

Five questions for Edwin Gordon and Bennett Reimer

Harold Fiske

[During the Philosophy of Music Education Symposium III [PME III] in Los Angeles [May 28-31, 1997] a “dialog” was held between Edwin Gordon and Bennett Reimer and the remaining participants in the Symposium. Harold Fiske served as moderator. Five groups of questions were prepared by Fiske; these questions guided the course of the discussion. Listed below are the questions. Anthony Palmer, who introduced the participants and organized and chaired PME III, invited general discussion based on Dr. Fiske’s questions and the responses to them by Drs. Gordon and Reimer.]

1. The methodology of doing philosophy

Does philosophy encompass all music education research or does its methodology distinguish and warrant its identity as a “special research interest group”?

- Is all music research “philosophical”? For example, is the scientific method a philosophy or does philosophy transcend hypothesis testing? (Is science a philosophy or is philosophy a science?)
- Does current music education philosophy reflect carefully applied methodology?
- Should philosophy of music education derive essentially from a theory of music or can we rely on philosophies developed in other non musical disciplines to shape our own philosophy?
- Is there irony in the sense that, while there is a good deal of criticism of 19th century aesthetics-based music education, there is still a tendency to rely on 17th-19th century philosophers for revising contemporary philosophy of music education?

2. The preparation of professional music education philosophers

Should any changes be made to graduate programs in order to nurture the development of future professional music education philosophers?

- What non-music/non-music education philosophical sources/references should

be considered required reading for graduate students?

- What philosophical principles and criteria should guide curriculum development, evaluation and criticism?

3. Philosophy of music education and the problems of teaching music

What are the most critical problems in music education that need to be addressed by philosophers?

- Is there a gap between philosophical research and the practitioner? If so, how should this gap be bridged?
- What items should be included on a profession-wide research agenda that will predictably lead to better music teaching? [MayDay Group question*] (Is philosophy of music education important or are we just kidding ourselves?)
- Is there a crisis in music education philosophy? If so, is it limited to the research community or does it affect the practitioner as well? Is a methodology war the cause of this crisis? If so, is it a “good” crisis or a “bad” one?
- In what ways can music education philosophy affect the upgrading of music education materials and musical purpose?

4. The effects of music education philosophy on society

Are the effects of a philosophy of music education limited to music teaching or can they be made to affect as well our culture’s musical institutions (e.g., mass media, publishers, music business firms)? [modified MayDay Group question*]

- How can philosophy of music education influence institutions so as to improve their contribution to raising the musical quality of social and cultural life? [modified MayDay Group question*]

5. Cultural bias effects on philosophical methodology

Is it possible for any research methodology (experimental, qualitative, historical, ethnographic, philosophical) to be culture free (vs. culture loaded)?

What standards of musicianship and musicality in music education can be guided by traditions associated with aesthetic theories, while still emphasizing the cultural and social situatedness of the music practices in question? [MayDay Group question*]