffirm the intimate relationship between education and public life. Yet these essays also expose a persistent difficulty: democratic ideals cannot flourish through individual formation alone. They require

institutions capable of sustaining participation, dialogue, responsibility, and a genuine sense of public interest.

Part V appropriately concludes with children and youth. Wartenberg's philosophy with young people, Thayer-Bacon's engagement with Montessori and education for peace, Stone's examination of youth and political action, and Lavery's defence of liberal education from an early age extend philosophy beyond professional and university settings. Their significance lies in recognizing children and young people not merely as future citizens but as present participants in the intellectual and moral life of society. Wonder, dialogue, truthfulness, reasoning, and collaborative inquiry therefore belong to education from its earliest stages.

The book's principal limitation is the unresolved distance between philosophical critique and transformative praxis. While its contributors persuasively challenge neoliberal, instrumental, commercial and technologically reductive approaches to education, the institutional structures that sustain these tendencies—policy regimes, funding arrangements, accountability systems, professional specialisation and systems of measurement—receive comparatively less attention. The volume nevertheless traces an important movement from post-truth and democracy through inquiry, spirituality, technology, pragmatism and youth toward a broader conception of human formation. Reason is increasingly brought into dialogue with affect, relationality, embodiment, moral responsibility and transcendence. Yet this movement remains incomplete, since the collection recognizes the limitations of exclusively conceptual approaches without fully moving beyond the epistemological horizons it seeks to enlarge. This tension, however, does not diminish its value. By bringing diverse philosophical traditions into conversation without imposing a single programme, the volume reasserts that education concerns more than information, employability, measurable outcomes or technological efficiency. It ultimately concerns truth, judgment, responsibility, relationships, community and the formation of human beings capable of meaningful coexistence.