

Guest Editor's Notes

In this special issue centered on the theme of Philosophical Inquiry in the Learning and Teaching of Mathematics, our contributing authors – philosophers of education and mathematics education researchers – explore the role of philosophical dialogue and inquiry and its potential for transforming the math classroom. To start us off, Stefano Oliverio traces the deep, historically grounded solidarity between math and philosophy, and calls for re-thinking and (re-) harmonizing this relationship in the mathematics classroom. Contrary to the ancient Platonic dictum that math is a “doorway” to philosophy, he suggests the opposite: that philosophical discussion in math classes may lead to an enriched engagement with mathematical practice itself. Such an engagement is ultimately ethical, as it allows, in his words, individuals to follow their own inquiries and to find “the appropriate place” for math in their own lifeworlds. Then John Roemischer points out that mathematics is often taught as “non-problematic,” but that a discipline can never be such. The role of philosophical inquiry, he argues, is “not to discover something of which until now we have been ignorant,” but to see conceptual aspects and assumptions that have not been unearthed, and thus “to come to know it [mathematics] in a different and better way.” Taking this idea a step further, Nataly Chesky argues for the use of philosophical discourse as a reflective meta-language, which can be utilized to unearth the normative assumptions that inform the way we conceptualize mathematics. Then Daniel Fisherman discusses the potential of philosophical dialogue for transforming students’ negative attitudes towards mathematics, through forging personally meaningful connections between math and everyday experience.

Transitioning onto more concrete terrain, Lyn English offers the possibility of philosophical inquiry set within the context of mathematical modeling as used in real-world interdisciplinary situations. Here, philosophical inquiry becomes an “inbuilt component” of modeling, and functions concomitantly with the actual mathematical inquiry to challenge and evaluate students’ assumptions, and the thinking underlying a given math model, thus engaging students in a complex cycle of interpreting, questioning, and trying out multiple approaches to finding solutions. And Diana Meerwaldt, Rita Borromeo Ferri, and Patricia Nevers explore yet another aspect of philosophizing in the context of mathematical modeling—the use of specula-

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tive thinking in support of the development of modeling skills and dispositions. Then, by way of clearing the atmosphere for this kind of thinking, Marie France-Daniel advocates engaging students in philosophical dialogue to enhance autonomous and critical engagement with mathematical problems and a deeper understanding of concepts, as well as critical reflection on the biases and stereotypes that are often associated with mathematics. Finally, Dimitris Chassapis argues that philosophical dialogue should be an essential dimension of math teacher education. It has the potential, in his view, to act as a tool for the epistemological clarification of mathematical knowledge – which he considers essential for the preparation of competent teachers – as well as to provide a medium for ongoing critical practitioner reflection.

Our hope is that this special issue of *AT&PP* will inaugurate ever more robust conversations about the merits of philosophical dialogue in the mathematics classroom, and that it will act as a “doorway” leading to not just the reconstruction of classroom practice, but the reconstruction of popular beliefs and value judgments about mathematics as a field of knowledge.

Happy Reading,

Nadia Kennedy