

## AFTERWORD

# Afterword: Practical and impractical philosophies; intuition and reason

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### What role for reason?

Having good 'reason' to do something in no way determines the task will be done, or that undertaking the task will extend our capacities. As recent political events such as Brexit, the election of Trump and the Australian plebiscite on same sex marriage show, reason has little purchase in the contemporary political world. Signs of global warming increase yearly while political figureheads continue to claim climate science is a fraud. No doubt survivors of recent hurricanes in North America and earthquakes in Mexico would attest to the realness of environmental distress. This is to say, then, that for better or worse it seems there is little practical use for reason in contemporary culture. Perhaps we need to accept this as the broad economy of practice in which scholarship now occurs. If we are ever to intervene in affective circuits of iconoclasm, rising far-right movements, climate denial, dogmatic cultures of schooling and their racist, neo-liberal hidden curriculums, we must abandon the hope that reason alone will make a difference. As Deleuze (1990, p. 226) explains in his reading of Spinoza:

We can know by reasoning that the power of action is the sole expression of our essence, the sole affirmation of our power of being affected. But this knowledge remains abstract. We do not know what this power is, nor how we may acquire or discover it. And we will certainly never know this, if we do not concretely try to become active.

Spinoza's timeliness at this historical juncture pertains to this current crisis regarding reason and the mass mobilizing of affect. Spinoza shows that reason alone is not enough. Affect, intuition, charisma and imagination act in ways that reason cannot. We must intuitively understand the economies of knowledge and value systems that hold power in schools, in scholarship and in the broader political contexts that frame these respective 'educational' institutions. Asking us to rethink reason in relation to intuition, the editors of this collection have made a significant theoretical intervention into philosophies of education by creating space in which the significance of Spinoza's work for educational philosophy can be re-examined. This collection is very much 'of its time' in its response to an increasing uptake of Spinoza's work in education (Hansson, 2012; Harwood, Hickey-Moody, et al., 2016; Hyland, 2014; Neto & Overns, 2017; Roth & Jornet, 2017; Shann, Bauer, et al., 2015). This theoretical and methodological move has paralleled the affective turn and the uptake of Deleuze's thought in education studies, both of which have popularized the feminist project of thinking through the body (Gallop, 1977) and legitimizing intuition (Friedman, 2003). The agenda introduced by the editors at the beginning of the collection is indeed pressing: 'the question of what constitutes an *ethics* adequate to the new paradigm shift remains underexplored and demands attention'. If we take the works collected here as a response to this provocation, we can begin to identify some of the many ethical modalities operationalized when engaging Spinoza in the philosophy of education. Below I discuss the significance of some of the key themes that emerge in these articles.

## Reasoning with Spinoza

In the article focused on a doctrine for children's education, De Rezende offers a highly specific examination of a brief passage in Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the intellect*. At first glance, de Rezende points out, one could assume meanings of 'emendatio' associated with a somewhat punishing ascetic life: 'correction; amendment', 'reprimand', 'painful cure' and 'bitter medication'. However, a closer examination of Spinoza's text reveals an education that guides the student to grapple with affect and transcend the 'ordinary goods' of life. These 'ordinary goods' are honour, wealth and sensual pleasure. They are 'ordinary' because one becomes obsessed by them for their own sake, leading to agitation, fear, hope and enslavement. However, these same goods can be used as a means to a greater good and thus become transformative; a pathway to connect with Nature and the supreme good of knowledge. Thus, a theory of education which may have suggested ascetic and punishing practices is transformed into the reverse. The *emendation* reveals Spinoza's belief in the use of the ordinary good as a pathway to the destination of supreme good and the removal of static and transcendent models of perfection and truth.

In *Thinking with Spinoza about 'Hands-on' Learning*, Roth is concerned about the mind/body divide in education and a persistent inability to overcome the apparent gap between 'knowing' and 'doing'. Roth suggests that the work of Spinoza, particularly as it is interpreted by the later Vygotsky, carries the solution to this problem. Like many others, he challenges the Cartesian mind/body dualism by using Spinoza's notions of 'substance' (God) and 'attributes' to suggest that this dualism fails to allow one to be conceived through the other. Spinoza allows for the non-dual 'thinking body', made from the same non-divisible substance in which the idea and the action, the understanding and the doing, are one and the same thing, in the same way as the eye is indivisible from sight. Roth emphasizes the importance of this understanding for modern education, pointing out that, from a Spinozist perspective, the union is observable through language use. Roth embodies 'thinking with Spinoza' as an ethical activation of education scholarship.

In her piece on cooperative schools, Dennis focuses on growing concerns about academies in the British school system. This is a much-needed engagement with education marketization. Dennis employs Spinoza to explore the positions of, and likely outcomes for, rapidly increasing numbers of cooperative schools in England, clearly outlining how Spinoza's concept of 'co-operative power' and its relation to 'conatus', or the drive to 'persist in being', as well as the sad passions of hope and resistance, are identifiable in the processes of many schools converting to alternative academy models. Dennis sees the misguided motivation for schools to change, and the absence of a subsequent strategy to implement change, as likely to create sad affects and to limit the cooperative power of the school. This lack of strategy means that, in practice, individualism is affirmed as a dominant value and runs counter to the 'co-operative' philosophy. We are reminded that, while some confident and well-positioned schools actively chose the cooperative model, many reasoned that it was the lesser of two evils. Such reasoning is passive, or 'fearful'—one of the negative sad passions described by Spinoza.

Similarly critical of conventional schooling, Ian Leask's insightful piece on *Ideology and the 'Multitude of the Classroom'* reminds us that 'we need to appreciate the sheer extent of the imagination', and the way in which, for Spinoza, it is 'the only cause of falsity', yet it is also a core feature of educational systems. Leask links Spinoza's imagination to Althusser's treatment of ideology and the claim that schools are the ultimate ideological state apparatus, reminding us that 'Imagination is the expression of the ways in which bodies are affected by their environments'. He draws a significant parallel between Althusser's argument that ideology is materialist, on the one hand, and Spinoza's empirical, materialist method for thinking, on the other. This echoes my earlier writing that 'educational discourses ... offer an excellent example of the limits of perspectives that fail to reflexively acknowledge structural models in thought such as binary frameworks. These structures, or limits in thought, can be both enabling and disabling, depending on how they position

materialities, how they are conceived and whether or not they are viewed as conceptual tools' (Hickey-Moody, 2009, p. 46).

### Intuition, empiricism and process

In exploring how an ethical education might articulate, many of the articles collected here map materialist processes of affection, or empirical processes through which power is expressed: '... in Spinozism all power bears with it a corresponding and inseparable capacity to be affected. And this capacity to be affected is always, necessarily exercised' (Deleuze, 1992, p. 93).

In her piece on *How Things Teach Us*, O'Donnell reimagines education with Spinoza. Taking as her starting point Spinoza's notion that each individual cannot understand itself except as a part of the whole and in relation to those known other parts, O'Donnell argues that 'joyous relations', where agree-able parts become more capable of agency together, become a primary goal of education. It is one's capacity to affect and be affected that are of importance, and O'Donnell argues that environmental surroundings should assume a greater prominence in education as agents that can affect us. Such an education would involve experimentation and playful encounters where the interaction of minds and bodies, and their expression through each other, are recognized and valued. Classrooms, she imagines, might become 'sites of ecological thinking' rather than the current situation, still trapped in a Cartesian dualism.

Similarly, Tamboukou highlights the central importance of Spinoza's threshold emotion of 'joy' in transformative education, using the example of women workers and writers of the later 1800s and early 1900s. These women came to formal education late in life through the Workers Education movement and encountered new educational approaches in settings such as rural Wales, where their surroundings created joy. Here, they were involved in a process of understanding together their position in society, their relationship to it and to each other, and the implications for action, particularly in regard to the union movement. Using the archive of the historical writings of these women, Tamboukou uncovers the central place of qualities that are integral to Spinoza's philosophy: the joy of collaboration, its agonistic nature, and the role that imagination played in women re-envisioning their place in society. Spinoza's three levels of education, and the qualities they require, are identifiable in archives of the women's work, with imagination, reason and finally intuitive understanding present as the women came to grasp their true position.

Continuing this interest in materiality and affect, yet problematizing the anthropomorphising of materiality, Le Grange examines two schools of thought that have aligned themselves with Spinoza's philosophical principles: the Deep Ecology Movement (DEM) and New Materialism. He contends that, at its core, the DEM does not align with the ethical centre of Spinoza's philosophy. Le Grange suggests that the DEM privileges living beings over non-living beings and imbues the non-human world with human ethics in an act of anthropomorphism which fundamentally undermines the connection to Spinoza. He also argues that the New Materialist movement has contestable connections to Spinoza's theoretical work. While Spinoza may accept the equality of all (inter-related) matter, he places emphasis on affects, power and ideas and he would not suggest that all modes were equal in this regard. The implications of this argument, at a time when a new theory of ecology is desperately needed, focus on recognizing the separate *conatus* of the human animal which renders human ethical agents unlike the non-human (or 'more-than-human') world.

Rovere's article situates Spinoza in his historical context, exploring *Spinoza's own pedagogical experience and his relation to his teacher F. Van den Enden*. Both men queried 'Why do school masters teach the children to seek what the wise men despise?', namely, the 'honors' achieved through competition. For Spinoza, and Van Den Enden, a theatre-based pedagogy might be pursued instead, as it 'gives way to a collective practice of feeling and thinking'. Van den Enden echoed Spinoza's belief in three kinds of knowledge—but framed these knowledges slightly differently as imagination, belief and clear knowledge. In working towards an education that generates clear

knowledge, he argued that we should reject honorary titles and mobilize theatre as a method for re-organizing the classroom. Rovere presents drama as an immanent pedagogy for anti-hierarchical education in ways that link to Dorothy Heathcote's educational theatre practices, which were designed to facilitate expression in an emergent form and create experiences through which group agendas evolved and collective issues were discussed. This article reminds us that 'Spinoza's thought would certainly appear to introduce both a language theory and an affect theory that help us to conceive of collective experience'.

In opening up educational philosophy to thinking with Spinoza, we must also open our own scholarly sensibilities to matter, to process and to affect. As imperfect and ethically bankrupt as much schooling is, we must find places, moments and processes in which growth and extension are facilitated. These are the ethical pathways into a Spinozist philosophy of education.

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## ARTICLE HISTORY

First published in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 2018, Vol. 50, No. 9, 888–891