

## **From the Editor**

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As I put this issue together, it is difficult to know how to begin my comments. Since assuming editorial responsibilities I have sought to make the focus of my comments the articles in each current issue. That is more difficult than usual for this issue, the first since the slaughter (to call it “senseless” seems redundant) of the children in Newtown. One does not know whether to be more outraged by the specific act, by the fact that gunfire is a leading cause of death among American children, or that we accept so many people being killed by gunfire in an average day that we only notice it when large numbers of people are killed in a single incident. Thirty separate incidents is not news-worthy.

What is one to say when there is nothing to say? What is the significance of scholarly work, even really good scholarly work, in the midst of insanity inscribed as social norms? That the shooting took place in a school is less significant, it seems to me, than that we are a society that routinely allows its children to be killed, and then, if they survive to young adulthood, to be sent off to war. How do our systems of education shape our children to fit into such a culture of violence? And what can we do to change things?

In the face of such questions, of such catastrophe, I would love to be able to say something profound, but I cannot imagine there is such a thing to be said. Perhaps all we can do in a society with so much insanity is live as sanely and as well as is possible. Perhaps all we can do is do the work that is ours, and do it as well as we can.

In this issue, the authors are asking important questions that are

connected to the practice of good education. Graham P. McDonough, by focusing on the importance of judgment in teaching, suggests ways we can ameliorate the mindlessness of test-based teaching by remembering that we are engaged in a social endeavor, not a technical one, that it is as much an art as a science, and that the imprecision of *judgment* is indeed the best we can do. We need what Aristotle called *phronesis*, what Dewey called intelligence, and not just the precision of *techné*. By either judgment it is far removed from technical rationality and far closer to the requirements of education worthy of the name. With this emphasis on judgment, he reminds us that the relationship between theory and practice always depends on not only seeing what practical implications follow from which theoretical commitments, but also exercising good judgment in the first place regarding what theoretical commitments are justified, and then exercising judgment about how close one's practice brings one to one's goals.

*Phronesis* is, for Aristotle, the overarching requirement for the practice of the virtues. Suzanne Rice, Arlene L. Barry, and Molly McDuffie-Dipman explore ways in which first-rate children's literature can help children explore the importance of some specific intellectual virtues while seeing both what these virtues look like and the difference that they can make in forming a life well lived. What Rice, Barry, and McDuffie-Dipman remind us is that the American view of virtue, primarily focused on sexual morality or moral virtue more generally, is not the whole of what we mean, or ought to mean, by virtue; intellectual virtues are also necessary if we are to fashion good lives. Making good judgments, in short, requires the exercise of intellect, and intellect is what we just might want to consider developing in schools. By reading young people's literature in a certain kind of way, teachers can draw students' attention to the way individuals live wisely (or not) and what one can do to develop the intellectual virtues.

And to help us consider the implications for practice of one educational theory, Conner K. Warner explores what it might mean for education to take seriously the elements of Paolo Freire's educational thought, specifically in America today. While it is doubtless true that oppression of the poor looks different in twenty-first century America than it did in twentieth century Brazil, Warner's thesis is that the elements of Freirean pedagogy being what they are, and oppression being what it is, we can fruitfully use his applied theory to the task of liberatory education here as well. There is certainly risk in teaching in opposition to what Freire referred to as the banking model of education, which certainly describes the system we have long had in the US, and even more so under the Common Core regime with schools racing to the "top." Recognizing that,

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it is at least worth reminding teachers that there are alternatives, even if they are neither comfortable nor safe.

To round out this issue, Joseph Watras, in his review of Richard Quantz's *Rituals and Student Identity in Education*, points to yet another way that intellect and judgment are essential elements of a good life and why we must find ways to include them in schooling, if we want schooling to be educational. Rituals themselves may not be at root intellectual exercises, but intelligent study of them, particularly of peer-initiated and valued rituals, may allow thoughtful and reflective teachers to make schooling educational.

Finally, a personal note of apology to the readers of this journal and the authors in this issue. It is late. It is very late. My fiancée has been very ill, and I have been juggling work and care-taking, to the detriment of much else. I am, in fact, completing this while sitting with her in the ICU. To the authors whose work I have delayed, to the readers who have waited for the journal, and to Alan H. Jones, the publisher who has been extremely kind and patient, my apologies and thanks for your understanding.

Go hug someone you love.