

Conference

Good Judgment, Critical Thinking & Epistemic Virtues in Academic Education



April 3 - 4 2019

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Room HG-16A00

Conference booklet

Index

Program	5
Keynote speakers	
Patricia King	6
Ian Kidd	7
David Reeve	8
Michel Croce	9
Maria Silvia Vaccarezza	11
Wayne Riggs	13
Richard Smith	14
Workshop speakers	
Floor Rombout	16
Robert van Boeschoten	18
Hedwig van Rossum	21
Ido Gideon	23
Katie Crabtree	26
Matthew Warren	28
Rik Peels	30
Addresses	
Conference venue	32
Boat trip & dinner location	32
Sponsors	34
Contact details organizing committee	35

Program

April 3	
08:30 – 09:00	Coffee
09:00 – 09:15	Opening of the Conference: René van Woudenberg
09:15 – 10:15	Keynote: Patricia King (chair René van Woudenberg)
10:15 – 10:35	Break
10:35 – 11:45	Presentations (chair Chris Ranalli)
	Floor Rombout - Robert van Boeschoten
11:45 – 12:45	Keynote: Ian Kidd (chair Michel Croce)
12:45 – 13:45	Lunch
13:45 – 14:45	Keynote: David Reeve (chair Marije Martijn)
14:45 – 15:55	Presentations (chair Rik Peels)
	Hedwig van Rossum - Ido Gideon
15:55 – 16:15	Break
16:15 – 17:15	Keynote: Michel Croce (chair Wayne D. Riggs)
18:15 – 20:30	Canal tour incl. dinner

April 4	
09:00 – 10:00	Keynote: Maria Silvia Vaccarezza (chair Ian Kidd)
10:00 – 11:45	Presentations (chair René van Woudenberg)
	Katie Crabtree - Matthew Warren - Rik Peels
11:45 – 12:00	Break
12:00 – 13:00	Keynote: Wayne D. Riggs (chair Rik Peels)
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:00	Keynote: Richard Smith (talk read by René van Woudenberg)
15:00 – 16:30	Closing words, Drinks and Good bye

Keynote speakers

Dr. Patricia King

University of Michigan

Understanding and Enacting the University's Epistemic Responsibilities

This presentation will address three key aspects related to the University's epistemic responsibilities: how desired educational outcomes reflect these responsibilities, psychological processes that are related to students' changing epistemic assumptions, and how the social identities of students and educators can affect our understanding of these issues. By addressing these aspects, I seek to illuminate the central role epistemic assumptions play in university life and the complexity of enacting effective epistemic practices that are affected by our individual and collective social identities.

Dr. Ian Kidd

University of Nottingham

Epistemically Corrupting Education

Educational systems are epistemically corrupting when they tend to facilitate the development and exercise of epistemic vices - the negative epistemic character traits that contrast with the epistemic virtues about which one hears so much these days. But since there are many vices of the mind there is much disagreement about which ones ought to invite the concern of educators. I argue that worries about epistemic corruption in education always ultimately turn on disputes about the deep aims and nature of education. Character traits classed as vicious on one conception may emerge as virtuous on another - so talk about virtues and vices of the mind can only really usefully proceed when we connect them to deep conceptions of education.

Dr. C.D.C. (David) Reeve

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Aristotle on the Aims of Education

Education for Aristotle isn't a matter of putting information and skills into people so that they can be productive members of a consumerist society by getting well-paying jobs. Instead, the aim is to produce people with the sorts of characters that enable them to live happy and fulfilling lives—people of practical wisdom, well-educated people, as he calls them. Who are these people, and what lessons, if any, do they have to teach us today?

Dr. Michel Croce

University of Edinburgh

Critical Thinking and Intellectual Virtues as Aims of Education: Is There A Real Divide?

A central question in the epistemology of education concerns what the aims of education are. Two are the main competing views in this debate: according to several prominent scholars, education should aim at providing novices with critical thinking (e.g. Scheffler 1989; Siegel 2017), while others contend that education should aim at fostering the development of intellectual virtues in the students (e.g. Baehr 2013; Battaly 2016). The goal of this talk is to argue in favor of an irenic approach to the aims of education, namely one that reconciles the main tenets of the rival views. In particular, I shall focus on two challenges recently raised against virtue epistemologists (see Carter, Kotzee, and Siegel forthcoming), and argue that they fail to provide conclusive reasons for dismissing the intellectual virtue approach to education.

The first is a pedagogical challenge, according to which the intellectual virtue approach lacks an effective pedagogy to help students acquire and

develop intellectual virtues, whereas the critical thinking approach has the necessary resources to help students develop critical thinking skills. In response to this challenge, I shall argue that (i) pedagogical worries with the intellectual virtue approach may not suffice to undermine the theoretical motivations underlying this approach, and (ii) a sensible educational perspective should aim at promoting both aims, as they are fundamental at different levels and mutually enforcing rather than mutually exclusive.

Endorsing a conciliatory account commits one to face a further challenge: according to Carter, Kotzee, and Siegel, incorporating critical thinking skills into an intellectual virtue approach comes at a high cost, in that it involves admitting that virtue (a) is not relative to a person/situation, and (b) can be acquired via direct instruction. I shall resist this argument by showing that neither (a) nor (b) follows from a conciliatory approach.

Dr. Maria Silvia Vaccarezza

University of Genova

Between unselfing and self-esteem. Intellectual generosity as the master educational virtue

In this talk, I will shed light on a rather neglected intellectual virtue, i.e., intellectual generosity. In particular, I will contend that intellectual generosity is the master intellectual virtue of an educator at any stage of the educational process, since it largely depends on the intellectual generosity of a teacher that a learner flourishes and improves her overall epistemic profile. After offering an account of intellectual generosity, I will spell out its preconditions. I will claim, in particular, that intellectual generosity depends on two main set of higher-level virtues: the care-related and the (self-)esteem-related. While the first set implies an ability to overcome one's selfish drives and motivations – what Iris Murdoch would have called 'unselfing' (cf. Murdoch 1997) – in order to get in touch with the reality of someone else, and to focus on their epistemic good (Dalmiya 2002), intellectual

generosity requires also a second, esteem-related, set of virtues, such as proper pride, humility, modesty, and concern for esteem (cf. Tanesini 2018).

The proposed analysis will help me focus on the particular case of educational practices within the academia. I will claim that this is a particularly fertile field where exemplarist character education has an advantage over rival approaches. Therefore, I will apply my exemplarist model to the case of exemplars of intellectual generosity in the academia, so as to highlight the contexts, duties, benefits and risks involved.

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Wayne D. Riggs

University of Oklahoma

Virtue and the Aims of Education

In the first part of this talk I will argue for the importance of institutions of higher education to directly aim to instill epistemic humility and open-mindedness in their students. This follows, I think, from the epistemic mission of the university (though universities may have other missions as well). Institutions of higher education used to be able to tout their role in promoting the enlightenment values of the pursuit of eternal or at least objective truths by the pure individual application of reason and observation. Our current best theories in the hard sciences, social sciences, and humanities all militate against the attainability of such a goal. I will humbly suggest an account of successor epistemic goals for present-day universities that point in the direction indicated. In the second part of this talk I will consider the situation from a more administrative point of view and consider what concrete steps universities and academic professionals could take to better achieve those goals.

Dr. Richard Smith

Durham University

Recalling judgement to educational thought

Judgement is becoming marginalised in education as the application of norms and criteria – for example in the assessment of students’ work, or of academics’ research – becomes more widespread. Political tendencies such as the growth of neoliberalism have fostered the idea that between hard facts and personal choice there is no space for judgement or deliberation. The related demands for transparency and accountability feed the culture of micromanagement and are fed by it in turn; the exercise of judgement comes to seem both élitist and an attempt to avoid the proper channels of democratic control. In the field of educational research Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) and the search for ‘what works’ similarly reduce or altogether eliminate the use of interpretation, discretion and judgement. In this paper I argue for the return of judgment on the grounds that its moral dimension is ineliminable, while its requirement for flexibility and attentiveness to the particulars of individual cases is true to our ordinary experience of

the world. I suggest that we pay more attention to the vices that thwart good judgement: of these Aristotle's alazony, particularly in the form that now has academics 'bigging up' their research in the name of 'impact', needs to be identified and contemned.

Presentations

Floor Rombout

University of Amsterdam (UvA)

Teaching strategies for value-loaded critical thinking in inquiry dialogues

An important aim of education is that students learn to think critically about societal and moral issues. A recent conception of critical thinking emphasizes the normative dimension of critical thinking: value-loaded critical thinking. Value-loaded critical thinking is defined as logically consistent and self-reflective reasoning focused on deciding what the right thing is to believe or do. Previous research into (value-loaded) critical thinking and moral education indicates that inquiry dialogues are a fruitful way to teach this, especially when facilitated by skilled teachers. The aim of this exploratory study is to identify teaching strategies that promote value-loaded critical thinking in inquiry dialogues. We analysed 15 inquiry dialogues given by 5 different teachers in their 10th grade pre-university track philosophy classes. First, we coded all value-loaded contributions in the dialogues, to select the

dialogues in which moral values were discussed for further analysis. Then, we analysed the teaching strategies that were used to promote value-loaded critical thinking, via an inductive process of content-analysis, in which we went through multiple cycles of identifying strategies and verifying and refining our list of strategies. This resulted in four clusters of teaching strategies: strategies 1) to explicitly address values, 2) to apply values to concrete cases, 3) to promote reasoning about values, and 4) to promote critical thinking in general. For each cluster we describe a variety of teaching strategies, illustrated with examples from the observed lessons. With this, we provide a detailed insight into various ways in which teachers can promote value-loaded critical thinking in inquiry dialogues. Although this study was done in secondary education, the identified teaching strategies could be applied in academic education as well.

Robert van Boeschoten & Martien Schreurs

University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht

Towards a new interpretation of Bildung

This paper addresses issues around a renewed interest in Bildung in higher education. By “Bildung” we mean the dynamic inner relationship between personal development and the history of the world (Schreurs, 2017). According to Bildung Humanism, it is the primary task of higher education to promote such a personal, historically and culturally embedded development.

In the Netherlands, the term “Bildung” is at stake in the debate about the aims of education. The controversy is concentrated on the following question: should education prepare students for the labour market or is the aim of education to facilitate the personal development of students?

Although the concept of Bildung goes back to the eighteenth century, we show how it is helpful to develop educational practices that transcend the prevalence of market and economic imperatives in higher education. Of course, the 21st century is

fundamentally golden different from the golden age of Bildung. Two important indications are that firstly Bildung nowadays is not only realized through books, but also through informal learning environments, such as social media. Secondly, currently there is not one culture or society (Bildungsbürgertum) that we should take into consideration, but many.

Therefore, we will provide a new interpretation of the concept of Bildung that gives credit to new technological developments, such as the digital revolution in a diverse global society. To that end we will link the concept of Bildung to (1) the concept of individuation (Simondon, 2013 and Stiegler, 2010) and to (2) the concept of posthumanism (Taylor, 2016). We will demonstrate that there is a huge learning potential in the digital world and how the concept of Bildung may be helpful in conceptualizing that potential.

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Hedwig van Rossum

Free University Amsterdam (VU)

Valuing an academic attitude: let's play

Contemporary society is global, complex, and perpetually changing due to technological innovations. Dubbed 'risk society', uncertainty takes center stage, causing a shift from traditional values to hyper-individualism, economic rationality, and risk management. To maintain credibility and at the same time countering societal pressures that are adverse to its academic core, the university needs to adjust its values, curricula and pedagogy. In recent years, the university has done so by an emphasis on student employability and skills training but at the cost of offering students a broad education. I argue that it is not primarily training skills or teaching knowledge that the university should focus on. Rather, it is the development of an attitude: the mindset of play and playfulness. Although perhaps contra intuitive on first sight, theories on play and playfulness call attention to the innate seriousness of these concepts, which can be illustrated by their effects. Play and playfulness contribute to Bildung and have the ability to foster a sense of community and responsibility. It also stimulates curiosity,

understanding, critical reflection, imagination, and creativity. Furthermore, a playful attitude helps lighten the burden of uncertainty that comes from having to choose between the many options of choice made possible by technology, while every choice may have unforeseen consequences. I maintain that professional legal academics need these characteristics to thrive in the complex and uncertain society of the 21st century. Even more so, this holds true for all academics. Therefore, the university is required to value and promote this playful attitude and incorporate it within its culture, curricula and classrooms. The paper will support this argument by defining play and playfulness as an academic attitude, scrutinizing its effects, and exploring ways to incorporate this mindset in the university.

Ido Gideon

Ben-Gurion University

What we don't know about teaching- the virtues of pedagogic uncertainty

It is a staple of educational writing that teachers face constant uncertainty in everyday practice. Practice based teacher development seeks to mine the uncertainties of teaching to foster professional learning (Cochran Smith & Lytle, 2001, Ball & Cohen, 1999). However, in an educational culture growingly concerned with accountability and performativity, expressions of uncertainty are referred to negatively as demonstrating "low efficacy" (Helsing, 2007, p. 36). Our analysis of teacher discourse in an actual practice-based teacher development program emphasizes the negative connotations teachers face when expressing uncertainty: when teachers discuss their practice, expressions of uncertainty are much rarer than the literature seems to suggest. This paper will suggest that a fostering a professional commitment to the "quieter epistemic virtues" such as modesty, self-deprecation and irony (Smith, 2016, p. 275), is a condition for teacher inquiry into educational practice.

Different kinds of practical uncertainties vary in their potential for meaningful new professional knowledge and require different "modes of intellectual engagement" (Kidd, 2016, p. 400) to foster the necessary epistemic capacities, or virtues. The paper analyses findings from our study of a practice-based teacher development program, to offer a typology of the uncertainties of teaching. This typology begins with a preliminary distinction between uncertainties that concern pedagogic questions, and kinds of uncertainty that are not pedagogical (for example, uncertainty concerning organizational reform). Different kinds of pedagogic uncertainty will be defined as uncertainty concerning teachers' work in classrooms and with students, and three distinct kinds will be identified: epistemic uncertainty concerning questions of knowledge (what do my students know? What have they learned?), conceptual uncertainty concerning the aims and methods of teaching (how am I teaching? What should teachers know about teaching?), and ethical uncertainty (what is my responsibility toward my students?). Using both empirical discourse analysis and philosophical inquiry, this paper will present a way for these pedagogic uncertainties to serve as cornerstones in developing teachers' understanding of their work.

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Katie Crabtree

Leeds Trinity University

The Inarticulable Impetus to Judge: The Pedagogical Ramifications of Lyotard's Differend

The work of Jean-François Lyotard on the differend and the sublime points toward the impossible necessity of making judgements without recourse to universal rules between two conflicting parties. Largely, Lyotard's politicization of Kantian reflective judgement has been used in educational thought to call for continued reinterpretation of the canon or to utilize aesthetic education to sensitize students to differends through curricular or pedagogical means. This, however, ignores Lyotard's later work on affect. In "The Affect-Phrase" Lyotard¹ demonstrates the differend between feeling and deliberation. Properly understood, affects are not available to the subject to be articulated; they are 'covered' in their very expression. This destabilizes such educational conclusions that Lyotard's sublime feeling can be produced through a programmatic curriculum or pedagogy. Further, such educational thought also misses the locus of prescription at play in the differend. Ethical obligation, in the paradox of Lyotard's differend, comes from occurrences

themselves. This absolute ethical duty occurs without communicability, yet we are still obligated to try to do justice to it. What bearing does this have on a university or what we might do in such a place? This requires a reorientation of pedagogy. Rather than conceiving an educational program to better engineer students' judgement, we must then see events, material and immaterial, and the ineffable affect in relation to them as inherently pedagogical. Studying becomes the multitude of expressions of judgement in relation to events.

Matthew Warren

Durham University

The Inarticulable Impetus to Judge: The Pedagogical Ramifications of Lyotard's Differend

The establishment and critique of truth is the foundation of our general conception of the objectives academic research. However, whilst the meaning and nature of that is easily seen in most disciplines, it is not so easily established in disciplines which focus on creation, an obscurity which has caused much recent debate. Here, I look at the understanding composers situated in academia have of their practice and what categories they use to evaluate it, finding that truth is a central value here, but that it is a self-truth or honesty rather than an objective truth.

In my study of composers in academia in England, the rationale of a good work being a faithful presentation of the self is a prevalent current of evaluation. I consider the perspectives put forward during interviews conducted with composers, looking at how conceptions of truth are related to, separated from and reconciled with the academic research structures within and for which the

artworks are made. The centrality of honesty as a category of evaluation then leads to questions over judgements of artistic research not given by the creator them-self and how valid such judgements might be.

Rik Peels

Free University Amsterdam (VU)

Educating for Ignorance

It is widely thought that education should aim at positive epistemic standings, like knowledge, insight, and understanding. In this paper, we argue that, surprisingly, in pursuit of this aim, it is sometimes necessary to also cultivate ignorance. We examine several types of case. First, in various circumstances educators should present students with defeaters for their knowledge, so that they come to lack knowledge, at least temporarily. Second, there is the phenomenon of ‘scaffolding’ in education, which we note might sometimes involve the educator quite properly ensuring that the student is ignorant of certain kinds of information. Third, if ignorance is lack of true belief, as a number of commentators have claimed, then in those cases in which students believe something truly without knowing it and teachers show that they lack knowledge, students may abandon that belief and thus become ignorant. In examining the role of ignorance in education, we explore exactly which kinds of ignorance are valuable in teaching situations and draw attention to important epistemic differences between ignorance on different levels.

Addresses

Conference Venue

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Room HG16A00

De Boelelaan 1105

1081 HV Amsterdam

Boat trip & Indonesian buffet

April 3, 6.15 – 8.30 PM

Departure and drop-off location:

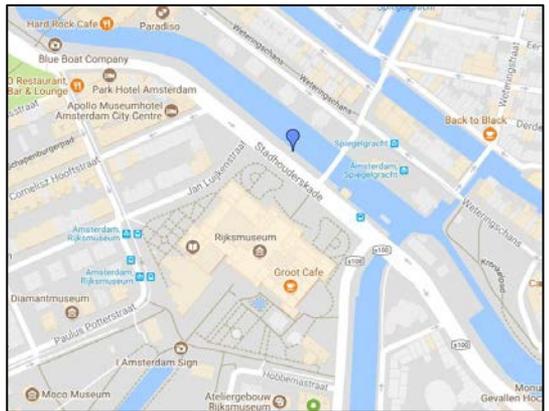
Rijksmuseum (**Stadhouderskade 520, Amsterdam**).

Route description:

- Take tram 5 from Amsterdam, De Boelelaan/VU to Van Hallstraat.
- Get out at: Rijksmuseum.
- Walk to Stadhouderskade 520.

Please make sure to be at the designated point at *no later than 6.45 PM*.

Route to and departure point boat trip & dinner April 3, 6.15 PM



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