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Nicolas J. Tanchuk

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Review of

The Importance of Philosophy in Teacher Education: Mapping the Decline and Its Consequences

by Andrew D. Colgan & Bruce Maxwell (Eds.), New York: Routledge, 2020

NICOLAS J. TANCHUK
Iowa State University

The essays collected in *The Importance of Philosophy in Teacher Education: Mapping the Decline and Its Consequences*, edited by Andrew D. Colgan & Bruce Maxwell, tell the story of a discipline's fall from prominence in teacher education and some ways this trajectory might be meliorated or reversed. In the mid-nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, philosophical study was "widely recognized as essential to the craft of teaching" (Colgan & Maxwell, 2020, p. 1). During this period, nearly all pre-service teachers were required to take a course in the philosophy of education. Compare this today with Canada, the only country for which there is data, where less than 10% of educator preparation programs require a course in philosophical thought (p. 5), and the decline is obvious.

The anti-philosophical bent in teacher preparation programs, of course, is not anomalous. As Alasdair MacIntyre (2007), Philip Kitcher (2012), and others have noted, we live in an age that is *generally* skeptical of philosophical inquiry. *The Importance of Philosophy in Teacher Education* does not spend much time reflecting on this broader context. For Kitcher and MacIntyre, at least, some of the blame for our present age's philosophical skepticism falls at the feet of philosophers. Kitcher laments a drift in academic philosophy from a Deweyan focus on the "study of the good life" and seeking "to understand how opportunities for living well can be promoted by social institutions" (2012, p. 345) towards "arcane puzzles" (p. 346) of metaphysics and epistemology. MacIntyre's worries point to a deeper anxiety: that seemingly unavoidable methodological tendencies in ethics and political philosophy – where the problems of life are defined and rooted – make it unlikely that philosophers are likely to make progress on these problems.

Specifically, MacIntyre (2007) observes that in contemporary ethics and political philosophy it is standard to appeal to conflicting starting points – basic judgments, perceptions, or intuitions – to establish what purport to be "normative" ethical and political conclusions. But problematically, the inferences drawn from these disparate starting points leave us with conflicting conclusions – all purporting to be "normative." Philosophical inquiry into "normative" ethical issues can thus appear to boil down to a purely preferential choice between internally coherent but conflicting views. MacIntyre refers to the non-cognitive ethic we are left with amidst such fragmentation as "emotivist" (p. 8). MacIntyre's insight, if well founded, bears directly on the predicament of the philosophy of education. The empirical study of preferences and their satisfaction is a canonical domain of social scientific inquiry. So, if MacIntyre is correct, then it should be no surprise that philosophy in general and philosophy of education in particular have witnessed a decline not felt in the same way by the social (and natural) sciences. The latter but not the former, one might think, are more conducive to solving the problems of life.

The chapters in Colgan and Maxwell's edited volume – divided into three sections – largely abstain from such meta-philosophical questions and their practical consequences. Nevertheless, the

chapters shed light on the decline in prominence of the philosophy of education, what has been lost, and how the field is already rethinking and re-establishing its place in the unique context of teacher education. A common theme that emerges across the volume's sections is a shift of the sort Kitcher recommends towards the concrete problems of life and theorizing on terrain closer to that studied by social scientists. This, of course, is one response to problems in the epistemology of philosophy noted by MacIntyre: if the most philosophers can hope to do is reframe possibilities for interpreting and practically satisfying preferences, then focusing one's work on interpreting what people *descriptively* think, desire, and do allows the philosopher of education to be made useful to at least some public or other's interests. Philosophy, in this picture, gives up the role of "queen of the sciences" and is instrumentalized in the service of the public's present problems.

The first section of the volume, "Diagnosis and Prognosis," lays out some of the features of philosophy of education's current predicament in educator preparation programs that motivate this empirically oriented shift. In the first chapter, Robin Barrow argues that while claims to do "philosophical work" have proliferated in faculties of education, little of this work would be recognized as such by analytic philosophers. The "4Cs" that characterize analytic philosophy – an argument's being "clear, coherent, complete, and compatible" (Colgan & Maxwell, 2020, p. 19) – are, in Barrow's view, neglected, leaving much educational debate and practice to proceed without sufficient analytic rigor.

The volume's second chapter, by David Waddington, traces a different decline, this time not in current analytic philosophical work in education, but in John Dewey's status as an educational scholar. Waddington, a Dewey scholar, suspects that Dewey's status is unlikely to persist into the twenty-first century. The reason, according to Waddington, is Dewey's ethical, political, and epistemic modernism, which involves a commitment to a form of "liberation through science" (p. 34) that seeks to control nature for the sake of satisfying human desires. Dewey's modernism, according to Waddington, entails an unwarranted ethical assimilation and integration of other cultures – most notably those of Indigenous peoples – that see nature as bearing inherent worth (p. 37). By Waddington's lights, this modernist tendency makes Dewey less well suited to our present moment, in which the modern liberation of human desires through science has led to a near total collapse of natural life and in which many inside and outside educator preparation programs are rightly worried about colonialism. An opportunity is missed in Waddington's insightful essay to signal awareness of Indigenous ethical and political thought as an alternative to Dewey's, to post-Marxist critical theorists, *and* to European postmoderns' views (e.g., Borrows, 2016; Kruse, Tanchuk, & Hamilton, 2019; North, 2021; Simpson, 2017). Nevertheless, Waddington, like Kitcher, and Dewey himself, can be read as calling philosophers to attend to the most pressing public problems of our day. Ironically, if Waddington is correct, the problems of the public now cut against Dewey and his pragmatic, problem-focused form of scientific modernism.

The third chapter, by Matthew J. Hayden, rounds out the first section, but with a more favourable outlook on the Enlightenment project, as it is reinvigorated by Jürgen Habermas. For Hayden, the neoliberal enemies of philosophical thought are largely to be found outside the walls of faculties of education (although technocrats within educator preparation programs are also a concern). The enemies within and without, according to Hayden, have failed to attend adequately to the critical "emancipatory interests" (Colgan & Maxwell, 2020, p. 51) of students. In Hayden's view, Habermas rigorously articulates these interests. Read in dialogue with Waddington's piece lamenting the Deweyan attempt to liberate humanity through scientific and communicative exchange, Hayden's chapter calls us in the opposite direction: towards the discursive and political conditions for rational emancipation, as they are spelled out by Habermas.

This dissensus between Waddington and Hayden, both well-trained philosophers of education, exemplifies MacIntyre's metanormative anxiety that philosophers (including philosophers of education) lack a genuine basis upon which to adjudicate the normative dimensions of the problems of life. Where one despairs of answering questions such as "Is a modernist ethic (of some form or other) true?," it can

be tempting to reduce the scope of analysis and turn towards more concrete concerns. The bulk of rest of the volume takes this line as the most promising pathway forward for philosophers of education.

In the middle section of the volume, "Philosophy and Teacher Development," all four chapters recommend, in different ways, a tighter tie to empirical problems of educational practice. The Philosophy for Teachers (P4T) movement described by Leonard Waks in the fourth chapter and by Janet Orchard & Carrie Winstanley in the fifth, the problem-based approach to philosophy of education championed by Dianne Gereluk in the sixth chapter, and Michael R. Matthews' focus on concrete problems in science education in the seventh, all evince a focus on building teachers' philosophical literacy within the context of the present practice of teaching.

This trend continues in the third section of the volume, "Historical Perspectives." In the eighth chapter, Douglas Yacek and Bruce Kimball argue for a return to an approach to teacher education based in the liberal arts. Yet, rather than unseating the current marginalization of philosophy in schools of education, Yacek and Kimball claim that philosophers more realistically might seek "to widen our understanding of what it means to embody a philosophical spirit and to teach for liberal sensibility" (p. 160) within the constraints of existing courses. In chapter 9, Lee S. Duemer similarly argues for a vision of educational foundations that allows policy and practice to be placed in a broader "epistemological and theoretical framework" (p. 173) that illuminates the human condition. By contrast, the final chapter of the volume, by David T. Hansen and Megan J. Laverty, recounts how the Philosophy and Education program at Teachers College, Columbia University has largely resisted the trend towards problem-based inductive approaches to the philosophy of education in favour of a historical curriculum focused on the "Great Books." Yet, even at Teachers College, where admissions are highly selective and placement rates are strong, Hansen and Laverty report that the program faculty intend to reflect on ways to deepen the curriculum's connection to the empirical realities of teacher education in response to graduate feedback (p. 195).

This wealth of perspectives on how to reinvigorate the field through deeper engagement with the problems of life is a strength of the volume. Such a shift towards problems that are both empirical and philosophical, in my view, aptly characterizes some of the most vibrant and thoughtful work in the philosophy of education today. Extending these insights, one might look to recent work that not only starts in worldly problems, but that features philosophers of education themselves engaging in empirical data collection and analysis as part of their research agendas. In recent books like Jen Morton's *Moving Up Without Losing Your Way*, qualitative data collected by Morton herself figures prominently in the context in which theoretical considerations are unpacked. In a similar spirit, Lauren Bialystok, et al. (2019) have conducted empirical research on the teaching of philosophy in schools, Doris Santoro (2018) has empirically researched the way the demoralization of teaching has affected teacher retention, and David Hansen (2021) draws on his own field work to articulate his vision of the ethics of teaching.

Philosophers of education have reason to avoid Dewey's colonial tendencies. The broadly Deweyan unity of philosophical and empirical educational problems recommended in this volume, nevertheless, strikes this reader as a promising pathway forward for the philosophy of education. *The Importance of Philosophy in Teacher Education* provides an excellent occasion for the field to reflect on the intersection of these problems, to seek knowledge of the empirical realities that form their backdrops, and to start to deliberate about how we should move forward together.

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