

Editorial: Open Issue

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For this eighth volume of *Confero* we invited contributions that deal with issues related to the broad scope of the journal, i.e. education and social critique. In this open issue we present three interdisciplinary essays, all with a framework of social critique and with a contribution to *Confero's* encouragement of essayistic writing. Despite the variety when it comes to topic, theory, and methodology all of the essays share *Confero's* areas of interest, that is discussions on education of philosophical and political nature.

Confero has over the years profiled itself as an interdisciplinary journal with papers presenting a wide range of topics. This issue is no exception. Here, we present papers dealing with subjects such as the connection between Trump's election rhetoric and increased bullying in U.S. schools, the creation of spaces for development within agonistic theory as well as a critical reading of the works of Ayn Rand. Our anticipation with the present issue is to emphasize the interdisciplinary capacity of educational science, while at the same time presenting a non-traditional form of academic writing, essayistic writing. We hope that this encourages new lines of thought and inspires further discussions and reflections on the topics presented.

In the essay *Building Walls: Trump Election Rhetoric, Bullying and Harassment in US Schools*, Paul Horton highlights links between social practices of bullying and harassment in U.S. schools and the rhetoric of Donald Trump during the presidential election in 2016.

The study conducted is based on a plethora of news articles about U.S. schools along with communicative events from Trump during the election. Using a Critical Discourse Analytical approach, Horton applies Bandura's social learning theory to understand how bullying behaviour is influenced by role models on the societal level and Bronfenbrenner's model to understand bullying as a social-ecological phenomenon. In the light of different systems, e.g. macrosystem and exosystem (i.e. the massmedia), Horton places emphasis on inherent complexities when empirically examining discursive influences regarding the phenomenon of bullying. Moreover, Horton discusses how Trump's election rhetoric modelled and influenced certain social practices in schools, filtered through the media and e.g. parents and teachers. For example how Trump's rhetoric on building a wall influenced daily social practices in U.S. schools. Thus, Horton highlights the importance of scrutinizing discourses at different levels, when examining destructive social practices of harassment and bullying in schools.

In the second essay *Why Agonists Should Stop Discussing with Deliberative Theorists* Ásgeir Tryggvason call for agonists to open up a space for agonistic theory in educational research by ending what is described as a standstill with deliberative theorists. With the radical call to stop discussing with deliberative theorists, Tryggvason argues that 'the richness and diversity' of the agonistic theoretical tradition would be a suitable basis for agonists to engage in theory development within educational research, instead of engaging in the standstill with deliberative theorists portrayed by Tryggvason. By exploring and elaborating how agonistic theory has conceptualized the 'other', Tryggvason initiates the within-agonistic discussion while illustrating the ontological differences that arise in the ongoing discussion on emotions and identity in democratic education between deliberative and agonistic theorists.

In the third essay *'As If He Had Come into the World Like Minerva': Ayn Rand's (Anti)Educational Philosophy* Anouk Zuurmond reads Rand's two most well-known fictional works, *The Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), through an educational lens. They are first read as concretizations of Rand's philosophy to gauge what they can tell us about Rand's Objectivist views on education.

Through a close read of two scenes from these works “against the grain” Zuurmond argues that these scenes reveal an anti-educational stance, which is problematic for the consistency of Rand’s philosophy of Objectivism. Zuurmond argues that Rand presents characters who are in educational settings but already fully formed, and that her uninterest in depicting the protagonists’ gradual character formation reveals how the Objectivist educational philosophy provides a very narrow understanding of what education involves. By arguing that this flaw can be traced in current discourses on learning and education, and that Rand’s narratives foreshadow the rise of an instrumental discourse on education, Zuurmond’s essay contributes not only to a philosophical debate on Rand’s ideas but also to a more general debate on neoliberal ideology and marketization of education.

All the contributions in *Confero’s* eighth volume emphasize, with a critical gaze, the plethora of discourses spurred by ideology within a broader educational context. Indeed, tensions and influences between different arenas and issues are addressed. Thus, these contributions create a venue for further discussion on how ideals and practices in different institutional settings are intertwined with political stances and ideas. We see this issue as a contribution to the central and never-ending discussions that constitute the educational field and aspire to continue these discussions in forthcoming issues; concurrently, encouraging essayistic writing.