

Introduction

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Volume 4, numéro 1, 1990

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1073387ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1073387ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Canadian Philosophy of Education Society

ISSN

0838-4517 (imprimé)

1916-0348 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Magsino, R. (1990). Introduction. *Paideusis*, 4(1), 3–3.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1073387ar>

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Introduction

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John Wilson recently observed that, in the absence of respect for rational authority and with the dedication of most institutions of education to anti-intellectual values, philosophy of education has been the first victim. Under siege, philosophers of education may succumb to the temptation to remain passive. With acid pessimism, he despaired, "We can, after all, still write (perhaps even publish) our books, some people may read them, our consciences may be kept by our diligence, and nobody (yet) forces us to drink hemlock."

The pressure on faculties of education to concentrate on the so-called practical and the empirical could still turn out to be the educational philosopher's hemlock in the future. As if it were of no use to the practitioner, philosophy of education has been tolerated at best in the teacher preparation curriculum. In a number of undergraduate faculties of education, it does not exist at all.

The hemlock is perhaps being poured for philosophers of education in Canada as everywhere else. However, they do not have to drink it. In fact the time may be ripe for increased efforts to make the contribution of philosophy prominent. The current popularity of the notion of the reflective practitioner opens the opportunity for highlighting the indispensable role of the discipline in promoting professionalization in education.

Not to be charged with passivity, the Canadian Philosophy of Education Society called for participation proposals for a symposium at the 1989 meetings of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education in Quebec City. The call elicited enthusiastic response. However, due to time constraints, only seven proposals could be accommodated at the double-session symposium held on June 6, 1989. The attendance, the quality of the presentations, and the spirited discussions demonstrated the capacity and the will of Canadian philosophers of education not only to analyse the state of their discipline but also to show how it may be taught to and employed by prospective practitioners.

Wilson has recommended some drastic, radical action if we are to avoid hemlock. The symposium papers published in this issue of *Paideusis* may not be the kind of action he has in mind. However, they represent the thoughtful first step required, if further confident steps are to be taken at all.