

# **Symposium**

## **Re-reading Arendt on Education: Action, Politics and Thinking**

**Gert Biesta**

**Eduardo Duarte**

**Geoffrey Hinchliffe**

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**The purpose of this Symposium is to explore a number of related themes on education through the writings and ideas of Hannah Arendt. The intention is not to put forward a distinctive ‘Arendtian’ concept of education but to use Arendt’s ideas to explore the nature of teaching and learning and its wider context, especially its political context.**

**There follows a short summary of the contributions succeeded by each of the contributions themselves.**

Gert Biesta explores the relation between education and political existence which is understood in terms of 'being-together-in-plurality'. Political existence is an existence of plurality that needs to renew and re-invent itself. Reflection and learning can aid this process so that education, far from being distinct from political processes may sometimes incorporate them. Education need not be seen as a preparation for the political and yet separate from it: reading against Arendt here, Biesta challenges this assumption.

Eduarde Duarte questions Arendt's assertion that education cannot both teach a student and instruct in the art of living. By drawing on Arendt's own reflections on Stoic processes of self-formation he shows that education not only can but must include the art of living. It can do this by helping students find their own personas or unique characters.

Geoff Hinchliffe examines Arendt's concept of action, concluding that action only works through a dialectic of recognition. He then goes on to suggest that Arendt may have erred in assuming that action could only be confined to the political domain and that education can also be seen as a scene of action as well. This can happen when the teacher 'takes risks' in the class and when the student uses their learning to forge their identities through self-formation.