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Siegel, Harvey (1997). *Rationality redeemed? Further dialogues on an educational ideal*. New York: Routledge.

Pp. xii & 234.

\$19.99 ISBN 0-415-91765-4.

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March 14, 2000

In the introduction to *Rationality Redeemed? Further Dialogues on an Educational Ideal*, Harvey Siegel describes his book as a defense of rationality – an “old-time Enlightenment metanarrative” – as an educational ideal. In this collection of essays, Siegel responds to philosophers of education who have taken on his prior works, *Relativism Refuted* (1987) and *Educating Reason* (1988), or who have written about issues associated with rationality, critical thinking, and epistemology. Some of the chapters in *Rationality Redeemed* are direct responses to papers or book chapters. In other essays, Siegel addresses criticisms of his position more generally, clarifying his arguments regarding critical thinking and the essential contributions that rationality and epistemology make to educational philosophy. Siegel describes his position in this way:

a wide-ranging set of theses concerning the role of reasons in human life, the importance of individual autonomy, the centrality of considerations of justice to the evaluation of actual and possible social arrangements and relationships, the value of knowledge, the importance of believing responsibly, i.e. in such a way that beliefs are informed by and based upon relevant evidence, and so on. (p. 2)

The issues Siegel raises in this passage are crucial issues in the philosophy of education. As the subtitle of the book suggests, there have been considerable debates about these issues across different approaches to philosophy. As a representation of the analytic tradition in the philosophy of education, this collection is an important and formidable contribution to dialogues about rationality and epistemology. Although Siegel breaks little new ground in his arguments for rationality as an educational ideal, his frank but considerate attention to critics makes this a valuable collection. Because of the current diversity in educational theory, there is a great need for philosophers to juxtapose diverse philosophical approaches to epistemology and rationality. Philosophers of education and other scholars may benefit from communication across disciplines and through theoretical traditions. This kind of dialogue may help give careful consideration to what it would mean to do things such as simultaneously rejecting metanarratives and embracing progressive political projects.

Much has been written about the political implications of critical, feminist, poststructural and postmodern theory, and Siegel's contribution here is to advance arguments against relativistic theorizing and for more conventional rationality. A reader may wish for more voice from Siegel's interlocutors, so that there may be richer dialogue, but in *Rationality Redeemed* Siegel defends himself in a spirit of engagement that invites further dialogue. In fact, since the book's publication, many philosophers of education have addressed salient issues in the book (e.g., Ellett & Ericson, 1999; Garrison, 1999), and so the dialogue has continued.

In this review, I first identify the main arguments that cut across the chapters so that I may locate the direction Siegel wishes to take the dialogue about rationality. After that, I summarize the individual chapters and show how they contribute to his arguments. I then offer some critiques of Siegel's arguments in the interest of formulating a broader dialogue about rationality and epistemology.

Defending rationality, epistemology, fallibilism, and critical thinking

As I see it, Siegel has four simultaneous subsidiary projects that support his main objective of defending his previously articulated theory of rationality. These overlap and support each other at various points in the collection. Going not so much in the order he presents them but in their perceived order of importance, the first is a defense of his prior arguments for the centrality of critical thinking, which Siegel argues is the educational cognate of rationality. He explains in further detail his view that a critical thinker possesses both skills and character traits. The latter he calls the critical spirit. His argument is that a person must not only be able to think critically, but the critical thinker must be willing or otherwise disposed to doing so. As he argues in the introduction, his argument has been that educators are morally obliged to foster critical thinking in their students, for failure to do so is to show disrespect for their integrity as persons.

The second project in the book is a discussion of universalism and particularity, in which Siegel takes on seemingly over-zealous postmodernists who would deny the existence and feasibility of metanarratives. Siegel argues that progressive political projects necessarily are grounded in ethical metanarratives of the Enlightenment, and that liberationists must reject relativism and other untenable postmodernist notions in order to justify their liberationist projects. For Siegel, Enlightenment ideals are remarkably pliable, particularly if they are used as ideals and are not seen as totalizing.

A third project, and closely related to the second, is consideration of the appropriate place for inclusion, or something like it, in a theory of rationality. Siegel argues for inclusion as an ethical rather than epistemological virtue. In doing so, he rejects claims by feminists and others as to the significance of inclusive discourses to the justification of knowledge. He argues that inclusion is at times meaningful but neither necessary nor always desirable. Implied here is maintaining a separation between ethics and epistemology.

As a fourth project, Siegel articulates a fallibilist, contextualist epistemology that uses truth as a criterion for knowledge claims but separates truth from justification. The epistemology underlying the view is the standard definition of knowledge as justified true belief. In Siegel's words, this is fallibilism: "while there is truth, there is no

certainty; we get at truth by way of warrant and justification, and these are always open for further consideration” (p. 23). Siegel acknowledges that certainty is problematic and that nearly all contemporary philosophers reject it as a criterion for knowledge justification. Retaining a notion of absolute truth, Siegel maintains a distinction between truth and justification and builds his argument for fallibilism and against relativism. For Siegel, truth remains absolute although unverifiable, and justification is forever open to defeat. The distinction between fallibilism and relativism is indeed highly significant for Siegel, and he uses it in several of the essays to defeat his critics.

Charting the defense

Establishing his fallibilist epistemology is one of Siegel’s projects in Chapter One, which opens the first of two parts of the book after a brief and general introduction. This first part, “Development and Defense,” brings together a series of essays grouped here to describe his view of rationality more thoroughly. The second part, titled “Dialogue,” is a series of responses Siegel has written in the past ten years, mostly in response to philosophers who have addressed Siegel specifically. Chapter One includes the definition of fallibilism excerpted above. It becomes important as Siegel wraps up his argument that critical thinking pedagogy is necessary to encourage students to be reasoned thinkers. In order to support critical thinking pedagogy, Siegel argues for the significance of epistemology. Educators must necessarily reject relativism, he argues, and he provides his fallibilist epistemology as supporting ground for the right application of reason.

In Chapter Two, Siegel splits critical thinking into its reason assessment and critical spirit components, arguing that both components are generalizable and boosting his argument that critical thinking itself is generalizable. In his discussion on critical thinking skills, he attends to the debates among advocates of critical thinking over whether skills and criteria of reason assessment are subject-specific or subject-neutral, and he debates on behalf of the latter. Siegel rejects the notion of subject-specific reason assessment criteria, noting the blurred distinctions between genres. While there may be different criteria for reason assessment, there are not different epistemologies operating. This becomes Siegel’s chief defense against alternative epistemologies or otherwise contextualist epistemological theories. Further, Siegel argues here that critical thinking needs an epistemology that does justice to reason and rationality, an argument that later informs his discussions about critical pedagogy and inclusion. This epistemology needs to distinguish between rational justification and truth, reject relativism, and acknowledge rational justification as a fallible indicator of truth. Rejecting relativism means rejecting the notion that rational justification is merely the rationalization of interests. For Siegel, the justification of beliefs should arise because of good reasons, supported by standards that are nonetheless fallible.

The epistemological contextualism implied in the language “good reasons” is actually a weaker form of contextualism, because Siegel wants to be able to identify good reasons across contexts. Although different groups may have meaningful standards for what count as good reasons within their individual contexts, a common epistemology allows (or is required for) not only the contextual justifications but also justification across contexts. He describes the situation in what follows:

we are entitled to regard these various criteria as appropriate criteria of reason assessment, and to appeal to them in order to establish or determine

the goodness of putative reasons, only because they are sanctioned by a common epistemology: a theoretical understanding of the nature of reasons, according to which putative criteria are recognizable as appropriate criteria of reason assessment. (p. 32)

In arguing for the critical spirit component, Siegel transposes the skills of a critical thinker into character traits. For Siegel, the critical spirit is “a complex of dispositions, attitudes, habits of mind, and character traits” (p. 35), and he specifies the particular traits that he has in mind in these four categories. Included are the following:

dispositions to seek reasons and evidence in making judgments...; respect for the importance of reasoned judgment and for truth...; a rejection of partiality, arbitrariness, special pleading, wishful thinking, and other obstacles to the proper exercise of reason assessment and reason judgment; ...habits of reason seeking and evaluating..., engaging in the fairminded and non-self-interested consideration of such reasons. (pp. 35-36)

In short, Siegel is describing someone who values reasons and desires to exercise good judgment. Tucked in between the other virtues is the notion of non-self-interest, and elsewhere Siegel describes this virtue as highly important for the critical spirit. Disinterested assessment of reasons is crucial, because it allows Siegel to defeat relativism. At bottom of certain other theorists' notions of reason assessment is a different thesis about knowledge, a Mannheimian notion that it is a product of interest, that it cannot be separated from the interests of those claiming it. Siegel denies this and furthermore argues that the traits that make up the critical spirit are generalizable across contexts.

Siegel appears to step in a different direction with Chapter Three, but by the end of the chapter, he has connected back to his argument for the critical spirit. He describes the use of the Fyodor Dostoyevsky novel *The Brothers Karamazov* to teach reasoning. He also uses his discussion of the novel as a springboard for defending a rationality theory of teaching, in which a teacher should foster critical thinking in her students. He thinks of the novel as a way for students to develop dispositions toward rationality, in short how to feel the putative force of reasons. This is his link to the critical spirit.

Critical spirit remains the focus in Chapter Four, wherein he defends the necessity of a critical spirit. In a response to a paper by Connie Missimer. Here we are a bit left out of the conversation, for we do not have Missimer's text in front of us, and much of the article is written as if the text had just been read. And although this is a dialogue in a similar vein to those of the second part of the book, it proves the exception to the rule and fits nicely here. In this chapter, Siegel gives a more thorough defense of the necessity of the critical spirit, making it seem necessary to the generalizability of the critical spirit.

In Chapter Five, he takes on the defense of rationality, a seemingly circular logical task or defective question that relies on its own existence for the act of its defense. Instead of taking the route that other rationalists take and argue that the justification of rationality is a question-begging exercise, or choosing the route that Popper takes and argue for an irrational, leap-of-faith justification for rationality, Siegel argues for a self-reflexive justification of rationality. The first part of this argument

involves showing that asking for the justification of rationality presupposes its existence. Siegel here is arguing that the skeptic who asks for the justification of rationality must assume rationality in order to ask her question in the first place (presuming her question is a serious one). To make this argument, Siegel relies on a coherentist view of justification. He requires that the skeptic's question be coherent with (i.e., justify in a mutually coherent way) her act of questioning (this requirement may be another form of question-begging). Siegel justifies rationality in this way: "In order seriously to question the value or justificatory status of rationality, one must assume the relevance of considerations which rationally support one or another answer to the question; in so assuming, one is presupposing the rationalist's position" (p. 82).

In Chapter Six, Siegel very briefly addresses critical thinking and prejudice. Siegel theorizes here the usefulness of critical thinking in fostering tolerance. He comments, "For if prejudice can be seen as a violation of the canons of rationality/critical thinking, then effective educational intervention aimed at increasing students' critical thinking abilities might serve to ameliorate our shared circumstance by reducing prejudice" (p. 90). This is in response to an incident not so much of prejudice but racism directed at Siegel's Jewish identity after he participated in a debate and gave a rationalist critique of Christianity. He uses Bernard Williams' definition of prejudice as a quality of being non-reflective and self-protective. Siegel shows how prejudicial judgements (or more accurately, racist judgments) are irrational. He then links it to a defense of democracy, a brief but helpful touch on the complexities of democracy as an ideal. More of this is certainly needed.

Next begins the dialogue chapters, in which Siegel responds to and comments on various philosophers of education. In the next several chapters, the reader begins to see the implications of a redeemed rationality for ideas such as standpoint epistemology, critical pedagogy, and emancipatory research agendas. Collectively, these chapters are the most engaging portion of the book, with the deepest implications for educational theorizing, and the greatest opportunity for furthering dialogue.

In Chapter Seven, Siegel takes on the notion that rationality is contextually determined. This aim is similar to what he accomplished in Chapters Two and Five. In this chapter, he threads his way between absolutism and relativism. On the one hand, Siegel argues that rationality is not contextually determined, that while what counts as good reasons may vary from context to context, rationality remains the same. On the other hand, he argues against a formalistic sense of rationality – essentially pure logic – as desirable as an educational ideal, because what is needed instead is awareness of the epistemic relations between substances. This is rationality as a substantive epistemic notion. The attention to epistemic relations and acknowledgement of the force of putative reasons sets him apart from Nicholas Burbules's argument for strong contextualism. With the sentence, "Justifying putative virtues of reasonableness by noting that we regard them as such cannot succeed" (p. 107), Siegel invokes the familiar critique that agreement within a context, however well-articulated, is not the same as justification. If it were, persons within a context who use heinous logic could make heinous beliefs seem perfectly rational. The heart of Siegel's position is as follows:

I agree with Burbules that the social contexts and relations which he suggests are causally efficacious in fostering reasonableness are desirable. My point is that understanding why they are requires exactly that we do not regard them as "constitutive of" or "inherent in" the ideal of

reasonableness. So understood, their causal efficacy is rendered irrelevant to their justification, as is the warrant they duly enjoy from our moral and epistemological theorizing. Regarding causal factors as “inherent in the ideal” mistakes causal efficacy for epistemic support. (p. 109)

This last sentence is one of his main criticisms of the Burbules approach. This distinction proves useful again later to stake out philosophical territory for epistemology.

In Chapter Eight, Siegel continues addressing interlocutors, this time addressing Mark Weinstein regarding the limits of a priori philosophy. Siegel sees Weinstein’s critique as a problematic conflation of several related but distinct concepts, such as foundationalism, a priori reasoning, and certainty. Siegel clarifies the meanings of these terms and their relationship to each other. He thinks that Weinstein has him wrong, particularly on the link between correctness (Weinstein’s term for “certainty”) and applicability. Consistent with his previous arguments, Siegel takes this as an opportunity to reiterate his distinction between truth and justification. Siegel uses this familiar argument here to reframe a further question of interest to Weinstein, namely what Siegel refers to as the extra-philosophical theorizing needed to put a critical thinking pedagogy into practice. Siegel takes care to place this theorizing outside the realm of philosophy, and he focuses more narrowly on the philosophical project of justification.

The subsequent section of Chapter Eight, on absolutism, relativism, fallibilism, and justification, is one of the most important in the book. In this small section is substantive discussion of epistemological justification, with Siegel exploring the distinctions between his version of contextualism and other, stronger forms. In this section is Siegel’s most thorough attention to contextualism as an epistemological theory. Throughout, Siegel holds to the distinction between justification and certainty. This allows him to reject Weinstein’s critique of foundationalist epistemology (although as Siegel shows, Weinstein has not given a consistent or recognizable definition of foundationalism), because the basis of foundationalist epistemology are self-justified or otherwise foundational beliefs, which does not make these beliefs certain.

Further discussion recalls Siegel’s critique of Burbules in Chapter Seven. Significant here is attention to Weinstein’s move to focusing on discourse frames, or what in other language would be communities of thinkers. The argument against strong contextualism is the same, worded differently:

More generally, Weinstein runs together a community’s *regarding* or *taking* a claim to be a (good) reason, and that claim’s *being* a (good) reason. But this distinction is crucial for any view which seeks, as Weinstein’s does, to avoid a pernicious relativism. (p. 124, emphasis in original)

The difference in this defense is attention to relativism, which leads to further discussions about the difference between relativism and fallibilism. Siegel makes the distinction between his own fallibilism and relativism in this way:

the argument fails because it confuses the process of judgment with the epistemic status of judgements arrived at through that process. All of our judgments, including our

epistemic evaluations of other judgments, are contextual, and all are fallible. But accepting that evaluations are themselves contextual, community-based judgments does not preclude the relevance of (fallible) standards in accordance with which judgments are to be evaluated. Any particular judgment must admit of criterion-based evaluation, however fallible – including judgments of the adequacy of such criteria themselves. (p. 125)

Siegel establishes this as the standard that epistemic contextualism cannot meet and which ultimately defeats it. In other words, for Siegel, contextualist epistemology is not epistemology in any meaningful philosophical sense. Repeating the logic from a prior chapter, Siegel writes, “Without some criteria with which, or perspective from which, we can fairly assess the merits of critiques and alternatives, our epistemic judgments will be powerless, arbitrary, or worse” (p. 126).

As Siegel notes near the end of the book, Chapters Nine and Ten are opportunities for him to argue for distinctions between moral and epistemic justification. Things get really interesting in Chapter Nine, with Siegel taking on Weinstein again, this time making the argument of the chapter’s title, “Gimme That Old-Time Enlightenment Metanarrative: Radical Pedagogies (and Politics) Require Old-Fashioned Epistemology (and Moral Theory).” In this chapter, he takes on Weinstein’s assertion that the moral failing of discourses that exclude or totalize amounts to the epistemological weakness of those discourses. Weinstein uses this argument to support the simultaneous so-called postmodernist embrace of progressive politics and rejection of metanarratives. Siegel’s position: “Postmodernism, or any other perspective which seriously endorses radical or progressive social and educational change, requires an epistemology which endorses truth and justification as viable theoretical notions” (p. 139).

Siegel here faults Weinstein for ambiguous invocations of the terms metanarrative and discourse frame. In Siegel’s words, “There is no Enlightenment *principle* which forces Patriarchy. It is rather the manifestation of deficient *practice*. On this deficiency Modernists and Postmodernists are, or at least should be, agreed” (p. 136). This assertion is of course highly contested. The view of postmodernism that both Weinstein and Siegel address is amorphous but seems to be tied to critical theorists such as Henry Giroux. Siegel offers no definition, but does note in passing that if the mark of postmodernism is incredulity toward metanarratives, then postmodernists have no business working toward emancipation, liberty, democracy, or other similar principles, which are not only metanarratives, but Enlightenment metanarratives as well. Presumably the question is, how can postmodernists live with the irony? This leads Siegel to conclude the following:

Postmodernism is best seen, then, not as a rejection of Modernism, but as an advanced movement within it: one which accepts basic Modernist, Enlightenment principles and intuitions concerning truth, justification, fallibilism, justice, and respect, and seeks politically and epistemologically more sophisticated understandings of those principles and more realistic explanations for failures to live up to them. (p. 137)

Here Siegel is reinforcing the pliability of his fallibilism, so much so that it can incorporate the epistemological skepticism usually associated with postmodernism. Again, this argument is made in the context of defining postmodernism with theorists

such as Giroux. Siegel more thoroughly addresses the epistemological issues in the next chapter.

Chapter Ten, while not a dialogue like the other chapters in this part, continues this line of argument from Chapter Nine, focusing more specifically on the epistemological requirements for critical pedagogy. His view in this regard is clear in the following passage:

In particular, it is commonly held that education ought to respect all students/persons, regardless of their race, gender, class, sexual orientation, etc.; and moreover that education ought to be particularly, and scrupulously, sensitive to the needs and interests of minority and other “marginalized” students. These needs and interests include (though they are not limited to) protection from the hegemonic domination of the dominant culture. Multiculturalist initiatives in education are generally understood in this light. I fully endorse this general moral/political perspective.... However, this moral/political perspective is often conjoined with a related epistemological perspective.... I will argue not only that that perspective is of dubious epistemic merit, but additionally, that honoring it has the unfortunate consequence of undermining the moral/political commitment to which it is routinely related. (pp. 141-142)

For Siegel, radical pedagogy reflects dedication to Enlightenment-oriented ideals of inclusion and democracy. For him, the commitment is not epistemological. It does not necessitate the acceptance of alternative epistemologies that are culturally specific (he seems to mean standpoint epistemologies, as in Harding, 1986; Collins, 1991) as necessarily relevant and certainly not equivalent. Siegel offers two reasons that embracing culturally specific, alternative epistemologies is unjustified. One, the epistemological basis for them are unjustified, and two, defending the principles behind radical pedagogy require rejecting alternative notions of rationality (which would presumably put those principles in jeopardy).

Instead, commitments to respect others are moral. This moral justification places critical pedagogy squarely in a conventional epistemological position. He says,

Thus, accepting education’s moral obligation to engage in multicultural initiatives, and regarding as educationally important the obligation to treat marginalized students and their cultures with respect – and in doing so, striving to avoid “monocultural domination” – are straightforward requirements of “liberal” moral and social/political theory. (p. 144)

Further, he says, “In this sense, educational multiculturalism is a moral/political view (rather than an epistemological one) which rests on the culture-neutral principles of moral and political theory – principles which apply with equal force to all persons and cultures” (p. 144).

Siegel uses his by now familiar argument against those who would reject the universality of metanarratives. A critical pedagogue cannot reject the universality of metanarratives, Siegel argues, because the rejection itself is a universal metanarrative. Further, a critical pedagogue cannot regard alternative epistemologies as equally legitimate, because to do so is to accept as most forceful the argument for equal

legitimacy. He concludes, “But this is exactly to favor its own epistemological perspective in a way which it denounces as disrespectful” (p. 151). Siegel sees these as self-contradictory. His aim is to guard against relativism (which he defeats similarly). Again, it is fallibilism that provides the alternative to relativism:

A better way to understand it is to regard our own epistemological views as fallible; to acknowledge that alternative epistemologies may be held by others, and may in fact be superior to our own; and to commit ourselves to a fairminded evaluation of ours and its alternatives. (p. 151)

The further distinction in his argument is the again familiar one between relativism and fallibilism and the consequent epistemological roles of justification and truth. Despite the admission that truth is absolute but fallible, rationality apparently provides a strong enough justification to make guarantees that go beyond the fallibility. It is strong enough that Siegel would claim the following, a statement that while repetitive of what has come before, has an unmistakably forceful conclusion:

In order to establish these judgments as true and/or justified, we must have recourse to conceptions of truth, justification, etc., which provide us with the conceptual resources to establish those claims. Without those resources, there is no possibility of acting, in a morally motivated and justified way, so as to end or alleviate the suffering wrought by injustice. (p. 152)

The discussion then spills over into Chapter 11, wherein Siegel reflects on the implications of feminism and postmodernism on knowledge and certainty. The chapter repeats responses Siegel made to Lynda Stone and Rene Arcilla in Wendy Kohli’s edited volume of philosophical dialogues. The chapter fits here as an extension of Siegel’s defense of rationality. Toward that end, Siegel depicts Stone’s rejection of certainty and essentialism as being consistent with conventional rationality. Siegel simplifies Stone’s arguments, so that they sound very much like Siegel’s fallibilist view of epistemology. This leads him to conclude the following:

As Stone suggests, it is both theoretically and politically important to recast our philosophical musings so as to reject the traditional desire for certainty and to embrace as something positive – indeed, to accept as “a new ethic” (185, [in Kohli]) – the uncertainty which characterizes women’s lives and actions. (p. 158)

Siegel seems to read Stone’s embrace of radical uncertainty as the same as contemporary epistemologists’ rejection of certainty as a criterion for knowledge justification. In Siegel’s words: “In so rejecting certainty as a condition of knowledge, most contemporary epistemology unproblematically accepts Stone’s ‘feminist’ insistence on uncertainty as characteristic of knowledge” (p. 158). He also sees Stone’s denial of essentialism itself as an essentialism (he would depict Stone as arguing that the essential thing about women is that they are essentially different).

Siegel uses a similar tactic for his response to Arcilla. Siegel takes on Arcilla’s use of Derrida and his theories about the limitations inherent in language. By this point, the alert reader not only will recognize the logic of the critique in the following passage but should anticipate it. Siegel here writes:

if language has only provisional meaning, and is indefinite, then the premise expressing that claim is itself only provisional and indefinite. But if so, the claim is at least to some extent undermined, because its grand pronouncement about the nature of language is (to say the least) significantly limited. (p. 163)

Siegel then goes on to espouse fallibilism as an alternative to postmodern skepticism. For Siegel, Derrida is merely a fallibilist.

By the final chapter, Chapter Twelve, the arguments and strategies are clear, but he engages formidable and numerous adversaries. Siegel addresses several theorists who would argue for the epistemological significance of inclusion (or something like it). Mostly these are critical theorists in education, feminist epistemologists, and feminist philosophers of science. He quotes Mark Weinstein (who in the passage excerpted argues that discourse frames should be judged on inclusion), Lorraine Code (who argues that the ideals of rationality and objectivity have excluded certain attributes and experiences, notably those of women), Helen Longino (who argues that enlarging perspectives leads to greater objectivity), Henry Giroux (who argues that abstract and non-particular is totalitarian), Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (who are skeptical of a universal account of knowing without context), and Sandra Harding (who advocates research out of women's experience, leading to fuller knowledge).

Common to these diverse perspectives is some agreement on the epistemological significance of the experiences of women, people of color, and others traditionally excluded from Western discourse. Siegel finds exclusion and inclusion to be morally but not epistemologically significant. For him, the important question is, "Should philosophers of education value inclusion? If so, should they also value particularity, and devalue universality?" (p. 170). Siegel is committed to inclusion, but he argues that it is not an epistemic virtue. Further, inclusion requires what many advocates of inclusion reject. Siegel argues the following:

embracing the ideal of inclusion forces us to reject either the aim of striving for universalistic theories, e.g. theories concerning what is true of, or best for, all people; or the idea that theorizing is governed by (fallible but) universally applicable standards. (pp. 170-171)

He allows that often inclusion is an epistemic or methodological virtue; however, since as he notes, "inclusion is not necessary for good science; exclusion does not guarantee bad science" (p. 173), inclusion remains only a moral ideal that occasionally has epistemological significance, apparently by chance. While it does appear that Siegel considers context to matter in this case, it does not seem to vary systematically. Siegel makes this distinction to reject the valorization of particularity and the necessity of considering alternative epistemologies. Here Siegel argues for the necessity of visions of universal characterizations of persons in order to make comprehensible knowledge claims and to take defensible political stances.

Commentary

Returning now to the four main themes I identified in *Rationality Redeemed*, I have a few general and a few specific comments to make about the collection. First, a

few general comments about the structure of the book. As a collection, the book is comprehensive in that it brings together much of Siegel's work on the issues of critical thinking and rationality since the publication of his previous books. The collective nature of the book helps the reader to see how Siegel has responded to various concerns that philosophers of education have raised about his prior work, and it is helpful to have Siegel extend his reach to concerns raised by others, notably issues of language raised by Arcilla, feminist critiques of essentialism raised by Stone, and more generally, the significance of inclusion raised by several others.

Siegel has chosen to let the chapters stand on their own, which lends them individual integrity. The original arguments are intact, and in most cases, the original context is preserved. The individual chapters hang together as a volume mostly because of the consistency of the arguments. There is also a down side to the collection approach, in that the arguments recur in many places, so that toward the end of the book, once the view of the Siegel presents the view of the interlocutor, the reader can anticipate the critique before Siegel gets to it.

A second comment is related. While he does not always engage to a length that a reader might want in a book-length treatment of rationality, it is significant that he addresses these issues earnestly across different philosophical orientations. For me, this is the particular strength of the work, and it seems that further dialogues across philosophical orientations may continue to result in fruitful exchange. Going deeper on some issues would be of benefit. For example, of great benefit would be an extended chapter in which Siegel engages not only Arcilla but Derrida on the indefiniteness of language, so that he might have the opportunity to explore the connection he proposes between Derrida and fallibilism, which would take some doing to explicate fully. Similarly, his attention to feminist critiques of epistemology is broad, in that he mentions and excerpts numerous feminist philosophers of education and philosophers of science, but his engagement with them is rather brief and the arguments limited. It would contribute greatly to the conversation about rationality to link his notion of fallibilism to feminist discourse on issues such as the struggles between subjectivism and objectivism, as well as feminist (and other) philosophers' willingness to theorize ethics and epistemology as not-so-separate entities. It is not Siegel's fault that he does not address everything, but it is an indication of the diversity of issues associated with his arguments and the potential for dialogue across difference.

At this point, I have a few comments about what I earlier suggested were Siegel's four subsidiary projects that support his main objective. The first of these is his defense of critical thinking, and he devotes much attention to defending his notion of the critical spirit. It does seem clear that he has a compelling argument to contrast Missimer, in which he advocates the necessity of the critical spirit as providing essential elements in addition to the skill component. There are many reasons for thinking that character matters in the development of critical thinkers. I wonder, however, that Siegel seems merely to list the virtues of a critical thinker rather than argue for them specifically. It would be fruitful to engage dialogue regarding the qualities that make for a critical thinker.

Particularly intriguing is of course the virtue of disinterest. Although he clarifies disinterest as not a rarefied or pure disinterest, it still strikes me as particularly white, male, and Western (culturally speaking). He argues that the critical spirit is not culturally bound and generalizes across difference cultures. However, it seems to be in

contrast to the black feminist epistemology of Patricia Hill Collins (1991), for instance, and radically so. Collins includes the justification criteria of responsibility and caring (among others, and I am oversimplifying) in her epistemology, and these criteria strike me not just as (weakly) contextual criteria, but as foundational to the qualities of the critical thinker. If the qualities of a critical thinker are up for discussion, and there is evidence of radically different qualities in different contexts, then perhaps there is more to the discussion of alternative epistemologies than Siegel seems to believe is warranted. Although I am reasonably sure he disagrees with me on this point, it does seem that by arguing for the critical spirit component, that Siegel opens the door for discussion about epistemological relativism. More on this below.

In the meantime, a related concern is why he would leave out other virtues that educators might wish to instill in students, some of which may be applicable to critical thinking, but others which may not. It would seem to be a more defensible philosophy of education to be more comprehensive, although I can understand that Siegel would want to include only those virtues that would support critical thinking. However, this observation may also support further dialogue on such virtues, or a challenge to the notion that critical thinking is in some way an activity that can be isolated.

Siegel's second subsidiary project is defense of the necessity for Enlightenment metanarrative and conventional epistemology to support critical pedagogy and associated projects for liberation or emancipation. Here I concur with Siegel that in much of the critical theory literature in education, there has been inadequate attention to the epistemological implications of the simultaneous assumption of liberationist politics and disavowal of Enlightenment metanarrative. As with Giroux, whom Siegel addresses directly, there are calls for "rejecting" or "refusing" generalization, universalism, or metanarrative, suggesting with that language that they have a moral commitment. Frequently these theorists exhort us to "rethink" how we connect our projects to "radical notions of democracy" or some other Enlightenment notion or principle (as in Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). I see in Siegel's attention to these issues one earnest approach, but there are certainly others. Feminists in particular have addressed this concern more recently, among them Collins (1991), Code (1995), and Sharon Welch (1990), as have philosophers of education, such as Frank Margonis (1998). The ideas these theorists have put forward should further enrich the dialogue that Siegel has extended.

Third is the concern that occupies Siegel as he moves into the later chapters, his argument for inclusion as an ethical rather than an epistemological virtue. My comment refers to Siegel's engagement of inclusion and multiculturalism in the final chapter but also throughout the book. Siegel seems to view these issues as the same. He describes multiculturalism as primarily the manifestation of respect for the experiences of others, with special concern for the self-images of students and providing opportunities for multiple perspectives. While this view is certainly a reasonable beginning point, it speaks to the vagueness of the term multiculturalism. It also limits the possibilities for engaging conventional rationality. When Siegel argues about inclusion and exclusion, he seems to fit them into his arguments against epistemic contextualism. As examples of multiple contexts, however, some cultural groups have thorough critiques of conventional rationality, even in its fallibilist form. Siegel underestimates the extent and depth of the critiques. If multiculturalism is understood to include more elaborate and defensible articulations of constructs such as standpoint epistemology and alternative visions of rationality (or critiques of its possibility), then it amounts to a more radical critique than that which can be solved through greater inclusion. Sharon

Welch (1990), a feminist philosopher and theologian, is not the only theorist to argue that, “The perspective of Euro-American women or the perspective of African-American women and men cannot be simply added to that of privileged Euro-American males” (p. 128). Welch argues (as does Collins, 1991) that when alternative perspectives are merely added to the larger picture, the dominant discourse maintains dominance and distorts alternative perspectives dramatically. It strikes me as a problem of de-contextualizing inclusion. While it may not be necessary in all contexts to be radically inclusive, it seems unproblematic that inclusion should be a necessity in particular contexts, such as occasions when theorists make claims about a certain population.

Nevertheless, I view Siegel as providing a valuable contribution on this issue by setting the terms for debate about inclusion, or at least one portion of the debate. Siegel gives points of entry for philosophers who wish to engage conventional epistemologists on the separation of epistemology and ethics, particularly the moral dimensions of knowledge.

The fourth subsidiary project is his articulation of a fallibilist, contextualist epistemology. On this point, Siegel is most clear, and the chapters give him opportunities to consider the many implications of fallibilism. My comments here regard his defeat of relativism and its distinction from fallibilism. I should admit finally that I do not find compelling the self-defeating argument against relativism. It is not clear why the same argument, which he uses elsewhere (relativism makes relativism itself relative; the rejection of universals makes the rejection itself a universal; etc.) would not also defeat fallibilism. I do not suggest that it should. It does seem to me that acknowledging the futility of certainty (we are in agreement on the this) excuses philosophers from having to justify sentences that are merely restatements of the cliché, “the only thing I am certain of is uncertainty.”

More problematic, however, is that Siegel does not identify relativism with a particular theorist or a particular argument, and as nearly as I can tell, the relativism he is arguing against is the view of the global skeptic (or typical teenager). Consider the following statement in his argument for the importance of critical thinking:

If the goodness of reasons is relative, then we cannot say that one assessment of an argument is better than another; worse, we cannot legitimately think that our argument assessment rules and criteria are superior to our students’ untutored rules and criteria (or denial of such). (p. 20)

His arguments against the kind of relativism implied here are certainly useful, and he goes on to give suggestions of how to encounter this form of relativism when it is encountered in the classroom. But there is more to the discussion of justification than choosing among determinism, fallibilism, and (this form of) relativism. Here, fallibilism seems remarkably pliable, because its main alternative, relativism, is made of straw.

Because he makes relativism a weak straw man, Siegel is able to use the phrase “having good reasons” as a logical place holder for his view of rationality (for in his view of relativism, it is nonsensical to speak of reasons as being good). If he were to accept a stronger form of contextualism, “having good reasons” would come off as

rather vague. It would not be so easy to reject an alternative epistemology, because while “having good reasons” could describe numerous epistemologies, the criteria would be significantly different (but epistemologically so).

If relativism is redefined, perhaps using the sociology of knowledge or standpoint epistemology as the guiding theory, the aspect of Siegel’s epistemology that would remain and continue to be contentious would be absolutism. Siegel holds on to a notion of absolute truth, however unattainable it is. Truth remains an arbiter for him in fallible knowledge claims. In certain alternative views of epistemology, that is not the case, and so with this distinction, there is further exploration for dialogue. On that point, I would maintain that fallibilism does not need an ideal notion of truth in order to operate, particularly if we are excused from having to justify relativism. There is, in any event, a clear need for further dialogue and greater nuance in theory about rationality and epistemology. Siegel seems to want to limit himself in this area to the traditionally philosophical approach to these subjects, but it would seem to me a fruitful discussion to expand linkages to what Siegel calls extra-philosophical approaches as well.

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