

científicas, la obra se plantea como el esfuerzo titánico de abrir los vasos comunicantes entre los diferentes prismas discursivos sobre lo humano; sin embargo, ello no se hace desde una postura ascética y neutral, sino desde un marcado humanismo y desde una tesis fuerte de la singularidad de lo humano que no olvida, empero, las vinculaciones biológicas del origen del ser humano, si bien no reduce éste a aquéllas. En su planteamiento holístico, el ejercicio ensayado por el autor es especialmente loable por su capacidad sintética, pues en apenas doscientas páginas logra una ilación y una comprensión multidisciplinar que patentiza una serie de problemas de larguísimo recorrido antropológico a los que logra dar una respuesta satisfactoria, planteando una oportunidad excelente en el estado de la cuestión para proseguir alguna de las líneas aquí abiertas, siempre sosteniéndose en el pilar de esta subjetividad objetivadora y hermenéutica en cuya conservación temática aguarda la propia conservación de la dignidad humana.

Roberto Ballester Corres. Universidad de Zaragoza
ballestercorresroberto@gmail.com

SIEGEL, HARVEY

Education's Epistemology: Rationality, Diversity, and Critical Thinking, Oxford University Press, New York, 2017, 304 pp.

Education's Epistemology collects seventeen papers by Harvey Siegel published between 1999 and 2017. While a number of topics are treated, Siegel especially develops and defends two main ideas.

The first is his “reasons conception” of critical thinking. According to this conception, to be a critical thinker involves two components. First, one must be able to engage in “reason assessment”. That is, one must be able to “construct and properly evaluate the various reasons which have been or can be offered in support or criticism of candidate beliefs, judgments, and actions”. Second, one must have a “critical spirit”. One has a critical spirit if they have the disposition to engage in reason assessment as well as “the disposi-

tion... to be guided by reasons so evaluated, that is, actually to believe, judge, and act in accordance with the results of such reasoned evaluations.” (p. 4)

The second idea that Siegel defends is that critical thinking is the preeminent educational ideal, so that education *should* be directed towards making students critical thinkers. As such, education should be directed not only to developing skills in gathering and analyzing the relevant evidence and reasons for belief and action, but it also should be directed into inculcating certain thought dispositions, most importantly the dispositions that make up the critical spirit.

The seventeen papers are divided into four sections. The first section consists in the papers “Cultivating Reason”, “Education as Initiation into the Space of Reasons”, and “Neither Humean nor (Fully) Kantian Be”. These papers serve as an introduction to Siegel’s reasons conception of critical thinking and his claim that critical thinking is the preeminent educational ideal. The second section consists of the papers “What (Good) are Thinking Dispositions?”, “‘You Take the Wheel, I’m Tired of Driving; Jesus, Show Me the Way’: Doctrines, Indoctrination, and the Suppression of Critical Dispositions,” “The Role of Reasons in Moral Education”, “Critical Thinking and the Intellectual Virtues”, “Open-mindedness, Critical Thinking, and Indoctrination”. These papers relate Siegel’s reasons conception of critical thinking to other intellectual virtues, and defend the idea that critical thinking, as opposed to intellectual virtues like open-mindedness, should be the preeminent educational ideal. The papers “Is ‘Education’ a Thick Epistemic Concept?”, “Truth, Thinking, Testimony, and Trust: Alvin Goldman on Epistemology and Education,” “Rationality and Judgment” and “Epistemology in Excess? A Response to a Heideggerian Reconceptualizing of Critical Thinking” make up the third section. In these papers, Siegel argues for the relevance of epistemology to philosophy of education and vice-versa, and clarifies his understanding of rationality implicit in his reasons conception of critical thinking. The final section consists in the papers, “Multiculturalism and the Possibility of Transcultural Educational and Philosophical Ideals”, “Argument Quality and Cultural Difference”, “Multiculturalism and Rationality”, “Epistemological Diversity and

Educational Research: Much Ado about Nothing Much?”, and “How Should We Educate Students Whose Cultures Frown upon Rational Disputation? Cultural Difference and the Role of Reason in Multicultural Democratic Education.” In this section Siegel argues that a democratic multicultural society is best served by rejecting relativism and accepting the transcultural legitimacy of certain ideals, including the ideal of critical thinking.

The volume has a number of strengths. First, the papers as a whole show the fruitful ways philosophy of education and epistemology can interact with each other. Siegel’s work makes it clear that debates in traditional analytic epistemology bear on questions in the philosophy of education. At the same time, read together, the collection of papers makes a strong case for Siegel’s claim “that specific epistemological issues... are helpfully viewed in the context of education, such that thinking about education promises substantial benefit for the pursuit of standard epistemological questions.” (p. 123) Second, Siegel’s prose throughout is admirable. The papers are all clearly written and move at a brisk pace. Third, the collected papers can serve as a fine introduction to Siegel’s philosophy of education that he has developed over the past thirty years, which can in turn serve as an introduction to the philosophy of education at large.

That the volume is a collection of papers presents some difficulties. Many of the papers are either responses to published criticisms or contributions to *Festschriften*. As a result there is not a linear exposition of ideas in the book. This reviewer sometimes wished that Siegel would set aside questions raised by his interlocutors to address others. Sometimes there are repetitions of material; oftentimes a number of interesting questions are raised, but not answered due to space considerations. This is to be expected given the nature of the book, but it would be nice to see Siegel address the following two questions.

The first question has to do with how internalist Siegel’s reasons conception of critical thinking is. For example, could someone falsely believe that *p*, but properly evaluate the reasons they could have for believing *p* and believe in accordance with that evaluation? It is natural to answer: yes, they could have properly evaluated the reasons they have for belief, since, from the perspective they occu-

pied at the time, the most reasonable thing to do was believe that p. This seems to be the side Siegel takes. But it is also natural to answer that no, they could not have properly evaluated the reasons they have for belief. Misleading evidence (as such) cannot give us good reasons to believe that something is the case. But the individual in question has evaluated the misleading evidence that p to give them good reason to believe p. So they have made a mistake in their reason assessment. Depending on how one answers this question, their answer to the questions what it is to be a critical thinker, and what it takes to make someone into a critical thinker will differ greatly.

The second question has to do with the idea that critical thinking is an educational ideal. Experience shows us that one might be able and disposed to think quite critically about e.g. the proper interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, but not about e.g. the current political questions of the day. Indeed, given human limitations, it seems impossible that anyone has the ability to properly construct and evaluate reasons for belief and action regarding every possible domain of thought, let alone have the concomitant disposition to exercise this ability and to believe and act according to one's judgments. On the one hand, the ability to assess reasons will often go beyond our capacities; on the other hand, there will be many domains in which we won't take careful critical thinking to be worth our while. Is being a universal critical thinker necessary for being a critical thinker full stop? If it is not, are critical thinkers about Kant interpretation but not about e.g. their political engagements critical thinkers full stop? If it is, should we worry about the seeming impossibility of being a critical thinker? Should we instead think of the educational ideal as domain specific critical thinking? In this case, which domains should we be interested in inculcating critical thinking?

This being said, Siegel's *Education's Epistemology* will be a rewarding read for philosophers of education and epistemologists wanting to learn more about the philosophy of education.

Joe Milburn. Universidad de Navarra
jmilburn@unav.es