

# Matters of Perception

Thomas Lucey

School of Teaching and Learning-5330, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790, USA; [tlucey@ilstu.edu](mailto:tlucey@ilstu.edu)

This Issue in *Education Sciences* publishes select responses to a call for papers concerning groundings for knowledge that inform education. Epistemological foundations provide the basis for social judgements that guide education policy, curriculum, and instruction. Yet, as history and current events tell us, very often, these foundations derive from those who desire to control social thinking, measure select knowledge, or silence alternative views [1–3].

While one may attribute the scarcity of responses to this call to many causes, the outcome may very well relate to a state of complacency towards the scientific basis for generally accepted knowledge. It may also represent an expression of resistance to self-examination and a subtle acknowledgement of the imperfect nature of the human condition.

Prompting the academic community to acknowledge its imperfections represents a difficult matter. In a professional environment that emphasizes a disposition of positive thinking and development of confidence, reflecting on intellectual biases may seem senseless or nonsensical. Afterall, academics have been trained to be experts in their specialized fields of knowledge. To acknowledge inherent flaws and imperfections would be like admitting having not considered all the informing literature, to depending on a misguided theory, or to have an irrelevant research question and nonsensical data.

The author of the Book of Ecclesiastes observes that “All is meaningless” (Ecclesiastes 1:2, New International Version). One may consider that the basis for knowledge that informs education represents a process of perception. The way that society interprets the world that we share represents an extension of the narcissism that shapes individual and collective senses of importance.

The two articles published from this call describe alternative lenses through which to interpret the world of education and address the patterns of vanity that shape it. In these contributions, one observes perspectives that may challenge pervasive injustices in education. They offer potential to realize paths towards reconsidering the groundings for social interpretation that preserve the social status of the privileged elite who guide policy and direct the curriculum to fit their social agendas.

The narratives by which one describes society inform about their view and relationship to society. In her book “A Short History of Myth”, Karen Armstrong [4] observed that the myths of the ancient world served as metaphors to teach the culture about the dangers of personal vices and risks of social transgressions. The attribution of these stories to a poor understanding of science and the material world in early classrooms distorts the sophistication of these cultures and the lessons that they can teach about social relationships. Such misinterpretations of these mythological stories provide a flawed “telos” conception of civilization that construes society as developing with time. An alternative perspective would be to present the essence of human psychology as unchanging with time, except for developing more efficient technology for purposes of good and evil [5].

In considering the foundations for knowledge that inform education, one may wrestle with the truths and falsehoods constructed to justify the power structures that shape society. To what extent do these groundings reinforce the materialist principles that inform the control and manipulation of resources by the privileged? To what extent may these groundings promote spiritual relationships that yield compassionate environments for the mutual appreciation for societal participants?



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Thus, when considering the bias and selectivity of facts employed in teaching and learning, one may consider that the grounding for knowledge that informs education rests upon a spiritual foundation. The extent to which education science interprets society and its contexts through lenses of selflessness versus selfishness, through control versus sacrifice, and through hate versus love ultimately determines the patterns of knowledge employed to guide future generations. Through processes rooted in principles of humility and prudence, we may open ourselves to alternative groundings for interpreting this world that humanity shares.

Through these two papers, the reader is invited to consider the 21st century's scientific dependency as representing a spiritual debacle; that the pursuit of standards designed to preserve the status quo detracts from voices that bring valid alternative patterns of understanding; that its failure lays in the discouragement of principles that promote human thinking grounded in principles of humility. To consider the knowledge that informs education is to acknowledge the degree to which the culture of privilege seeks to enshroud the future in a dark cloud of narcissism and vanity.

These papers challenge the world of education science to acknowledge its imperfect knowledge and develop the courage to admit the validity of findings that extend beyond the range of standard normal distributions. It is from the outliers and outcasts that new directions for understanding the world originate. It is from these sources that truth, hope, and love are to be found. It is time that we listen to them.

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