

The ethico-politics of teacher identity: Re-animating teaching with three contemporary feminist philosophers

This presentation is written against the background of teaching and teacher education's dominance by discourses of standards and accountability in Europe and many other global policy contexts. Following Taubman, it is possible to argue that these discourses and their associated practices have had a reductive and narrowing effect, replacing conceptually and philosophically rich understandings of the nature of teachers' work and careers with a 'teaching by numbers' perspective that reduces teaching to following prescribed classroom routines and limits the purpose of teaching to the achievement of ever-better results in standardised assessments. Against this background, the presentation argues for a reconsideration and reinsertion of ethics and politics into conceptualizations of teachers and teaching, or what I am calling the ethico-politics of teacher identity, as a provocation to develop a re-animated vision of teaching for the twenty first century. In order to substantiate this vision, the presentation draws on three conceptualisations of ethico-politics from contemporary European feminist philosophers, including Simona Forti's critique of systemic evil and way it induces us to play the role of 'mundane demons', Adriana Cavarero's critique of rectitude, and Mari Ruti's ethics of defiant singularity. The presentation will share how each of these thinkers offers resources for constructing an ethico-politics of teacher professional identity capable of resisting the denigrations of neoliberal education policy and reinserting a non-cruelly-optimistic form of hope into teaching in the twenty first century.

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