

CODA

Justice, Education and the World of Today: Concluding Remarks

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In recent philosophy of education, there have been many pleas to rethink education, along with various concepts that relate to it in important ways. However, as far as it concerns justice and education, which has been the main theme of this book, such rethinking should be preconditioned on avoiding a facile recourse to hegemonies. As Torill Strand has put it lately, “to rethink justice in, for and through education today thus requires a radical move beyond the surfaces of conventional paradigms to reach at a deep-seated and far-reaching understanding of the phenomena of education and justice itself” (Strand, 2022, p. 2). And this move has been attempted, certainly modestly and in awareness of limits, by the contributors to the present book too.

This collection of essays has, from a philosophical perspective, investigated connections of education, justice, and the world of today. It has aspired to offer a new outlook on the link between education and justice and to enrich the related discourse through the exploration of justice in, for, and through education. It has advanced a restored normativity of education through a powerful notion of justice. The plea for restoring a normativity of education through justice reflects the observation that, today, the foundational issue of justice has lost much of its power as a qualifier of appropriate education.¹ For instance, many educational projects and policies adapt the aims and scope of formal and lifelong education to neo-liberal imperatives that dissociate education from justice and divest learning from its normative, critical, and expansive potential (English and Mayo, 2021, p. 14). That is, while the discourse which normativizes education as critical-democratic emphasizes “the principles of social justice, diversity, equality and deliberative democracy”, the neo-liberal discourse highlights instead “the values of the market for the structuring of human relations” (Pais and Costa, 2020, p. 6).

Nevertheless, liabilities burden not only the neo-liberal ideology but also those theories that are at first sight less complicit in promoting discursive² and other injustices. Importantly, one such discursive injustice is the very neglect of exploring the relation of justice and education, a neglect that characterizes contemporary political philosophy. According to Torill Strand, following Axel Honneth, “issues concerning justice and education

are today totally abandoned by philosophy” (Strand, 2022, p. 1). Educational philosophy engages with such issues, but it also has its own share of discursive injustice toward the topic of how education and justice relate to one another. Some current educational-philosophical discourse tends to narrow down, singularize and limit the relation of justice and education to some modish themes. As Nick Peim and Nicholas Stock (2022) have aptly argued, even when posthumanist educational theory targets some injustices in the world, it still tends to treat education *per se* (and the improvement that it promises) as the remedy for all ills, and fails to see it as a biopolitical “hyperobject” of deep-laid complicities in global injustices. Also, instead of investigating the relation of justice and education as such, or, at least, offering richer illustrations of it, many writings tend to concentrate more on some instantiations of this relation such as specific and glaring challenges of inequality or exclusion in classrooms. In awareness of such tendencies, the chapters included in this book have tried to enrich the exploration of the relationship between education and justice beyond themes and paradigms that have become modish and conventional in the world of today.

Thus, many of the ideas of justice and education that have been formulated in this book reflect the concern of the contributors about neglected or missing themes in the relevant book-length literature. Neglected have typically been nuances which differentiate: justice in education (that is, how different issues of in/justice look when occurring in education), justice through education (that is, how education contributes to solving issues of injustice), and justice for education (that is, how the obstacles that education faces in advancing its aims and getting the support, e.g., the funding, that it may need for fulfilling higher expectations should be acknowledged and dealt with).³ In other words, much nuance is often lacking when educational theory fails to demarcate the scope of educational potentialities to intervene in the world of today for the sake of justice. To enrich the educational-philosophical outlook on the relation of justice and education, the book has challenged how this relation is often understood in educational discourses that do not nuance the prepositional (in, through, for) qualification of the relationship between justice and education. Underlying the rationale of this book has been the differentiation of justice in education, justice for education, and justice through education as follows:

- justice in education concerns pedagogical content, access to schooling, and institutional practices;
- justice through education concerns fostering principles, attitudes, virtues, and visions of justice and of a just future society; and
- justice for education concerns societal recognition of educational intervention and simultaneous recognition of the societal limits that educational prospects face in the effort to change, of education’s own accord, a world that is structurally unequal and unjust.

Often missing in the relevant literature is also a tackling of

- the ontology and socio-politics beneath the normativity of an education for justice and a justice for education (the book has attempted this tackling in its first part);
- contextualizations of the justice-education relation through kindred notions and challenges (the book has indicated such contextualization in its second part through *diverse concepts* related to justice in and through education, such as happiness, forgiveness, dialogue; *current issues that invite justice* such as migration and the climate crisis; and *divisions* such as the global and the local, East and West, and North versus South); and
- meta-critical/meta-theoretical issues that advance self-reflection on limits and potentialities of how we, philosophers of education, approach complex situations of justice (in, for, and through education) in the world of today (the book has approached this in its third part).

Therefore, to engage with the aforementioned, the book was divided into three parts that correspondingly focused on the ontological and socio-political grounds underlying the relation between education and justice; contextualized the relation by offering tangible, new examples of it; and examined how, in our tendency to promote and uphold orthodox visions and missions of improvement, we, as philosophers of education, may unwittingly perform symbolic violence. By the latter we mean that we occasionally fall into the trap of onto-epistemic blindness and ethico-political complicities.

The book has set out from standpoints that acknowledge the interconnectivity of many perspectives and persuasions when justice is concerned, hopefully without trying to minimize or “manage” the complexity of the relation of justice and education. The aforementioned points of complexity, which are often cast aside in more single-focused approaches to justice and education, are interconnected, but they are not reducible to one another. The question about what promotes justice in, through, and for education thus invites deeper and further engagements with what counts as just and how to explore, analyze, and theorize justice and education philosophically. We are not claiming then that the work accomplished through this book is, or could ever be, conclusive or complete. Our aim has been to initiate dialogue on such dimensions and intricacies of the relationship of justice and education and to contribute to this dialogue from diverse perspectives.

In short, this collection of essays has critically combined many of the intellectual traditions on the issue of justice that our scientific international community (educators, theorists, and philosophers of education) has inherited. Inevitably, for reasons of length and of discipline relevance (as this is mirrored in the title of the present book which specifies its investigations as philosophical), these intellectual traditions have been drawn from philosophy. Thus, the book has cast aside economic, religious, sociological, and legal insights on justice and education. And because the book has as a sub-text the “world of today” (also in the title) it has not followed a historical

trajectory, nor has it aspired to produce a narrative of how the notion of justice or the relation of justice and education have been theorized from antiquity to the present (as we have explained in our introduction, such ground has already been covered by other books). Also, direct or exclusive engagements with ancient theories of justice have not been searched since ancient philosophical perspectives inform or find a word in edgeways in many current and diverse persuasions.

Thus, instead of aspiring to cover everything of relevance, this book has, among other things, addressed and tackled the need to broaden the scope of philosophical sources that could influence and enrich educational discourses on the theme of justice. More specifically, it is the concept of “educational justice” that has so far acquired prominent status in related international research (for proof of this and a long bibliographical list, see Papastephanou [2021a]). Numerous contemporary studies adopt the term to research and debate topics relevant to political philosophies and theories of education. However, instead of acknowledging the multi-dimensional character of the relation of education and justice, such studies one-sidedly limit the province of educational justice to issues of equal distribution of resources and opportunities through education. By contrast, this book has critically revisited the three historically formed paradigms on justice (the distributive, the cognitive, and the representative) and evoked diverse faces of justice that remain overlooked or undertheorized in related scholarship. It is through this diversification of faces of justice as a backdrop that the book has aimed to deepen our outlook on justice and education by investigating presuppositions of the normativization of education through justice, critical concretizations of the relationship of justice and education, and meta-critical considerations of the relationship of justice, education, and the world of today, as all these are experienced in multiple ways by situated and different people. It has been claimed that “it is precisely in the complex balancing of facts, norms and values that we experience the situatedness of knowledge” (Bostad and Hessen, 2019). This pertinent claim also holds for ethical and political issues of justice. These issues invite scientific, long-lasting standpoints that involve curiosity about facts of injustices (visible or overlooked),⁴ eagerness to know about injustices that occur to others (and not just to us) as well as context-sensitivity and attention to normativity (norms and values) beneath what counts as appropriate knowledge.

The book has engaged with injustices and problems that are not likely to dissipate soon. And it has done so by means of educational philosophy, a field that often produces theories of constant relevance and endurance. That is, the book reflects diverse philosophical outlooks on justice and education that constitute resilient, indeed, inexhaustible, sources for critically and timely contributing to discussions about the current state of the world and the thorny issues that this state presents societies with. The effort has been to build bridges across a plurality of traditions and approaches to justice. Because of the diverse perspectives and sensibilities of its contributors, the book draws from a wide spectrum of related sources with philosophical

leanings that range from Hannah Arendt's discussion of forgiveness to John Rawls' liberal theory of justice, to Axel Honneth's recognitive prism on politics down to Catherine Malabou's normative notion of plasticity and Sarah Ahmed's critique of the received view on happiness. Thus, the book has utilized the rich intellectual context within which many debates over justice and its intricacies are deployed. But it has also utilized the current socio-political context within which issues of justice constantly emerge and compel a rethinking of our educational theories and practices. Therefore, the book has sought the "untimely" (in Nietzsche's [1997] meaning) and timeless, long-lasting qualities of philosophical ventures, while aspiring to the timely and topical intervention in current world affairs and challenges. This is also evident in the organization of the book's material along lines that we have described here and focus on: the persistent theoretical issues (e.g., the normativity of justice and education and the meta-critical self-reflectivity that is necessary if we are to avoid lack of vigilance and alertness concerning risks involved in our own educational-philosophical recommendations) and the timely, topical interventions that constitute critical, educational-philosophical responses to the world of today as well as to its current and often context-specific ethical and political challenges.

The current context of this book has involved the exceptional circumstances of the times that we live in (climate crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic, the refugee and migration crises, etc.). These circumstances have caused world changes, exacerbated older injustices, and created new challenges of, and responsibilities for, justice, such that invite fresh perspectives on how education may respond. Hence, engagements with justice, education, and the world of today from a philosophical prism are more relevant than ever and go well beyond any specific, even book-length endeavour to address ethics and politics in the world of today. Precisely when philosophical explorations of justice and education aspire to respond to the world of today, they are confronted with the Sisyphean task of catching up with even new manifestations of injustice that problematize consolidated perceptions of what counts as a challenge in today's world and concomitant, already set political priorities and educational directions. On the one hand, educational and philosophical responses to current realities acquire a heightened relevance and topicality. For they combine the merits of a theoretical investigation of time-honoured and persistent challenges that humanity faces concerning justice and education with the merits of context-sensitivity and awareness of the challenges in our times of pandemics and other crises. On the other hand, any such response seems too quickly surpassed by both, the continuously changing reality that requests ever-new responses to injustices and the ongoing debates and fruitful dialogues that are constantly fed by ever-new ethico-political challenges. Indicatively, while this book was still in preparation, another global challenge of injustice has broken out: the war in Ukraine presents educational philosophers with yet another challenge of territorial cosmopolitan justice that discloses partial scholarly priorities and theoretical omissions, complacencies, or unreflective certainties (Papastephanou, 2022).

At the same time, new outlooks offer fresh insights on issues that the book has not addressed: for instance, many (if not all) issues of justice touch, in one way or another, upon conceptions and evaluations of identity; could we rethink the heterogeneity within identity in such a way that unjust attributions of homogeneity to collective affect could be revisited (Drousioti, 2022)? Or, from a more practical perspective, could justice through education be promoted by alternative and innovative ways (such as school strikes) of engaging children’s activism (Biswas and Mattheis, 2022)? Or, other interventions single out injustices such as closing down schools due to “poor performance” by authorities that fail to consider the broader and non-measurable value of a school (Reid, 2021), or yet other new works focus on specific schools (e.g., No-Excuses schools), so far examined concerning whether they advance distributive justice, and study them by broadening the theoretical scope through relational justice (Smith, 2022). These more “applied justice” topics are also neglected in most educational-philosophical discourses and have not been discussed in the present book either.

Despite the acknowledged limits, this book has aimed to heighten the educational and philosophical consciousness of the potentialities of pedagogy to intervene in, and contribute to, the pursuit of justice in the world of today for the sake of a better tomorrow. It has accomplished this by combining a normative, critical, and self-reflective tackling of how justice relates to education. The editors and the authors of this collection of essays have dealt with this aim in their own “here and now”, in their own context, and through their own sensibilities as spatio-temporal beings and situated scholars. One of the risks that such endeavours constantly face when dealing with a topic as protean and intricate as justice is to take current meanings of the ideals of justice for granted or to reduce them to a handful of well-rehearsed issues. Various dilemmas, conflictual values, and norms are concealed or glossed over and operate as inconsistent, vague, and ambiguous grounds for educational theory, research, and policies. We acknowledge that the theoretical affordances of this book should not obscure its limitations. Consequently, we maintain the call critically to examine the normative conceptions beneath and beyond educational theory and research and continuously broaden our field’s purview of ever-new injustices.

Notes

- 1 At the same time, one must be cautious to avoid exaggerating what education can do for justice in the world of today. As became clear in our introduction, and we are emphasizing it here too, “justice for education” means, among other things, that to do justice to education, we must acknowledge the limits of what education can accomplish on its own for justice. In other words, doling out justice in today’s world is no simple matter of advancing a more critical-normative and demanding education. It also requires a complex set of global and societal changes.
- 2 Here we employ the notion of “discursive justice” (which is of Habermasian origin, see, for instance, Bunch, 2014, p. 43) somewhat more broadly. It denotes the kind of justice that concerns *what* our academic discourses (and not only our

public debates) ought to take into consideration, *what* they ought to include. This “what” comprises not only people affected by a discourse and representative voices that should be heard but also issues and ideas that should be considered and debated by scholars and global publics (Papastephanou, 2021b).

- 3 The differentiation of justice in, through, and for education as it stands in this coda was initially formulated by Marianna Papastephanou at a seminar on Educational Justice (Papastephanou’s paper title: “Distinctions of Justice”) in Norway (19 September 2019). It was there explained that justice in education, despite its significance, does not cover the whole ground of how justice may relate to education. For instance, justice in the inclusive classroom is crucial for the migrant student, but it does not automatically secure that students in this classroom are prepared for justice towards others who have not reached our shores or for justice, say, towards nature. In other words, it does not cover the ground of justice through education. The differentiation has then been used by the authors of this coda in common projects. For a recent and somewhat different use of this differentiation by Torill Strand, see Strand (2022).
- 4 On this politicization of curiosity concerning facts of injustice, see Papastephanou (2023).

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