Spring 2014

Journal for the Philosophical Study of Education
Vol 2 (2014)

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Anne-Marie Brault and students, France
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In memoriam
Anne-Marie Brault
(1931-2012)
The Society for the Philosophical Study of Education

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**Introduction**

Welcome to the second volume of the *Journal for the Philosophical Study of Education (JPSE)*, a peer-reviewed journal put out by the Society for the Philosophical Study of Education (SPSE). *JSPE* aims to publish papers that approach the field of education from a philosophical perspective, in the broadest sense of the term. Some of the papers considered for publication may be selected from works presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Philosophical Study of Education by members of that organization, after these papers undergo peer review and revision. However, this journal does not limit its content to works pertaining to the annual conference; it strongly invites outside submissions from any interested party, providing that such submissions fit the guidelines of the journal. This volume includes works by Professor Babette Babich of Fordham University, editor of *New Nietzsche Studies* and author of several books on Nietzsche and other topics, and Professor Eduardo Duarte of Hofstra University, whose scholarly publications include studies of Hannah Arendt and Heidegger, among others. *JPSE* will consider papers, book reviews, interviews, and other documents with emphases in history, psychology, religion, pedagogy, and other areas if they portend to the general ideal of philosophical speculation on the meaning, purpose, and/or nature of education. To encourage diffusion, we are posting abstracts of the contributions.

With regard to paper selection, *JPSE* has established the following guidelines for paper review, consideration, and publication: each paper is blind reviewed by two outside readers as well as by the chief editors. If deemed necessary by the editors, the paper may be sent to a third reader. Reviews are “value free” insofar as *JPSE* is not consciously pushing an educational agenda. If the argument makes logical sense, seems valid, and does not violate facts, it is treated with a certain amount of flexibility. Our desire is to ensure that all papers go through a “screening” process of blind review, whether or not the paper has undergone previous commentary during conference presentation. Unless other arrangements are made, we claim first publication rights for any submission that is accepted.

A paper that receives two positive reviews from outside readers and the journal editors will be accepted, with suggested revisions if necessary. Where possible, readers and/or editors will suggest appropriate revisions, stylistic or otherwise, or raise questions regarding the content, context, and argument of the essay submitted. These should help the author make revisions, if any are requested.

As a general policy, to enable writers to articulate their projects more richly and cogently, when necessary we suggest one revision. That is, our goal is not to turn papers away, but rather to help authors develop their ideas. If the paper is returned and the suggested revisions have not been made to the satisfaction of the editors, the paper will not be accepted. The decision of the editors is final.
Currently in academia, peer editing is highly select and often follows strict ideological guidelines. The effect of this is to reduce the possibility of exploring ideas. For this reason a section of this journal will be dedicated to works in progress, including those that are not currently fashionable in critical circles. The journal thus will consider finished works, reviews, and other forms of inquiry when these enrich the content of the review. This approach will enable writers to receive constructive feedback, though without compromising the integrity of the writing as well as the contribution of accurate information and knowledge, which must remain the purpose of scholarship. Thus the journal will encourage original endeavors and perspectives in order to broaden fields of research and speculation, aiming at the eclectic and Socratic purposes of pursuing inquiry and increasing thought about education in the broad sense of the term. This format should allow for a safe exchange of feedback and foster the growth of scholarship, thus creating a supportive intellectual community.

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An old French saying has it that culture is what is left when all else is forgotten, while Lao-Tzu states that the scholar learns every day, while the wise man unlearns every day. What do these saying suggest? They seem to point to some primary human quality beneath the veneer of acquired knowledge, informing the qualities we use to define ourselves. They speak to a “true” or “inner” self, be it nascent or absorbed by the person early in life, or be it built in the intertwining of experience with personality. This inner self, and the appeal to it, reposes in many of the works included in this volume. In their attention to pedagogy and to philosophy of education, they search for or suggest ways to get back to some origin or central quality, or critique educational systems that reject this appeal to the person. The paradox is that the educator somehow must steer students towards these capacities for self-knowledge, wisdom, and culture when in fact so much of our educational system is actually geared outward, toward the society, toward knowledge, toward production. Thus a spectrum of educational systems is raised in such questions as, “Can one be educated by following regimented teaching goals?” “Does education redeem the authenticity of the individual through the group?” “How can the educator give the pupil the tools needed to learn how to learn?”

The qualities in the educator that speak most directly to the need to foster the person seem simple enough—slowing down, listening, communicating, translating, interpreting. As a guide, the educator does not provide information, but assists the student in finding his or her own knowledge and insight. Communication is key, no matter what the discipline, to avoiding becoming what Eduardo Duarte describes as the “accountant,” the teacher who as record keeper focuses on filling slots of information regurgitation, “monitoring the learning so as to insure that the projected outcomes are being met,” in a way that resembles what Freire defined as the “banking system” of education where the teacher deposits information in passive student-containers that then, at the right time, return that information, often without interest. The educator, our writers continually stress, must instead lead the students to the discovery of content, to finding their own meanings, be it through the educator’s voice (as, Babich argues, it was for Nietzsche in
his discovery of Schopenhauer), or be it through permitting translation, perhaps through silence, as the papers by Duarte and by Schwieler and Ferm Thorgeson suggest. Or perhaps it is found in the structural formation of the child in ways that encourages the integration of instinct and intuition, as G. Johnston’s paper suggests. These approaches inform areas such as curriculum development (Magrini; Hyslop-Margison and Leonard), while failure to open the person to deeper self-knowledge via processes of educational commodification explains why some students just don’t really care about the education they receive, Falk suggests. Moving away from knowledge, or at least from the model of knowledge as certitude (thus guaranteeing command over what is known, control of meaning), leads us finally to a student’s own exploration of the meaning of an education, the goals it should achieve (Rohrbach and Rocha). How much does the student bring to learning? Does the student find the teacher? Should the instructor merely point, then get out of the way? Where does “Truth” fit in, if it can even still be discussed? Such questions circulate in these works, and give us a “handle” on ways to approach education, perhaps in the way that Gary Snyder points to in his poem “Axe Handles”:

In making the handle of an axe
By cutting wood with an axe
The model is indeed near at hand.

The essays collectively offer critical analyses of the goals of education, and search for new angles on how education should be approached, from processes of personal involvement to larger questions about the functionality of education as a social institution. Central to these inquiries are studies of Nietzsche’s *Untimely Meditations* (two articles) and the relation between Heideggerian pedagogy and teaching, both at the individual level and at the level of curriculum design (three articles). The study of Nietzsche’s third *Untimely Meditation*, “Schopenhauer as Educator,” by Babette Babich, explores Nietzsche’s examination of what is needed for culture, describing how the choice of an educator who speaks directly to the self is complemented by the cultivation of personal awareness shaped by love, freeing us to ourselves. Nietzsche’s depiction of a process of self-exploration, the “memory palace,” is compared to a similar process developed by Hugh of St. Victor and studied by Ivan Illich. If Nietzsche’s important commentary on the value of Schopenhauer as an educator is emphasized here, in the other essay on Nietzsche David L. Mosley suggests how Nietzsche’s second *Untimely Meditation*, “On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life,” resounds with the work of another tremendous influence on his cultural development, Ludwig van Beethoven. The model of theme and variation established by Beethoven in his Diabelli Variations becomes a model for both a philosophy of history and a pedagogy in which the historian shapes the student’s temperament. Implicit comparisons of types of historians to types of musicians lead to descriptions of the historical virtuoso and the composer of history, with the latter representing the true historian whose pedagogy can form students into “human beings” instead of “human aggregates.”

Three of the papers use Heidegger as a sounding board for exploration of approaches to education that concentrate on learning as translating, the importance of letting-be (*Gelassenheit*), and the fostering of the “moment of vision” (*Augenblick*) through
curriculum planning. Elias Schwieler and Cecilia Ferm Thorgesen analyze literary studies and musical education, showing how Heidegger’s concepts of translating and listening potentially enhance the performatives aspects of these activities as regards both teaching and learning. Eduardo M. Duarte’s study of online classes examines the pedagogy of Gelassenheit as it applies to new modes of teaching such as the online forum, where virtues of listening inform the role of the non-present and sometimes eclipsed or hidden educator who listens to the dialogic processes of virtual student interaction. Heideggerian phenomenology also informs James Magrini’s examination of the perspectives on curriculum theory developed by Dwayne Huebner. Magrini show how a curriculum inspired by Heideggerian principles attempts to merge past and present, history and the momentary, individual and the world in an authentic experience of presence or Dasein.

An interest in curriculum theory also informs the critical analysis of Kieran Egan’s views on common assumptions about education offered by Emery Hyslop-Margison and Hugh Anthony Leonard. Examining whether Egan’s critical perspectives on progressive education and curriculum issues justify curriculum change, the authors find these critiques problematic, while they do find value to his arguments regarding stage development theory and empirical research. From here the emphasis shifts to concepts pertaining to human development, particularly the development of consciousness, as manifested in the perspectives on education advanced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Guillemette Johnston’s study continues an ongoing comparative pedagogical analysis of Rousseau’s theories and approaches to education and growth with those presented in yogic philosophies, a topic developed in papers published in earlier issues of JPSE and elsewhere. Here she takes on such faculties as instinct and intuition, showing how they merge in both yoga and Rousseauist theory in the development of a consciousness centered in the self, removed from the entrapping forces of ego and Rousseauist amour-propre, or pride. This approach may show in the long run that Rousseau is closer to the east than to the west in the way that his understanding of intellectual intuition connects to both inner and outer experiences, and offers a way of both knowing and thinking accurately. Comparison of east and west continues with Allan Johnston’s exploration of Gary Snyder’s concept of the “Real Work” as it is developed in Snyder’s writings, and how this essentially Buddhist approach potentially applies to contemporary education.

The social and the personal resonate in the last two essays of this volume. Tom Falk’s exploration of the forces lying behind lack of motivation in students points toward an educational system that commodifies the student so as to make him or her an efficient addition to the economic system, rather than a thinking, feeling, intelligent human being. The last paper, introduced by Sam Rocha, offers Zachary Rohrbach’s take on his own development as a scholar and an educator, a development that led him away from the concept that a true education provides certainty toward the illumination that uncertainty occupies all disciplines, including the sciences. Movement toward certainty is an ongoing and increasingly complex quest, while definition of such qualities as the true and the good is achieved through negation rather than through positive assertion. We come full circle to the moment of translation, perhaps even again to the idiom of the personal that so deeply adheres to Nietzsche’s search for an educator, a guiding voice like the one
he claims to have found in Schopenhauer. We cap it off with a review by Robert Mitchell of Inna Semetsky’s *Re-symbolization of the Self*, a book that explores how Tarot provides insight into non-rational aspects of awareness that help illuminate perception and knowing.

We hope that considering today’s extraverted, goal-oriented world, the essays presented here will lead you to reflect even more on the purpose, fate, and future of education, and on its need to foster in both the student and the educator a universal recognition of the basic skills that encourage communication and accuracy in learning and understanding, not solely as a means to or a goal of production, but as a way of encouraging constant discovery and recognition of the state of being of the individual and collective self as they work to enhance and inform each other. The variety of topics addressed in the essays included in this issue of *JPSE* reflects the quality and diversity of the approaches we would like to consider in future volumes. Our next issue will consider essays from the 2013 annual meetings of the Society for the Philosophical Study of Education, as well as other offerings, such as interviews, reviews, works in progress, and other contributions. Should you have any questions or be interested in submitting material, please do not hesitate to contact the editors via email at ajohnst2@depaul.edu, ajohnston@colum.edu, or gjohnsto@depaul.edu.

Guillemette Johnston and Allan Johnston
CALL FOR PAPERS

_JPSE_ is now actively seeking submissions of papers by members of SPSE and others. Priority will be given to papers delivered at the 2013 November meeting of SPSE in Chicago. However, other works, such as interviews, reviews, works in progress, and articles, will also be considered. See the introduction for an idea of the editorial strategy and scope of _JPSE_. Please submit materials as attachments to the editors, Allan Johnston and Guillemette Johnston, at the following email addresses:

ajohnst2@depaul.edu
ajohnston@colum.edu
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Please indicate “_JPSE_ submission” in the subject line of the email. Documents should be submitted in Microsoft Word doc or docx formats. In formatting, please follow APA guidelines. Please also include an abstract of about 100 words and a list of key search terms with your submission, along with a short bio.

If you are interested in submitting a work to _SPSE Roundtable_, the online journal of SPSE, please send your paper (subject line “Roundtable submission”) to the email addresses listed above, and also to the SPSE webmaster, Alexander Makedon, at the following email address:

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_SPSE Roundtable_ exclusively publishes papers read by SPSE members during the SPSE sessions of the American Philosophical Association, Central Division (APA), held every February or March in various locations. Formatting and style are at the author’s discretion, but should conform to APA, MLA, or CMS.

A NOTE FOR READERS

If you are interested in reviewing papers submitted to _JPSE_, please let us know. Interested parties should submit a CV and a writing sample for consideration.

When reviewing a paper, readers are expected to exercise academic tolerance and provide constructive support with helpful suggestions, questions, and comments. Disparaging, egotistic, and dismissive feedback on behalf of the reader will not be accepted and will not be sent to the writer unless it is revised. This type of review, we feel, does not serve the purpose of helping to create a safe, respectful, and supportive academic community. We aim at opening minds, not closing them, and being helpful and productive.
ABSTRACTS

“Who do you think you are?” On Nietzsche’s Schopenhauer, Illich’s Hugh of St. Victor, and Kleist’s Kant

Babette Babich

In the third of his Untimely Meditations, Nietzsche writes on Schopenhauer and what is needed for the sake of culture. The same reflection on cultivation includes an account of the famous memory palace. In this context, it is useful to review Ivan Illich’s highlighting of this same technique with reference to the body and the physio-motor practice of learning in Illich’s last book on education, In the Vineyard of the Text. If, despite our knowledge of Nietzsche as the teacher of the death of God, Nietzsche also has recourse to the exemplary book that is the New Testament, to the value of love—highlighting that the project of self-discovery is indebted to Kant—Nietzsche also calls us to a poet’s sensitivity in the manner of Heinrich von Kleist. Our true educators always liberate or free us to ourselves.

Key words:
Nietzsche, educators, memory palaces, oral and written culture, spiritual exercises, liberation

Nietzsche, Beethoven, and the Composition of History

David L. Mosley

A great deal of interpretive energy has been expended on the first half of Nietzsche’s Untimely Meditation on “The Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life,” however the second half of the essay, which frequently alludes to music, musical acoustics, and musical composition, has received far less attention. The essay argues that Nietzsche’s conception of history as musical variations composed on a well-known musical theme constitutes a philosophy of history, and a pedagogy of history in which the historian with an artistic disposition, or Stimmung, shapes the student’s temperament, or Stimmung, such his or her sympathetic vibration, in the present, with the most resonant voices of the past, renders them timeless.

Key words:
Nietzsche, Untimely Meditations, “On The Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life,” Stimmung, philosophy of history, pedagogy of history, Beethoven, Diabelli Variations op. 120, transformative variation, Veränderungen, Helmholtz, sympathetic vibration, hearing out

Translating the Impossible: Listening, Learning, and Art

Elias Schwieler and Cecilia Ferm Thorgersen
This text is an attempt to analyze how literature and music education, from the perspective of Heidegger’s thinking concerning translation and listening, can affect and provide a space for the performative activities of teaching and learning. We argue that the concepts of translation and listening in Heidegger’s philosophy can have fruitful consequences for understanding art and give both students and teachers a place for thoughtful dwelling where the phenomenological significance of learning and art is unveiled. In the text we try to provide a philosophical foundation based on Heidegger’s ideas, which is then followed by examples from our respective fields of how such a space for learning can be thought. The text begins with an introduction to Heidegger’s thoughts on translation in relation to listening, dwelling and education. The two following sections deal with literature and music from the philosophical perspective that is outlined in the introductory section. The literature section focuses on a reading of Wallace Stevens; the music section focuses on a process of phenomenological listening to a song by Monica Zetterlund. The third and concluding section of the text attempts to draw the possible pedagogical consequences of the analyses in the previous three sections.

Key words:
Heidegger, translation, arts education, literature, music, learning

Together and Apart in the Time of Study: Teaching, Learning, Listening in Online Courses (An Application of the Technology of Difference)
Eduardo M. Duarte

This paper documents and explores an application of the technology of difference as a pedagogy of Gelassenheit. The paper explores how Heideggerian ‘letting’ becomes complicated in the distance learning environment. For Heidegger, “what teaching calls for is this: to let learn” (Heidegger, 1968, p.15), and the pedagogy of Gelassenheit is a teaching via ‘letting,’ happening through the practice of conscientious, mindful and painstaking listening. The presumption of an embodied educator who is always ‘close at hand’ is part of the Heidegger-inspired pedagogy. This paper focuses on the ontology of the ‘virtual’ educator, which, curiously, unfolds in the manner of aletheia: the ‘virtual’ educator is simultaneously present and absent in the online seminar. Such ontology, the play of presence/absence, gives rise to a peculiar kind of voyeuristic listening that is unique to the distance learning environment, a listening that troubles the ethical force of the pedagogy of Gelassenheit, or letting-be, which always presumes the full presence of the teacher as listener. Here, the ‘virtual’ educator is neither the fully present ‘caring’ educator, nor the fully absent ‘ignorant schoolmaster,’ but a hidden attendant who is, in effect, eavesdropping, or listening in, on the dialogic learning.

Key words:
Heidegger, Gelassenheit, online learning, distance learning, listening, pedagogy
Huebner’s Heidegger: Toward an Authentic Conception of Learning and “Historicity” for Contemporary Education

James Magrini

This paper responds to the following question: What issues concerned with potential educational reform arise from Huebner’s critical encounter with Heidegger and the tradition in education and curriculum theory? In attempting a rejoinder, I revisit Huebner’s groundbreaking essay, “Curriculum as Concern for Man’s Temporality,” which introduced the phenomenological method in curriculum studies, with the goal of examining the underlying themes, issues, and concepts grounding Huebner’s reconceptualization of curriculum reform as they emerge from Heidegger’s philosophy. I show that Huebner’s understanding of Being-in-the-world in terms of the educational context of learning embodies the flux, flow, and rhythmic dynamics of history’s unfolding as a temporal phenomenon. This for Heidegger represents Dasein’s authentic “historizing” in the “moment of vision,” or Augenblick, and is the definitive embodiment of Dasein’s authentic mode of Being-in-the-world.

Key words:
Heidegger, fundamental ontology, Huebner, curriculum, reconceptualism, phenomenology, education

Evaluating Kieran Egan’s Rationale for Curriculum Reform

Emery Hyslop-Margison and Hugh Anthony Leonard

Kieran Egan challenges many mainstream assumptions about education. In this article, we evaluate Egan’s major critiques of education, and consider whether these analyses constitute appropriate justification for curriculum change. We examine Egan’s views on stage development theory, incompatibilities in curricular objectives, progressive education practices and evidence-based research. Following our review, we argue that although Egan’s critiques of progressive education and curriculum incompatibilities are unconvincing, his concerns about stage development theory and empirical research are warranted. We also suggest that many of the pedagogical imperatives Egan advances are valuable regardless of his attack on mainstream education practices.

Key words:
Progressivism, research, stage development, curriculum theory, Kieran Egan

Rousseau and Yoga: The Roles of Intelligence, Instinct, and Intuition in the Shaping of Consciousness

Guillemette Johnston
This is the fourth paper in a series of articles that makes a comparative analysis of the pedagogical theories and practices advanced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Emile* and the discipline of yoga as it is presented in the *Yoga Sutra* of Patañjali, the primary written source in the teachings of yoga philosophy. In this paper, similarities between Rousseau’s pedagogy and yogic practices suggest how these two systems offer parallel or similar approaches regarding the role of heart, mind, and body in the development of the faculties of instinct, intuition, and intelligence, and how these faculties assist in fostering consciousness. A major difference is that Rousseau’s system aims at fostering appropriate development in the child so as to guarantee adherence to the self, whereas yoga aims to still the fluctuations of consciousness so that the adept can rediscover the true self, and achieve integration of the self with other functions.

**Key words:**
Rousseau, yoga, consciousness, pedagogy, instinct, intuition, intelligence, reason

**Gary Snyder’s “Real Work”: Educational Implications**
*Allan Johnston*

In helping transfer Buddhist values to the West by linking Buddhism to what he calls “the most archaic values on earth,” Gary Snyder has explored variations on Buddhist practice through what he calls “the real work,” a system of actions and attitudes that accords with natural occurrences and their spiritual significance. This paper analyzes the ideas that underlie this concept by exploring its connection to practice (both as meditation and as physical and other forms of labor), resistance to the forces that work against preservation of the environment, and resignation or acceptance, which involves recognition of impermanence and the potentiality of non-accomplishment in the goals one wishes to achieve. The Real Work is thus directly linked to the concept of Dharma advanced in Buddhism and other Eastern spiritual disciplines. The pedagogical significance of the values explored in the Real Work is considered in light of their importance to an educational system that would be oriented toward engendering ecological holism.

**Key words:**
Gary Snyder, Real Work, dharma, environmentalism

**Are Unmotivated Students Cultural Critics?**
*Thomas Falk*

This article asks whether unmotivated and underachieving students might be considered in the tradition of the cultural critic. From its earliest days in the United States, we see schools developing along with the industrializing economy, a sea change often resisted by those over whom its waves rolled. From the textile regions of New England to the Post-Bellum South and the cities of the Progressive Era, schools inculcated the discipline,
docility, and individualist-competitive ethic needed to fuel the growth of capital. Analyzing such patterns through a Marxian lens, we can see how many of today’s pre-eminent capitalists shape education and the social economy according to Neoliberal ideology. This is a raw deal for those trapped on the bottom rungs of the ladder. Short of casting them as sages before the fact, educators may seriously consider the nature of the horizons of achievement being rejected by some unmotivated students, and perhaps look to them as resources for recognizing the perversities of school, culture, and society to which we adults have become inured and therefore accept as natural.

**Key words:**

Students, motivation, critical theory, Marx, capitalism

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**The Quest for Uncertainty: Recovering An Appreciation For Truth Through Autobiography**

*Zachary Rohrbach and Samuel Rocha*

In this modern age, we place much faith in our scientists and their supposed objectivity. On the other hand, we are often seduced by the subjectivity found in cultural and moral relativism. Caught between these two seemingly antithetical conceptions, it is difficult to sort out what this thing called ‘Truth’ is, how closely we can know it, and whether it even exists. In such an intellectual climate, it is easy to develop a view towards knowledge and education that is simplistic. Here we present one such simplistic view—the idea that the world is wholly knowable and that education is what Dewey called a “quest for certainty”—and attempt to recover from it a more robust and subtle sense of Truth. However, we do so without acquiescing to relativistic or democratic theories of “Truth” and without accepting Dewey’s complete instrumentalization of Truth.

**Key words:**

Truth, democracy, certainty, quest for certainty, subjectivity, objectivity, science, physics, mathematics, John Dewey, Ivan Illich, William James, Nicholas Burbules
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Babette Babich is a Professor of Philosophy at Fordham University in New York City. Her most recent book, The Hallelujah Effect: Philosophical Reflections on Music, Performance Practice and Technology (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), is articulated with three distinct foci, the first discussing popular music and popular culture, including social media, through the lens of Leonard Cohen’s Hallelujah and via a review of k.d. lang’s cover of Cohen’s Hallelujah, highlighting the rarity of critical music theoretical engagement with k.d. lang and Cohen and some of the reasons for this, including an analysis of erotic desire (male/female); the second examining phenomenological sociology of music and critical theory, with a thematic analysis of Adorno on radio and its particular broadcast ‘physiognomy,’ as Adorno speaks of the space and shape of sound / music as of consumer culture, including technological culture; and the third with a focus on music as such, from antiquity to Beethoven’s ‘liberation’ of dissonance by way of Nietzsche’s philosophical thinking and his study of ancient Greek tragedy as music. Professor Babich has written several other books, including Words in Blood, Like Flowers (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), a book discussing music and eros, philosophy and poetry through readings of Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Nietzsche, as well as what remains today not only the first but the only critical study (in Kant’s good sense of critique) of Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Science: Reflecting Science on the Ground of Art and Life (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994). In 1996, she founded the journal New Nietzsche Studies, which she continues to edit. She specializes in continental philosophy of science and technology (particularly Heidegger’s philosophy of science but also Günter Anders on technology and media aesthetics), women in philosophy, the politics of academic philosophy, the lamentable analytic-continental divide (you know you’re analytic if you think there is no such divide), transhumanism, life-size ancient Greek bronzes, Heidegger’s essay on art work in connection with Meyer Shapiro and Greek temples, and so on.

Eduardo M. Duarte is a Professor of Philosophy of Education and a recurring Lecturer in the Honors College at Hofstra University. He earned his Doctorate and Masters in philosophy at the New School for Social Research, and his Baccalaureate in philosophy from Fordham University. Duarte is the author of Being and Learning (Sense Publishers: 2012), and has published articles in Studies in Philosophy and Education, Educational Philosophy and Theory, Educational Theory, and the Journal of Philosophy of Education. He is an active member of the Philosophy of Education Society. Under the pseudonym Professor Iguana, Duarte is host and producer of Dead Zone, 88.7FM WRHU.ORG, a program documenting the improvisational jam music of the Grateful Dead and related musical configurations. Duarte lives with his family (Kelly, Kat, Sofie, Jaime) in Portland, Maine.

Thomas Falk is a Visiting Faculty in the Department of Teacher Education, University of Dayton.
Cecilia Ferm Thorgersen has a PhD in Music Education, and acts as Assistant Full Professor at School of Music in Piteå, Luleå University of Technology, Sweden. She graduated in June 2004 on the thesis Openness and Awareness—A Phenomenological Study of Music Teaching and Learning Interaction. Current research areas: 1) Educational quality within music teacher training, with specific focus on Musikdidaktik and Practical Teacher Training; 2) How music education can be organized in a way that takes into account children’s previous and “informal” musical experience and learning, and also develops shared goals in democratic ways; 3) Philosophical studies in Aesthetic Communication in various educational contexts, and multi-dimensional musical experience and its implications for music education, based on a life world phenomenological way of thinking. Cecilia’s research is internationally presented at various conferences, and published in for example Philosophy of Music Education Review, Music Education Research, Visions of Research in Music Education, Nordic Research of Music Education Yearbook, Finnish Journal of Music Education and British Journal of Music Education.

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“Who do you think you are?”
On Nietzsche’s Schopenhauer, Illich’s Hugh of St. Victor, and Kleist’s Kant

Babette Babich

“Who do you think you are?”

This question—Who do you think you are?—is supposed to have been put to Arthur Schopenhauer when he was (and this is probably the most famous of the popular anecdotes) walking in the glass hothouse of the Botanical Gardens in Dresden, gesticulating dramatically and talking to himself. Now this carrying on happened well before the age of cell phones normalized the otherwise autistic or unhinged behavior of talking to oneself and disregarding the presence of others. But Schopenhauer must not have appeared completely insane—rather, perhaps, as if he were a famous actor, possibly rehearsing his lines, because upon his exit from the conservatory, the caretaker stopped him to ask who he was:

“Who are you?”

This is not a particularly unusual thing to ask, but it got an unusual reply:

“—Ja!” he said, that’s it exactly! “If you could tell me who I am, I’d be greatly indebted to you...” (qtd. in Salter, 1911, p. 18).¹

Among other things, including poodles and prostitutes, not to mention his famous fights with his mother, Schopenhauer is also famous for his sardonic moral theory. We are all, he says, like certain porcupines: we’d like to be close to one another, but nature endows us with so many spines and bristles (Schopenhauer, 1996, p. 651).

In Schopenhauer as Educator, the penultimate in a series of four mediations proclaimed as Untimely, i.e., as deliberately out of step with his own era, Nietzsche highlights the relevance of identifying an exemplar or a model for one’s self-formation.² His encounter with Schopenhauer almost miraculously fulfilled his youthful hope that a lucky happenstance [das Schicksal] would somehow alleviate the “wretched tiresomeness and dutifulness of having to educate myself,” as Nietzsche related this confidence of being saved by an educator, and thus redeemed:

in that I, just at the right time, would find a philosopher as educator, a true philosopher, whom one could obey without further doubts because one would trust him more than one would oneself. (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 342).³

The project of finding an educator to educate oneself is here less about self-realization or self-reliance (these are modern vapors) than about self-liberation. For Kant, this is the task of political pedagogy as he expresses it in his Answer to the Question “What is Enlightenment?” It
is all about freeing oneself from the restraints of what Kant famously describes as one’s self-imposed “tutelage”—immaturity or irresponsibility (Kant, 1999, p. 11-23). Such liberation is not easy.

In Kant’s day, as in our own, the tendency was to take things on authority, be it abstractly or generically, from books, newspapers, and today, radio, film, television, and internet, including social media trends. Thus we ‘follow’ an array of leaders. In Kant’s case, repeating a plea Luther had made before him in praise of the princes—for Kant this would be the same Frederick II to whom he dedicates his reply to What is Enlightenment?—one praises one’s supposed moral guide in order, by such conciliation, to encourage him (see Nietzsche, 1980b, p. 458-459). The project is as old as education itself. To this measure, Nietzsche’s own in usum Delphinorum, reflecting on the kind of education designed for those who would be likely to be made kings, i.e., for the sake of the Dauphin, also highlights, as Plato had argued, the importance of education for the sake of guiding and above all for the sake of forming rulers: guarding, in this sense, the guards. For the Greeks these would be self-mastered rulers, as we shall see below, rulers of the self: but this was the same as to say that these individuals would not be slaves and ultimately that they would be nobles, born to rule others. And students of education know that just as Plato inaugurated this enterprise at the beginning of philosophical reflections on education and politics, Machiavelli too set his sights on the value of guiding or advising princes and kings.

In this lineage, Kant proposes his own encomium to the prince with a single elegantly dissonant echo, “Caesar non eat supra grammaticos” [Caesar is not above the grammarians], a theme that also echoes in Plato and Aristotle. Nietzsche, a philologist and consequently a grammarian, reminds us in this spirit that the task of finding a suitable educator—just in order to overcome one’s lack of maturity or self-responsibility (i.e., Kant’s “tutelage”)—is difficult. For as Nietzsche reminds us (and now we are back to the circle of knowledge), all such undertakings presuppose self-knowledge.

To work out a path towards finding oneself, Nietzsche proposes a pragmatic, tactical technique, or “spiritual exercise.” This is “the secret” of education in his essay Schopenhauer as Educator, in which Nietzsche recounts the technical virtues that describe a memory palace, including a reflection on how to make one, and even more importantly, on how to use one. As always, if we mean to understand Nietzsche’s meaning, we cannot dispense with Nietzsche’s discipline of learned philology, which is the act of hermeneutic reading, interpreting, and setting the text in its historical context.

With its explicit reference to the classical study of study, Nietzsche’s example of mnemonics in his Schopenhauer as Educator offers nothing less than the details of the practice of constructing such a memory palace—its how and its why—and his account should be taken together with Aristotle’s practical philosophy of self-perfection, as theory and method, all in one:

Let the young soul look back on life with the question: what have you up to now truly loved, what has raised up your soul, what has mastered it and at the same time delighted it? Arrange these admired objects before you in a row, and perhaps they will reveal to you, through their essence and their order, a law, the foundational law of your own self.
Compare these objects, the way the one completes, expands, exceeds, transfigures another, how they build a stepladder upon which you have until now ascended to yourself; for your true nature does not lie hidden deep within you, but immeasurably high above you or at least above that which you usually take as your Ego. (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 340-341)

As with any comparison of different aspects, bracketing prejudices and societal convictions, the point is to find a common aspect that does not change. This is what mathematicians, physicists, and philosophers call the invariant.

In this sense, the method Nietzsche proposes accords with the wisdom of the Delphic oracle—*gnothi se auton*, know thyself—a point that lies at the heart of Pindar’s poetic challenge: keep true to yourself, now that you have learned, as all of us, qua students and educators, have learned, who you are, what you are capable of. To explain this connection I turn to the physi-motor or bodily practice of memory and understanding, since Ivan Illich (1993) has offered a more contemporary account of this same technique in *In the Vineyard of the Text*, his guidebook (rather than just commentary) on Hugh of St Victor’s own medieval guide to the arts, the *Didascalicon*. Beginning with his own first chapter, “Reading Toward Wisdom,” Illich reads and comments on each word of the very first line. Thus, for example, in order to read *Lumen*, ‘light,’ he first undertakes a reflection upon *Sapientia*, noting that with the “second sentence of his first chapter Hugh begins to explain what wisdom does” (Illich, 1993, p. 17). Reading this second sentence, “*sapientia illuminat hominem*, ‘wisdom illuminates man’ … *ut seipsum agnoscat*, ‘so that he may recognize himself’” (p. 17), Illich offers a phenomenology of light as such—the text moves between ancient and medieval theories of vision—as well as hermeneutic reflection upon the conditions of reading, candles and parchment, the “translucent sheep-or goatskin” (p. 17). For Illich, this is a world of monasteries and studies, of gothic churches all coordinate indeed to a world where, as Abbot Suger relates his own account of his builder’s achievement, the message inscribed on the doors of the Abbey Church of St. Denis reads, “The dull mind rises to truth through that which is material / And, in seeing this light, is resurrected from its former submersion.” Thus Illich (1993) can refer to the chiaroscuro worldliness of Caravaggio as demonstrating a Renaissance “delight in shadows and in the painting of things that are hidden in darkness” (p. 19). By contrast, the medieval world celebrated the shining illumination of gold. Thus Illich reflects upon the salutary importance of theological aesthetics in this regard: “the world is represented as if its beings all contained their own source of light” (p. 19). For Illich, the difference is between the medieval painters of a world of beings “who sparkle in their *Eigenlicht*” (p. 20), shining, literally, in their own light, and those who transmit or emanate light [*Sendelicht*]. But if the “shining eye” is thus a condition for seeing, the point as Illich presents it is that the fallen condition is matched by the illumination of the word.

It is in this shadowed human condition—the Canadian modern Thomist Bernard Lonergan uses the language of scotosis (see Lonergan, 1992, p. 191-192)—that Illich (1993) argues that Hugh presents “the book as medicine for the eye. He implies that the book-page is a supreme remedy” (p. 17). Coming face to face with the page, the medieval reader can thereby find his true self, a path that necessarily takes him not to self-absorption but to the word, to the world, to others (this is the value of love) and thus to God. But Illich, who always attends to the details of the process,
focuses on the arts in question in this medieval guide to the arts, noting that the *Didascalicon*,
directed as it is to beginners, offers them “rules for ordered progress” (p. 33) and is specifically
designed to guide them to the “treasure chest in the reader’s heart” (p. 35). It is in this sense that
Illich undertakes to illuminate the image of such a treasure chest, ordered, its contents and their
locus intimately known to the user, according to the classical rhetorical (and here medieval)
model of the memory hall or palace. The physical disposition in question is the key to such a
memory.

“The treasures of wisdom are manyfold, and there are many hiding places in your heart: here
for gold, there for silver, elsewhere again for precious stones…. You must learn to
distinguish these spots, to know which is where, in order to remember where you have
placed this thing or that.” (Hugh of St. Victor, qtd. in Illich, 1993, p. 36)

Already we recognize the metaphor of value, of things as precious, more precious than gold.

“Just observe the moneychanger in the market and do like him. See how his hand darts into
the appropriate satchel … and instantly draws out the right coin....” (Hugh of St. Victor, qtd.
in Illich, 1993, p. 36)

Anyone who has found him- or herself in line behind a person struggling to find the right coin at
a checkout counter knows the powerful precision of this metaphor as a sign for wisdom (and one
is also and already well acquainted with the signs of its attrition with age).

Likewise—for this is a metaphor—one moves throughout an “imaginary inner space.” This is
the memory palace or domain. Hugh’s Latin is “modum imaginandi domesticum”—and Illich
reminds us of Hugh’s friend, Aelred of Rievaulx, who compares memory to “an immense hall
[aula] containing innumerable treasure chests [innumerabiles thesauros],” themselves containing
the images of things derived from the senses. By means of this descriptive and associative
schema the reader is introduced to a method for the study of scripture, listing “several thousand
items mentioned in the Bible” (p. 36) and thus detailing a technique for ordering and
remembering them. If the young monk is so directed to store and to organize his memory, it is
done through certain rote phrases that are productively automatic, as they open up a further
retrieval of content and context. Thus whenever needed, the right treasure is found for the right
time, and the “child’s mind [is] trained to build the memory mazes, and to establish the habit to
dart and retrieve in them” (Illich, 1993, p. 37).

Illich explains this point via his own experiential or existential phenomenology, recalling his
own youthful engagement with maps when he worked as a mountain guide, in order to contrast
orientation with and without maps, a contrast between western and non-western modes of haptic,
or bodily, physical orientation. Illich’s example of the Austrian mountains (and the Baedeker
ideal) is juxtaposed to his experience of finding himself in Tokyo without a map and thereby
having to rely upon other modes of finding one’s way (his host’s wife had guided him, and he
followed the turns of his body in memory in the absence of signs he could read). In the case of
the medieval guide to the arts, given, as Illich emphasizes, that such things as words themselves,
much less the spaces between words and the entire order of the text (Illich, 1993, p. 39ff),
including such things as tables of content and indices, had yet to be invented, the indispensability of such “mapless orientational” (Illich, 1993, p. 37) skills would have been that much more critical.

For Illich, who wrote a great deal about the difference between oral and written culture, what is key is that, as with the Dalmatian singers of tales, the techniques of memory exceed our powers of imagining, while the proof of the gusla singer’s prowess is in his singing. The fact of it, that is to say the actuality of it, shows that it is possible. The scholar’s challenge is to discover the how of it. For like the Homeric singers of the Iliad in the ages before the invention of writing, memory requires practice and technique. If Hugh of St Victor’s Didascalicon is a beginner’s book, the advanced or adept’s guide to the arts is something else again, and Illich points to a range of references, from Francis Yates’s The Art of Memory (1966) to Peabody’s The Winged Word (1975), and because his book is a feast of footnotes, to a good deal in between.  

Noting that the discrete, the bit-like, notion of a word per se is a sediment of the alphabet itself, Illich (1993) reminds us that the “Greek language originally had no word for ‘a word,’ singly identified” (p. 39). For Illich—and this insight and the importance of its insistence he shares with Nietzsche—it is because the alphabet itself “is an elegant technology for the visualization of sounds” since “it records sounds, not ideas” (p. 39). And for Illich what is remarkable about this—please think of Nietzsche’s music and word, i.e., of opera—is the extraordinary precision of the technology of the written word as an acoustic medium. As Illich notes, the phonetic alphabet “is foolproof: readers can be trained to voice things which they have never heard before” (p. 39). Manifestly, one can read a text in another language without understanding it. What Hugh of St Victor does is to take over an ancient art of rhetoric in a largely if not always exclusively oral tradition and translate it, render it, to the service of medieval text scholarship. The emphasis Illich places on mumbling, the eating of words, like the chewing of a text on the way to its incorporation in the heart but also on the way to the invention of silent reading, is part of this translation.

It is in this context that Illich includes for the reader an important reference to the Jesuit pedagogue Marcel Jousse, who pointed to often overlooked rhythmic elements in memory (Illich, 1993, p. 60-61). But as always, when it comes to education, one needs to seek further. Illich’s own concern is with the context of education per se, situated historically, and with the framework of medieval and renaissance scholarship and classical learning, very literally as a way of life, as we have come to appreciate this term in the wake above all of the work of Pierre Hadot (1995).

Nietzsche’s Ladder

Nietzsche offers as the task of education cultivation, yet not for its own sake, as if the point of education were solely to learn for the sake of pure learning (although, and as any scholar knows, that is an extraordinary delight), but, as Nietzsche puts it, for the sake of becoming free for life itself. Nietzsche thinks you can use yourself and what you love for the sake of this project. No matter how young you are, Nietzsche reminds us, the best guide to the self is already at hand to the extent that you already know what you love. This is what moves you, and as Hadot (1995)
has pointed out, likewise following Nietzsche, this is also the key to any spiritual exercise, no matter whether it be that of Marcus Aurelius, Plotinus, or the founder of the Jesuits, St. Ignatius of Loyola. In examining our own hearts, Nietzsche asks us to ask ourselves, “what until now have you truly loved, what has lifted up your soul, what has mastered it and at the same time enchanted it?” (1980g, p. 340). What you discern in this is what moves you. This is what tames and claims and charms you all at once. But what follows takes us back to Illich’s market-trader, who has prearranged a place for everything of value, so that he knows where it is and can find it instantly. In Nietzsche’s Schopenhauer as Educator, in anyone’s search for an educator, the point is to discover what has value for the individual, as this varies from person to person. If the ordering in question follows the schema of the classic rhetorician’s memory palace, the result is more than a method to recall points one might wish to commit to memory for the sake of an important presentation. Here the project is to build a studiosum, the study chamber of one’s heart, for the object of study is the self, and the question is Schopenhauer’s question—who, indeed, are you; what, indeed, are you about:

Arrange these admired objects before you in a row, and perhaps they will present for you, through their essence and their order, a law, the foundational law of your authentic self. (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 340)

The things you love are used to descry yourself—and if you study their relation to each other, how they are themselves ordered with one another and in your heart, you may find your way to ascend to yourself, above yourself, beyond yourself, as Nietzsche suggests that this you is more than you ever supposed. In this way, the educator that one should discover for oneself has everything to do with that same ascent, and the technique is the same:

Compare these objects, see how one completes, broadens, surpasses, transfigures the other, how they form a ladder upon which you have ascended to yourself as you are now; for your true essence lies, not concealed deep within you, but immeasurably high above you, or at least above that which you routinely take to be your Ego. (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 340-341)

In this sense, education for Nietzsche is always a triumph of emancipation to the extent that such an accession inevitably reveals not only an inner ideal, but a progress, like the old pilgrim’s progress, evidenced by the way in which these treasures are what ultimately brought you to where you are: you already stand and lean on them in order to have attained the vantage point you have already reached. And yet, and here there is a turn around, one discovers in all this that one cannot in the end be educated, and that the point of seeking an educator is to discover that this ineducability only means that education is about liberation:

Your true educators and sculptors betray for you what the true original meaning and foundational material of your essence is, something thoroughly ineducable and unformable, yet in any case accessible only with difficulty, bound, lamed: your educators can only be your liberators. (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 341)

This ideal echoes Nietzsche’s great sympathy for both Baruch Spinoza and Blaise Pascal, and it hints at what he ultimately believes will be grace or the “light of art”:
[It] is the consummation of nature when it deflects her cruel and incompassionate assaults and converts them to the good, when it throws a veil over her stepmotherly aspect and her desolate lack of understanding. (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 341)

In this fashion, both liberated and concealed, Nietzsche discovers or “finds” himself as he reads Schopenhauer.

Telling himself his own story in this way, Nietzsche undertakes a kind of educational “cruising,” to use Tracy Strong’s calculatedly risqué language. But if Strong is playing on the very American search for the self, he is also reflecting on the search for an educator in accounts given by authors from Marcus Aurelius to Augustine and Descartes and Rousseau. Yet the seductiveness of confessional expression—and my earlier reference in connection with Illich’s *In the Vineyard of the Text* to Pierre Hadot’s *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (1995) has some of the same charms and the some of the same dangers—can obscure the urgency of the task Nietzsche saw before him at the start of his call to begin teaching at the University of Basel in Switzerland. It is owing to this urgency too that he would go on to title his own reflections or meditations as *untimely*. The concern then was not for his own success or career as a scholar in his own day, and clearly not, for from the start, Nietzsche found himself compelled to challenge his own educational institutions. One might argue that Illich had related reasons for issuing his own challenge to education in the time of cultural ferment in the ‘seventies, when he first wrote his book *De-Schooling Society* (2000). But where Illich offers a phenomenology of schooling, reflecting on what it takes to learn and asking what it is that schooling, qua schooling, offers simply given the fact that learning often comes about by other means, sometimes far more expeditiously and compellingly so, Nietzsche prefers to ponder the disparity of the scholar’s vocation in practice and ideal, which Nietzsche takes into a reflection on the differences between one scholarly expert and another, not unlike the reflections Max Weber will later offer with respect to both science [*Wissenschaft*] and politics. Now Nietzsche had been burned as a scholar after the publication of his first work. The scholarly silence on Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, a book about words and sound, a silence different from but not unrelated to the scholarly silence on Illich’s *In the Vineyard of the Text*, makes it difficult to see these parallels. But where Illich enjoyed a certain popular success that soured his academic reception and left him free to continue his own thinking from *Deschooling Society* to *In the Vineyard of the Text*, it was Nietzsche’s scholarly exclusion from his own field that would ultimately liberate his thinking as he reflected on his own field of philology and specifically on education. What is certain in any case is that success tends to muzzle a thinker, and it certainly deflects critique, above all institutional, disciplinary critique. To this day academic stars are as short on criticism of their field as they are on any critique of other scholars (who usually make no appearance in their footnotes). For Nietzsche the great majority of scholars could be compared to machines churning automatically away, eager to toe the line at the latest trend, unwilling to consider critique in fear of anything that might rock the boat and disturb their path to conventional security. For most it is all about the job, all about getting financing, grants, etc., and if the ancient satirist Lucian already teased scholars for their avarice and adoration of power (see Lucian, 1921 and 1929), Nietzsche’s
distaste for the scholar reflected not only the scholar’s cupidity and banality but also the aridity, the dryness of his element, the dust of books, the ‘greyness’ of most scholarly thinking. Nietzsche had argued in his inaugural lecture at Basel that claims to expertise were often so many assertions of personal scholarly taste, convention, or prejudice. The problem, as he argued in a related passage in Schopenhauer as Educator, is that such conventionalities offer a convenient hiding place for the narrowly competent as well as for the incompetent and also for the malformed, adding, to be sure, as Plato had done some millennia in advance of Nietzsche, that decadence in educational institutions once begun can only get worse over time:

What won’t pass, even among our most exclusive and best informed gentry, under the title of family tutor, what a mingle-mangle of addlepates and antiques is frequently denominated as a high school and thought to be good; what are all of us not satisfied with for our highest educational establishment, as university, with what leaders, with what institutions, by comparison with the difficulty of the assignment: to educate a human being to be a human being! Even the much admired fashion in which German scholars set about their intellectual vocation shows above all that they think more of their scientific endeavors than of humanity, that like a sunken reef, they have learned to sacrifice themselves to it, so as in turn to lure new generations to the same sacrifice. (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 343-344)

Nietzsche goes on in these same very German terms (German theorists of education and its politics still talk this way) to indict the political health of Germany. What Nietzsche is able to discover in Schopenhauer is not the educator in rhetoric and style that one might have supposed (and rightly supposed, given Schopenhauer’s accomplishments as a stylist), nor indeed the educator in morals or the virtue that seems to be traditional. Instead Nietzsche finds a friend—and this same discovery is also how he comes to speak of the self when he speaks of Schopenhauer. And the discovery Nietzsche observes, the friend he finds in Schopenhauer, is due to the way Schopenhauer writes.

The encounter with the author as friend is very different, if distally related, to the parallel instantiation that Nietzsche is drawing upon here, that of Augustine who hears the voice of the friend: tolle lege, take and read. Nietzsche tells us that he comes across Schopenhauer’s books in very nearly the same Augustinian atmosphere: no fig tree, to be sure, no declaration of burning, but still surrounded by books, and still trying this one, and then that one (we recall again Strong’s emphasis upon Nietzsche’s report of finding the educator, seriatim, “trying this one and that”). For Nietzsche, what is telling is a spiritual, affective, intimate connection with an author who in a very important way wrote and therefore spoke as if he directly addressed himself to Nietzsche, the reader. This style of writing intrigued Nietzsche, who took what Schopenhauer wrote, “as if it were for me he had written” (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 340). Nietzsche emphasizes that this manner of speaking is sheerly used “just to make myself understandable, however immodest or foolish” (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 340). His point in saying this is that in reading Schopenhauer he would be seduced not to become Schopenhauer’s disciple, but to become his own person instead. Discovering how this works is all about knowing something about the art of language, the art of writing, and the art of reading. This is philology, the hermeneutics of reading or interpretation.
The personal affinity Nietzsche discovered was only possible because Schopenhauer did not write in a popular fashion. Schopenhauer’s style is not the Strunk and White variety, or the sort of style writing clinics might counsel for today’s undergraduates ‘writing across the curriculum,’ or the sort of journalistic inoffensiveness that might permit one to write copy for a novel or a play for stage or a screenplay for the next television miniseries. Schopenhauer disdained the clichés—today we might say the memes—of his times. Still more plainly, Nietzsche’s point is that Schopenhauer, who took extraordinary care with his writing, did not write in a way that would have guaranteed literary or scholarly fame. Naturally this entailed that Schopenhauer did not become a best seller (this is also why Nietzsche could happen upon his books in a used book store at a price the young professor could easily afford—able to buy not merely one, which is a commonplace in used book shops in Germany and Switzerland, but both of the two volumes he found). Instead of writing for effect, writing for fame, Nietzsche writes, Schopenhauer wrote for himself, which also meant, Nietzsche argues, that he did not write for himself alone or indeed for his times alone. In this way, Nietzsche characterizes Schopenhauer’s specifically non-stylized stylization, i.e., his artless artfulness, by saying that so far from trying to make an appearance in the popular eye, serving up popular opinion in the marketplace of ideas, “Schopenhauer never wants to seem [scheinen]: hence he writes for himself” (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 346). The intimate vocative address, as Nietzsche writes on the educator he found for himself, in his own encounter not with the man but with his writings, calls to the reader as if, as though, no one else were intended apart from the reader.

Thus writes Nietzsche, our own educator, whom we encounter not as a man but through his writings. And here it matters that we tend to skip Nietzsche’s educators, not just Schopenhauer, in our impatience to take him as our educator, our author, our thinker. This paradoxical point takes us back to the element of seduction essential for every kind of pedagogic undertaking. For what is needed is love, and what love always needs is forbearance (that is, putting up with one another).

The element of seduction is in play just to the extent that David B. Allison can begin his _Reading the New Nietzsche_ (2001) by emphasizing the effect of Nietzsche as familiar, as a personal discovery all one’s own: “Nietzsche writes for you, the reader, only you” (Allison, 2001, p. 1). For his own part, as we have seen in Nietzsche’s account of his own discovery of a personal educator, the tactic of writing in such a fashion, well beyond Schopenhauer, has everything to do with just this style of intimate address as Allison identifies it. As Nietzsche tells us, it is the Bible, in particular it is the New Testament itself, that exemplifies a style of writing that is, seemingly, but in this case it means really and truly, directed to you, to you the reader, and only to you. Unpacking this stylistic point in some detail in the second volume of his _Human, All-Too-Human_, Nietzsche observes of “the book that speaks of Christ” (Nietzsche, 1980e, p. 417) that no other book “contains such an abundance, so earnestly expressed ... of that which occasionally does every human being good” (Nietzsche, 1980e, p. 417). Addressed to everyone, a book for everyone is accordingly universal, but to have value it must be specifically, uniquely addressed to each individual.
How is such a style of writing possible? How can anything written for each of us also be addressed to everyone collectively? How does one write a book for everyone? How can this be done? Nietzsche’s answer in the case of the New Testament is the word of the Word, the word of the good book, the good news of love: the “most refined artifice, which Christianity has above all other religions, is a word: it speaks of love” (Nietzsche, 1980e, p. 414). And this is a quite literal affair, as Nietzsche emphasizes, for the word “love”—as a word—works by way of its uncannily metonymic allure:

There is in the word love something so ambiguous and inspiring, speaking to memory and to hope, that even the lowest intelligence and the coldest heart feels something of the luster of this word. (Nietzsche, 1980e, p. 414-415)

This same associative power, Nietzsche goes on to observe, affects both body and soul, however the listener may be sensually or else spiritually attuned. This metonymic conviction “proceeds from the idea that God could only demand of his creature and likeness, the human being, what would be possible for him to fulfill” (Nietzsche, 1980e, p. 414). Because God loves you (and whole metaphysical dominions, levels, and degrees of the same are involved in this faith), the believer is able to believe that “the commandment ‘Be perfect, as your father in heaven is perfect’” (Nietzsche, 1980e, p. 414, citing Matthew 5:48), could “in fact become a life of bliss” (Nietzsche, 1980e, p. 414). The New Testament enables this confident conviction by way of nothing less than its language and its style. It speaks to the heart, the same heart’s treasure that we already referred to in speaking of Ivan Illich on the education of the word in his discussion of Hugh of St. Victor. And beyond the medieval era, Beethoven inscribes the same word over the Kyrie in his Missa Solemnis, “From the Heart, and may it reach the heart.” [Vom Herzen, möge es wieder, zu Herzen gehen!] With sufficient perspicacity, Nietzsche reflects, one can learn from The New Testament, as exemplar,

all the means through which a book can be made into a universal book, a friend of everyone, namely that master means of representing everything as having been already found, nothing yet to come and still uncertain. (Nietzsche, 1980e, p. 417)

I, the reader, am the intended addressee of this good news, as are you, and you, and you. Where religious and self-help tracts follow the gospel, writing for and to everyone, Schopenhauer writes for himself, so Nietzsche says, and we get the sense that Nietzsche’s subtitie to his Zarathustra, highlighting its qualities as A Book for All and None, is meant to go Schopenhauer one better. “This is my way, where is yours?”

Writing Schopenhauer as Educator, Nietzsche invokes an author who would seem to have written for Nietzsche as reader, as learner. But it turns out that such an affinity, such a connection is only possible because Schopenhauer’s directed interlocutor is not the reader per se (as some authors write “Dear Reader,” rather in the fashion in which one might write “Dear Diary”) but the writer himself, Schopenhauer himself, excluded as he was from the academy, from the received scholarly mainstream of his day. Nietzsche thus reflects that Schopenhauer benefits from his isolation (and we may recall by contrast that the theologian David Strauss suffers in the context of Nietzsche’s Untimely Meditations from his popularity—this is revealed
in the first of his four meditations—and so too, as Nietzsche will later argue, does Wagner, observed in the last meditation). The exclusive point, albeit somewhat differently expressed as a more popularizing strategy, may be compared to the tactic of inclusion deployed by the pop singer k.d. lang, who regularly confides (intimately so, in a confession offered to everyone who happens to be in the concert audience on any given evening) the very same secret in all her concerts, interrupting her performance to remind her fans that everyone there is a freak, because, and after all, everyone there is at a k.d. lang concert—what would your friends say, ah, if only they knew! The conspiratorial tone invites intimacy—one is in such good company—but the point of making the distinction in this context is to assure her audience (this goes along with another sales pitch reminding them to buy the concert memorabilia for sale and where they can find cups, CDs and such) that everyone there is unique. The tactic is common at many concerts, whether it’s the Boss himself, or Puff Daddy, or Lady Gaga, or Adele, or for old folk, Neil Young or Mick Jagger and so on—and you can just add your favorite musician here. Of course it also works when selling time-shares (but that’s another story).

Nietzsche’s reference is to the Greek ideal of friendship, which permits him to highlight the rare character of the philosopher. Most philosophers, Nietzsche will argue, have been solitary sorts. The idea of the married philosopher is laughable less because Nietzsche mocks the idea of marriage than because of its sheer implausibility. Marriage would have to be a consummate friendship, but as he points out, echoing Aristotle himself and not less Plato’s Socrates, even plain vanilla friendship, unalloyed, the crown of all the virtues, is also one of the rarest. And the elusiveness of friends weighed on Nietzsche. In addition to the inevitable dangers of isolation, which both Nietzsche and Schopenhauer shared, there is also what Nietzsche describes as the Kleistian despair of the truth, a despair which, so he argues, haunts anyone who thinks through the problem of knowledge, the problem he names the “problem of science” (Nietzsche, 1980c, p. 13), qua problem or qua questionable, in his “Attempt at a Self-Critique” in his re-issue of his first book on tragedy, renamed exactly in Schopenhauer’s honor, The Birth of Tragedy: Or Hellenism and Pessimism. It is this despair and its dangers to which I now turn in conclusion.

**Poetry and Critique**

Nietzsche invokes Kant’s critical philosophy in *Schopenhauer as Educator* in the context of the debate on nihilism with specific reference to the sensibility of the poet Heinrich von Kleist. Thus Nietzsche foregrounds the rare quality that must be presupposed just in order to understand Kant, arguing that—with the exception of Schopenhauer—few have grasped what follows from Kant’s writing not only for philosophy, but also, and this point is key to Nietzsche’s philosophy of science, for its consequences in the sciences, especially the natural and formal sciences, particularly logic and mathematics. In Nietzsche’s aphoristic formulation of this larger point, “if the sciences are correct, then we no longer stand on Kant’s foundation; if Kant is correct, then the sciences are incorrect” (Nietzsche 1980f, p. 459).

In this way Nietzsche highlights the difference between supposing that one has read and understood Kant and the living consequences of such a reading:
Indeed it seems to me as if Kant had acted upon and transformed the marrow and blood of only the fewest human beings. Yet ever since, as one can read everywhere, the achievement of this quiet scholar is said to have broken forth as a revolution across all scholarly fields, but I cannot believe that. (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 355)

The point here has to be understood in the context of the philosophy of science, the notion, idea, of any philosophy of science able to come forth as such. To be able to question science, as Nietzsche following Kant sought to do, to be able indeed to put science itself in question, is the ultimate challenge for critical thinking. This point takes us back to the initial reflections in this paper on Kant’s *What is Enlightenment?* For Nietzsche, after Kant, one is to take nothing, science included, indeed especially science—and not only political practice, morality, or faith—on authority. Nihilism, as the poet Heinrich von Kleist realized, is the danger. Nietzsche sets this poetic insight into the mouth of the tightrope walker [*Seiltanzer*] who emerges in the course of *Zarathustra’s* Prologue and eventually falls to his death, thereby ultimately punctuating Zarathustra’s first public speech. The figure of the tightrope dancer is essential, because although Zarathustra himself pays no attention to the constellation of the tightrope walker’s performance, the spectacle is manifestly prepared for all and sundry, as it is when Zarathustra appears on the scene intending to address the people who were duly “assembled in the market square” in “the nearest of the towns set lying against the forest” (Nietzsche, 1980a, p. 14). But Zarathustra’s consummate inattention to this same pre-figuring, as even he might have been able to guess from the crowds, from the “foretold” [*es war verheissen worden*] (Nietzsche, 1980a, p. 14) and thus expected performance of the tightrope dancer, can only be self-pleasing, a deception: one sees what one wants to see. The audience did not come to hear Zarathustra, and we come to see that the attention the people appeared from Zarathustra’s vantage point to be paying to him had nothing to do with him and even less to do with his words (details that compound Zarathustra’s denunciation of his [non-] audience’s incomprehension of his message to them). Literally, quite literally, Zarathustra is talking over the heads of those who are assembled there, spectators who have come—and this compelled all their attention—to see the performance of the “foretold” tightrope dancer (“Zarathustra’s Vorrede,” Nietzsche, 1980a, p. 14ff). And to be sure, it came to pass as Zarathustra was speaking that the performance began its course. As the talk itself finished, to Zarathustra’s irritation at the crowd’s evident non-response, the tightrope dancer managed to make it to the “middle of his way” on the rope hung between two of the town’s towers when a colorful fool, the figure usually associated with the tightrope dancer in literature and art in Germany, skittered across the same rope and began to mock the performer with loud words, demanding that he make way, springing over the original tightrope walker who, thereby unbalanced, falls to his ultimate death in the marketplace below.

Zarathustra rushes to the side of the broken, dying performer to pronounce the legacy of nihilism, comforting him at the hour of his death with the Enlightenment account “there is no Devil and no Hell. Your soul will be dead even faster than your body; now fear nothing more!” (Nietzsche, 1980a, p. 22). None too surprisingly, the crushed man’s response is seemingly given in Heinrich von Kleist’s voice, as Nietzsche had earlier foregrounded this voice in *Schopenhauer as Educator*. Here, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the dying man is no less melancholic:
“If you speak the truth,” he said then, “I have lost nothing when I leave life. I am not much more than an animal that one has taught to dance through beatings and starvation.” (Nietzsche 1980a, p. 22)

Zarathustra’s reply to this is that there is nothing disreputable in risking danger in one’s choice of vocation, and we read Zarathustra’s promise to honor him for dying such a death by burying him with his own hands. The promise can seem perplexing to today’s readers, as Zarathustra digs no grave, but why would he? The classic way to “bury a body” did not involve digging a grave, either in Greece or in the Germany of the Todtenbaum as Heidegger emphasizes it, so after carrying the corpse for some time, Zarathustra leaves it in the hollow of a tree.26 The entire vignette, given Nietzsche’s Zarathustra’s news of the death of God and just to the extent that atheism is absolute theism, the teaching Zarathustra comes to teach, the teaching of the eternal return of the same, can only strike the reader as a play on nothingness: nihilism again.

In his early essay on Schopenhauer, as we have been discussing it above—and and we recall that the notion of eternal recurrence was not alien to Schopenhauer, who also embraced another, more Eastern enlightenment—Nietzsche reflects upon what is required so that Schopenhauer might be taken as an educator. The question can be reframed for any educator, any philosopher. What is the intellectual, what is the affective precondition necessary for an understanding of Kant, including an understanding (necessary for Schopenhauer as for Jacobi, etc.) of the consequences of the Kantian critique? To be at all affected by Kant—as indeed to be affected by Schopenhauer or by Nietzsche—one must be capable of grasping, precisely as not everyone is capable of grasping, the very revolutionary consequence of Kant’s arguments with regard, once again, to “the problem” per se “of science itself,” as Nietzsche expressed this most critical of all critical questions: science considered “for the first time as problematic as questionable” (Nietzsche, 1980c, p. 13).27 Rare readers of this kind would be exposed, abandoned to doubt, to radical doubt, and to the consequences of the same. Such thinkers included Descartes and Spinoza, Hume and Kant for Nietzsche.28

In his discussion of such philosophical knights of the spirit, Nietzsche sets apart the poets who draw these same insights to their ultimate consequences. Such ultimately “noble and active spirits, who could never have been able to bear living in doubt, would in his place have met a shattering and despair of all truth as in the example of Heinrich von Kleist’s experience of Kantian philosophy” (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 355). Nietzsche here cites Kleist’s description of the moral effects of the Kantian revolution in epistemology: “We cannot decide” (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 355), as Nietzsche tells us that Kleist writes in a letter to a friend,

if that which we name truth truly is truth, or whether it only appears to us as such. If the latter, then the truth we gather together here is nothing upon our death, and all our strivings to secure a possession that will follow us to the grave are in vain. (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 357)

It is as if to answer this question in moral philosophy that Schopenhauer proposes the one rule of compassion, neminem laede [injure no one], a rule which requires much more than the pity Nietzsche excoriates. Schopenhauer’s moral ideal of loving kindness—and that is, of course, the plain meaning of compassion: cause or make no one suffer, Neminem laede—always includes
the corollary “*imo omnes, quantum potes, juva*”—*much rather help everyone as much as you can.* Compassion thus entails “the immediate participation independently of all ulterior considerations, primarily in the *suffering* of another, and thus in the prevention or elimination of it; for all satisfaction and all well-being and happiness consist in this” (Schopenhauer, 1995, p. 144).29

As Nietzsche explains in the second of his *Untimely Meditations, On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life*, “In truth, few people truly serve truth, because only a few have the pure will to be just, and of these the very fewest have the strength to be able to be just” (Nietzsche, 1980h, p. 287).

When Nietzsche goes on to write *Schopenhauer as Educator* he also points out what becomes a major concern in this regard—and this is perhaps the most signal characteristic of his thinking, for it is the reason we need critical and genealogical thinking—we are opaque to ourselves: we do not know ourselves. Thus Nietzsche emphasizes that it is qua educated, that is, qua knowers—and it matters in the spirit of education to note that Nietzsche does not opt to speak of “men of knowledge” but simply and plainly knowers: *Wir Erkennenden* (Nietzsche, 1980i, p. 248)—that we neither know nor seek ourselves. In his reflections on acquiring an educator, in our pursuit of cultivation, Nietzsche details a series of difficulties involved in coming to know ourselves, and we have already referred to his mnemonic art as the dynamic behind all learning, and behind any chance of finding ourselves.

Who are we? Are we up to the task of knowing this or that? What is at stake is coming to know for and in ourselves whether we possess the rare character needed for getting ourselves a culture, as Nietzsche puts it, especially with regard to the illusions and the obstacles that stand in the way of finding ourselves even when, and perhaps especially when, echoing Plato, we do happen to possess just such a rare nature. It is not easy to reflect on ourselves, and meditations, or observations out of time, *untimely* reflections, are not neutral, and they are not without danger. “How easy it is” thereby, Nietzsche says,

> to do yourself damage that no doctor can heal. And beyond this, for what would it be needed, as indeed everything bears witness to our nature—our friendships and our enemies, our regard and handshake, our memory and that which we forget, our books and our handwriting. (Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 340)

In this sense, I conclude this essay on the substance of Nietzsche’s reflections on the value of the philosopher, the thinker as an educator for life, by reflecting, as he does in an aphorism entitled “*There are no educators*” (Nietzsche 1980e, p. 667-668), that the problem of education as such is that it is either, inevitably, an untested experiment or else it is a rote exercise for establishing mediocrity and banality, according to whatever taste happens to be in force, just as Illich would argue almost a century later. As Nietzsche points out here, education heretofore has been the project of “parents and teachers,” which, as he says, one “fiercely honest” voice has rightly called “*nos enemmis naturels*” (Nietzsche 1980e, p. 668). Only by “finding oneself as oneself” after the world has long imagined one fully educated can “the task of thinking” truly begin. To this extent, Nietzsche's own reflections are not offered “as an educator, but only as someone self-
educated, who has experience.” (Nietzsche 1980e, p. 668) All education in this sense is self-education, and for us, in our times, this means that we are still called upon to overspring tradition just where such a leap means that we are called to learn the ways, the contours, the complexities of that same tradition, and thus, like Nietzsche, find ourselves.

We have, for Nietzsche, hardly begun to leap into our own light.30
References


Notes

1 The account was originally related by Schopenhauer to his friend Julius Frauenstädt. See Salter (1911, p. 18) for one of the earliest accounts in English, duly citing Salter’s own source: Julius Paul Möbius, *Ueber Schopenhauer. Mit 12 Bildnissen* (Leipzig: Barth, 1899).


3 All translations of Nietzsche are my own, from *Kritische Studienausgabe* (1980d). I cite individual texts from this collection separately.

4 For the original, see Immanuel Kant, “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?” (*Berlinische Monatsschrift*, December, 1784).


6 I discuss the complexities of Nietzsche’s motto, as indeed of translating Pindar’s phrase, in Babich (2009).


8 Abbot Suger is thus calling attention to the magnificence of the bronze doors he made as a portal in his rebuilding of the Abbey of St. Denis, but also to the role of the door (which we recall, functioning as doors do, as providing architectural ‘light’): “Whoever thou art, if thou seekest to extol the glory of these doors, / Marvel not at the gold and the expense but at the craftsmanship of the work. / Bright is the noble work; but, being nobly bright, the work / Should brighten the minds, so that they may travel, through the true lights, / To the True Light where Christ is the true door. / In what manner it be inherent in this world the golden door defines: / The dull mind rises to truth through that which is material / And, in seeing this light, is resurrected from its former submersion.” Translation here from Erwin Panofsky (1979), p. 47-49.

9 See further, as Illich suggests, Wolfgang Schöne (1954) and C. Van Schönborn (1976).

10 See also Paul Saenger (1997).
See additionally James A. Notopoulos (1938) and Eric A. Havelock (1982).

Illich’s reference point with regard to rhythm and gesture and memory throughout his text also has to do with the alphabet, the syllable, the word, the sentence, etc. For Illich all the phonetic alphabet is inherently a sedimented interplay with oral and text traditions and thus the rhythms, the sounding of readings and the work of the same (literally) on memory. Illich’s argument for its own part is illustrated between his footnote references and his explicative glosses in text, including the reference to Jousse, but also to Gerhart Ladener (1905-1993). I discuss this a bit more detail in a different context, in Babich (2014).

See Angèle Kramer-Marietti (1996) for discussion and further references.

Tracy Strong varies Nietzsche’s sampling selection of different philosophical offerings—‘I tried this one and that one’ (cf. Nietzsche, 1980g, p. 346)—in his introduction to the expanded edition of *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (2000, p. xxx, note 20).


See Illich, *Deschooling Society* (2000). The parallel Illich makes in his book is a complex one, but his point (which he argues can show the role that school plays as an instrument of globalization) is offered on the backdrop of cooption and cultural imperialism, especially as this is evident in underdeveloped countries, but which can also be seen at any level in society, especially in the contrast between high and low. As Illich notes in his own context, which focuses on the former: “With very rare exceptions, the university graduate from a poor country feels more comfortable with his North American and European colleagues than with his non-schooled compatriots, and all students are academically processed to be happy only in the company of fellow consumers of the products of the educational machine” (p. 34). Illich’s point should be integrated with the tendency of any interlocutor to except himself from this equation while yet acknowledging the injustice and exclusions of the academy. Cf., in the context of our own society—i.e., one does not need to travel to Illich’s Mexico nor indeed to Paulo Freire’s Brazil—McIntosh (2007).

Books famous in one age are rarely famous in another. Some are, and the ‘objective’ task of judging which were was, famously enough, the vexed point of departure for David Hume’s essay on the standard of taste (Hume, 1965). See for a discussion Babich (Autumn 2012).

The title *Reading the New Nietzsche* refers to an earlier edited book collection, David B. Allison, ed., *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation* (1985). The New Nietzsche in question is Nietzsche as read through Heidegger, Deleuze, and Derrida, but also Birault and Granier. For a discussion see Babich (Fall 2005 and Spring 2006).

I discuss this in the first few chapters of Babich (2013a).

("‘Friends, there are no friends!’ so cried the dying sage / ‘Foes, there are no foes,’ cried I, the living fool” Nietzsche, 1980e, p. 263). See further Nietzsche’s discussion of the friend in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche, 1980a, p. 71-73). The problem, and this reflection begins with Plato and continues in Aristotle, turns upon perception and representation—that would be what Nietzsche calls truth and lie—among friends.

The debate on nihilism had been going on for quite some time—nor has it abated to this day if it is often, thinking of Jaspers or Löwith or Heidegger, associated with Nietzsche’s teaching of the death of God. See for a discussion of this context, along with references to further literature, Babich (Spring 2010).

This is a conundrum. In the same way, and with regard to Kant’s moral philosophy, Nietzsche argues that Kant wanted to prove the common man right in a manner incomprehensible to the same common man.

The metaphor of the overman has everything to do with this, and the parabolic schema of Lucian’s *hyperanthropos* in his own *Downward Journey [Kataplous]* (a satirical dialogue set in the underworld, with Charon, Hermes and so on), with its terminology, illustrates the image of life (above) by contrast with its inevitable fall (below). See Babich (October 2010) and see again, as cited above, and for a more political reading, Babich (2013b).

A fuller discussion than is possible here would include a review of Friedrich Jahn’s (1828) study of German physical education. Jahn being a philologist and the father of physical exercise in Germany, it is highly unlikely that Nietzsche would not have been familiar with him, especially given Joseph von Eichendorff’s satirical ballad *Krieg den Philistern* (1824), written in a Lucianic mode contra the supposedly higher folk in this world and on behalf of the poets. Von Eichendorff is better known for his *Aus dem Leben eines Tauge-nichts* (1977).

The acanthus that is said to have inspired the capital style of the Corinthian column is an expression, a remnant of one of these classical traditions. In addition, the German, the old German, “Todtenbaum” as Heidegger recounts it for us in several loci, particularly with references to the different industries of death in modernity and in traditional peasant culture, is relevant here.

See on this question, Babich (1994) just for a start.

And in our day we name Nietzsche too along with Kierkegaard and Marx, and we name Adorno. Adorno is thus the last member of the Frankfurt School in its originally critical sense,
apart from Herbert Marcuse (who was less so) and Günther Anders (who was more so). The new Frankfurt School has the unfortunate distinction of not being critical in any but the conventional sense.

29 I reflect on some of these points in connection with neuroscience in Babich (February 2012).

30 This essay was initially written and presented in November 2012 at the invitation of Dean John Bach and with the support of Dean Isabelle Frank of Fordham University’s School of Continuing and Professional Studies as a Dean’s List address. A different version presented on April 23rd in celebration of David B. Allison (as educator) at the 43rd anniversary of PhDs in Philosophy at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. The author is grateful to the journal’s reviewers for helpful critique and to the editors, Professors Guillemette Johnston and Allan Johnston, as well as to Sam Rocha.
I’ve come to think of Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Untimely Meditations*¹ as a sort of symphony, in which the philosopher-as-composer explores two distinct, but nevertheless related, themes of culture and character, *Kultur* and *Bildung*, via a series of four philosophical “movements,” each represented by one of the four essays.² The first movement, if you will, *David Strauss as Writer and Confessor*, treats the themes from the perspective of theology and history of religion. The essay’s first section presents a definition of *Kultur³* that remains operative throughout all four of the *Untimely Meditations*:

Culture is a unity of artistic style that manifests itself throughout all the vital self-expressions of a people. However, vast knowledge and pedantic learning are neither a requisite means to, nor a symptom of, culture; indeed, these generally prove themselves most compatible with the opposite, with barbarism—that is, with absence of style, or the chaotic hodgepodge of all styles. (Nietzsche, 1995, p. 9)⁴

The second untimely meditation, or movement, in the *Kultur-Bildung* symphony, *On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life*, constitutes a set of variations on the advantages and disadvantages of monumental, antiquarian, and critical history. Here, too, Nietzsche explains:

The culture of a people ... is the antithesis of that barbarism once termed—and in my opinion, rightfully so—the unity of an artistic style that manifests itself throughout all the vital self-expressions of a people.... A people to whom we attribute a culture should in all reality be but a single, vital unity and not fall apart so miserably into inner and outer, content and form. (Nietzsche, 1995, p. 111)⁵

Nietzsche also addresses the theme in a passage from an unpublished essay titled “Philosophy in Hard Times” found in his notebooks from the spring of 1873, the same period during which he wrote the essay on history. “Redefinition of culture: a single temperament and key (*Stimmung*) composed of many originally hostile forces, which now enable a melody to be played” (Nietzsche, 1979a, p. 109).⁶ The third movement of the *Untimely Meditations* examines the *Kultur-Bildung* complex from the perspective of *Schopenhauer as Educator*, and the fourth suggests that the music-dramas of *Richard Wagner at Bayreuth* might lead to the rebirth of *Bildung* in contemporary German *Kultur*.

While a great deal of interpretive energy has been expended on the first half of Nietzsche’s essay on history, most notably Hayden White’s (1975) definition of historiographic tropes and Michel Foucault’s (1980) reflections on the genealogy of origins, the second half of the essay, which frequently alludes to music, musical acoustics, and musical composition, has received far less attention. Concentrating on this second portion of the essay, I will argue that Nietzsche’s
conception of history as musical variations composed on a well-known musical theme constitutes both a philosophy of history and a pedagogical method for teaching about the past.

The essay makes direct reference to types of historians via figurative comparisons to musicians. Beginning in section §6, the reader is introduced to the Historical Virtuoso, a personification of the least advantageous relation to history outlined in the essay’s preceding pages. Soon after, the Composer of History, who represents a vital and creative relation to the past, takes the stage. And, in the essay’s final section, we are invited into the Republic of Genius, where the musical perception of exceptionally resonant voices of the past, when apprehended in the present, become timeless.7

The Historical Virtuoso and the Composer of History

Nietzsche's Historical Virtuoso plays a lyre that resonates at the mere mention of “diverse ages and persons,” thus “nothing human is alien” to his sensibilities. Accordingly, he is nothing more than a passive “sounding-board whose reflected tones act upon other similar sounding-boards until the whole of the air of the age is confused” by the competing echoes. “[I]t seems,” Nietzsche continues, “that only the harmonics, as it were, of the original historical note remain audible” and, as a consequence, the “harshness and power of the original can no longer be divined in the thin and shrill sound of the lyre strings.” The fundamental tone, which “usually awakened deeds, difficulties, and terrors,” can no longer be discerned.8 “It is as if the Eroica symphony had been arranged for two flutes, and were intended for the benefit of dreaming opium smokers” (p. 124).9

Shortly after, Nietzsche objects to the work of a "celebrated historical virtuoso," likely such a “scientific” historian as Leopold Ranke or his ilk, who "no longer have anything to teach us" (p. 127).10 “To conceive of history objectively this way is the silent work of the dramatist” for whom “all things are interrelated.” The great failing of the Historical Virtuoso is the appropriation of the past for present self-interest. Thus history is little more than a vehicle to demonstrate technical facility, just as the 19th century virtuoso appropriates extant musical works for professional and personal aggrandizement.11 The virtuoso “weaves isolated events into a totality—always with the presumption that a unity of plan must be inserted into the things if it is not already inherent in them” (p. 126)12 and “force[s] the past to fit” the present’s “fashionable triviality” (p. 125).13

The final reference to this metaphorical figure points directly to Hegel, who “ought to have said that everything that came after him was properly considered merely as a musical coda to the world historical rondo” (p. 143). In this passage, Nietzsche, the musician and would be composer, parodies the repetitive, three-part structure of Hegel’s dialectic by comparing it to the rondo's large scale ternary organization, comprised of numerous subsidiary three-part structures. Beneath this remark, with its Nietzschean combination of the droll and the caustic, is a more sophisticated joke. In its most academic form, the rondo creates what can be heard as a dialectical alternation between the primary theme and the episodic material, i.e. ABACABA, yet inasmuch as a verbatim statement of the primary theme follows each episode, there is no musical Aufhebung.

25
While the Virtuoso composes history in rondo form, the true historian, the Composer of History, prefers the theme and variation form, in which the inspired re-working of a “well known (ein bekanntes) melody” leads to its elevation.

The true historian must have the power to reformulate a well-known, perhaps commonplace theme, an everyday melody, into a comprehensive symbol, and thereby intimating in the original theme a whole world of profundity, power, and beauty never before heard. (Nietzsche, 1995, p. 129)  

Like the Composer of History, the true historian (der ächte Historiker), reformulates “an age old truth (Allbekannte) into something never before heard” (p. 129). Through continued attention to a recurrent historical theme a “comprehensive symbol” can be created, one that is both untimely and advantageous to life. Put another way, rather than preserving history for egoistic reasons, the Composer of History finds the past a source of creativity in the present. The metaphor of the Composer of History becomes all the more compelling, and does even more philosophical work, if, as I believe, Nietzsche had in mind Beethoven's op. 120, the so-called Diabelli Variations (or Veränderungen über einen Walzer) for solo piano, as a model for such a composition.

**Beethoven’s Veränderungen**

Nietzsche's description of the Composer of History is strikingly similar to the characterization of Beethoven found in Wagner's 1870 essay, titled simply "Beethoven," commemorating the 100th anniversary of the composer's birth. Nietzsche first read the essay, in manuscript form, in 1870. It was published in Wagner’s *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen*, Volume IX (1872), and the composer presented the first nine volumes of his collected works to the young philosopher in the fall of 1873, while Nietzsche was at work on the Second *Untimely Meditation*. In the essay Wagner contrasts Beethoven, "the Genius of Music," with his predecessors, mere "virtuosos" who "placed the candle of art-dexterity in front of [music] instead of at its back, to light it up" (p. 86). Likewise, Beethoven "emancipated melody ... from the influences of ‘shifting taste’ and raised [it] to an eternal purely-human type" (p. 103).

Nietzsche first encountered Beethoven's works for solo keyboard as an adolescent piano student. In 1865 he purchased A.B. Marx’s *Ludwig van Beethoven: Leben und Schaffen* (1859). Beethoven’s piano works were also on Nietzsche’s mind, and under his fingers, late in 1872. In the draft of a letter to Hans von Bülow, dated 29 October 1872, Nietzsche (1969/1996) responds to the conductor’s candid criticisms of his efforts as a composer: “I shall try then to take a musical cure; and perhaps I shall remain, if I study Beethoven sonatas in your edition, under your tutelage and guidance” (p. 107). In the 1871 critical edition of Beethoven’s works for piano, von Bülow describes op. 120 as "the real microcosm, as it were, of Beethoven's genius, indeed even a portrayal of the essence of the whole world of musical composition" (Bülow & Lebert, 1871).  

Beethoven’s op. 120 was the result of a project initiated by the musician Anton Diabelli (Figure 1) in 1819. The music publisher’s aim was to solicit a collection of
Variations for the Pianoforte, on a Given Theme, 
Composed by the Most Excellent Composers and Virtuosi in Vienna and the I. & R. Austrian States

Figure One. Diabelli’s Theme

Beethoven was among those invited to make a contribution, but instead he set the theme aside. When he returned to it some years later, the composer used the theme as the basis for an independent composition. Beethoven’s 32 variations on Diabelli’s theme were published independently as op. 120\textsuperscript{17} in 1823 (Figure 2) and as the first volume of a two-volume set in 1824.\textsuperscript{18}
While op. 120 is popularly known as the *Diabelli-Variationen*, and Diabelli titled it *Große Veränderungen über einen Walzer*, Beethoven’s preferred title for the work was *Große Veränderungen über einen bekannten ‘Deutschen’*. According to the Beethoven biographer Maynard Solomon (2003), at the beginning of the 19th century the designation *Deutsché* referred to “a familiar theme-type—a German dance or waltz, or Ländler—one that is redolent of the commonplace” (p. 17). The designation *Veränderungen*, or transformations, indicates the degree to which Beethoven considered his treatment of the pre-existing material to be more than decorative.\(^{19}\)

In op.120 Beethoven presents an abbreviated history of music. In Variation 6 (Figure 3) he parodies the theme and variations treatment of popular melodies by such composer-performers as Kalkbrenner and Moscheles, examples of those self-serving compositions of the (world-historical) virtuoso Nietzsche finds so inartistic.\(^{20}\) Inasmuch as Beethoven's early career was based, in part, on his reputation as a virtuoso pianist, with exceptional improvisational abilities, his parody of the virtuoso is also a self-parody of his own early identity.
Additionally, there are clear references to the Protestant chorale in Variation 20 and the learned counter-point of Bach in Variations 24 and 32. In Variation 31 (Figure 4) there is a quotation from Bach’s *Goldberg-Variationen* (BWV 988).

Beethoven also refers to the rhythmic sequences of Handel's overtures and, in Variation 22 (Figure 5), he incorporates the aria *Notte e giorno faticar* from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.
Finally, in Variation 33 (Figure 6) Beethoven quotes the final movement of his own final piano sonata, *Arietta: Adagio molto, semplice e cantabile* (op. 111).  

Thus Beethoven's variations are both historicizing and autobiographical, a means by which he situates himself within the horizon of music history and his previous compositions.

Given its synthesis of creative expression and historical judgment, Beethoven's op. 120 exemplifies the genuine historian's power to recast the past into something never before heard, i.e. Beethoven transforms a *bekannten 'Deutsché'* just as the Composer of History transforms a *bekanntes Thema*. Beethoven's composition can also be heard as a genealogical endeavor in which new musical values supplant older ones, including those that informed the composer's earlier works. Said another way, by presenting a theme that reflects both the stylistic development of western music and his own biography as composer and performer, Beethoven treats the Diabelli’s theme perspectively.
The seminal research of Hermann von Helmholtz in acoustics and auditory perception is another source for Nietzsche’s musical framing of history. The German polymath was the first to explain, in physiological terms, the effects of vibrations in the air on the *cilia* of the inner ear. In both “On the Physiological Causes of Harmony in Music” (1857) and *On the Sensations of Tone* (1862), Helmholtz compares the ear’s *cilia* to the strings of a piano to illustrate how the sympathetic vibration of certain of the *cilia* with an external sound is similar to the sympathetic vibration sometimes heard from the piano when another instrument plays a pitch matching the tuning of one of its strings. Moreover, he claims that the ability to recognize and appreciate the upper partials of a musical pitch develops over time.

Such recognition allows the discrimination of timbres, or qualities of tone, and depends upon hearing the pitch’s upper partials. Helmholtz (1862) insists that these “are difficult to hear,” especially in the case of the “the human voice,” and that “many skillful observers have failed to discover them. In fact, a peculiar act of attention is requisite to hear them [the upper partials], and unless we know how to perform this act, the tones remain concealed” (p. 66-68). In other words, it is possible to cultivate our hearing; however, this cultivation, or attunement, requires the withdrawal of one’s attention from those acoustic phenomena of lesser importance, e.g. the tone’s volume, its articulation, etc. Recent theories of auditory perception call this withdrawal of attention “hearing out.”

For Nietzsche, the cultivated temperament that resonates with or is sympathetic to one voice of the past but not another is exactly what the Historical Virtuoso lacks. As indicated above, he hears everything and everything he hears is of equal importance. Hence he is unable to engage in the intentional acts of forgetting, to *hear out* the noise of irrelevant historical data, necessary for a healthy relation to history. This patently illogical demand—to intentionally forget that which is already known—becomes a bit more comprehensible when Helmholtz's explanation of the cultivation of hearing is kept in mind. Intentional forgetfulness is analogous to the habitual withdrawal of auditory attention from less important aspects to attend to more significant sounds, the upper partials that determine the timbre, or distinctive quality of the voice or instrument. A cultivated temperament renders one insensitive to one voice and sympathetic to another. If one cultivates the right sort of historical awareness, an activity requiring both knowledge of the past and understanding of one’s self in the present, admittance to the Republic of Genius (Nietzsche, 1995, p. 151) awaits. There, voices with a noble *Stimmung*, ones with an elevated “temperament,” “disposition,” or “tone” call from one pinnacle of history to another, yet only those with a similarly noble *Stimmung* can discern their significance.

The work of the untimely historian does not, so Nietzsche argues, “carry forward any process,” but instead allows us to “live contemporaneously” with the past. Nietzsche situates such history, freed from temporal constraints, in a Republic of Genius, a metaphor borrowed from Schopenhauer, where “one giant calls out to another across desolate expanses of time” (Nietzsche, 1995, p. 151). These giants recognize one another by the individual resonance of their voices. In a literal sense, citizens of the republic need both a strong voice, able to project across the many epochs of history, and a discriminating ear, capable of discerning the
characteristic timbre of similarly distinguished voices. Later in the same passage he describes the finely tuned temperament able to hear the noble resonances of history as follows:

[A]nyone who seeks to break this education must help the youth express itself, must help illuminate … the path of their unconscious resistance against this education and transform it into an outspoken and loudly sonorous awareness (einem laut redenden Bewusstsein). (p. 160)26

With the more or less inscrutable phrase einem laut redenden Bewusstsein, Nietzsche attributes an acoustic property, loudness, to human consciousness, that peculiar and most problematic aspect of human experience lamented in the essay’s early paragraphs.

**Conclusion**

The general intent of Nietzsche’s Untimely Meditation on *The Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life* is to create a just relation to history, one both well-tempered and discerning, i.e. one displaying *Stimmung*. In such a relation one cares less about heroes and their actions than the possibility of heroes and heroism. True historians adopt an aesthetic disposition, or *Stimmung*, toward the topic and strive to create “within themselves an image [of history] to which the future should conform” (p. 130).27

Latent within Nietzsche’s untimely meditation on history is a critique of contemporary pedagogical practices within the discipline along with a philosophy of education *in nuce*. The “fundamental characteristic of the modern human being,” according to Nietzsche, is a “remarkable antithesis between an interior that corresponds to no exterior and an exterior that corresponds to no interior” (p. 109).28 Furthermore, “modern cultivation (*Bildung*) is nothing living precisely because it cannot be comprehended without this antithesis: that is no real cultivation (*Bildung*), but rather only a kind of knowledge about cultivation (*Bildung*)” (p. 110).29 The composer of history, one with an artistic disposition, or *Stimmung*, can integrate the outer and inner, the form and the content, the *Kultur* in which he lives and the *Bildung* he possesses. He alone can serve as educator and guide. Likewise, students with the greatest potential for such formation, or *Bildung*, already display a resistance, albeit unconsciously, to contemporary *Kultur* and its methods of historical education. Young people with such a temperament, or *Stimmung*, “will have forgotten much of what they learned.” Indeed, these “young people” of the future may chart the "course and progress" of history in such a way that they are “deliver[ed] from the malady of history." They have become, perhaps for the first time, “human beings, and ceased to be human aggregates.” For Nietzsche, “that is quite an accomplishment! There is still hope” (p. 165-66).30
References


Notes

1 Today the four essays are typically grouped in a single volume, however they were released separately by Nietzsche’s publisher. Thus I will refer to the essays individually. All quotations are from Richard Gray’s excellent translation, *Unfashionable Observations* (1995). Because the traditional translation of the collection’s title is *Untimely Meditations*, this designation will be used in what follows.

2 This is an expanded version of the second in a series of talks on Nietzsche and the philosophy of education. It was presented at the 2011 session of the Society for the Philosophical Study of Education to the American Philosophical Association’s Central Division.

3 Nietzsche uses *Kultur* and *Cultur* interchangeably in the essay. For consistency I will use the former.

4 Kultur ist vor allem Einheit des künstlerischen Stiles in allen Lebensäußerungen eines Volkes. Vieles Wissen und Gelernthaben ist aber weder ein nothwendiges Mittel der Kultur, noch ein Zeichen derselben und verträgt sich nöthigenfalls auf das beste mit dem Gegensatze der Kultur, der Barbarei, das heisst: der Stillosigkeit oder dem chaotischen Durcheinander aller Stile. (Nietzsche, 1980c, p. 159)

5 Die Cultur eines Volkes als der Gegensatz jener Barbarei ist einmal, wie ich meine, mit einigem Rechte, als Einheit des künstlerischen Stiles in allen Lebensäußerungen eines Volkes bezeichnet worden; diese Bezeichnung darf nicht dahin missverstanden werden, als ob es sich um den Gegensatz von Barbarei und schönem Stile handele; das Volk, dem man eine Cultur zuspricht, soll nur in aller Wirklichkeit etwas lebendig Eines sein und nicht so elend in Inneres und Aeusseres, in Inhalt und Form auseinanderfallen. (Nietzsche 1980d, p. 274)

6 Umschreibung der Kultur—als einer Temperatur und Stimmung vieler, ursprünglich feindseliger Kräfte, die jetzt eine Melodie abspielen lassen. (Gedanken zu der Betrachtungen: *Die Philosophie in Bedrängniss* §48; Nietzsche, 1980b, p. 713)

7 Two of the most clear-headed readings of the Second *Untimely Meditation* are those of Daniel Breazeale (2000) and Charles R. Bambach (1990). For the former, Nietzsche fails to provide adequate standards according to which the *ächte Historiker* exercises his *Pathos der Richterum*. “[T]here is no guarantee at all that new values will in fact spring up on the barren ground that has been devastated by critical history. It is just as likely, indeed, it is far more likely, that the critical historian—*qua* philosophical genealogist or active nihilist—will prepare the way for something else altogether: not the endlessly self-overcoming *Übermensch*, but the infinitely self-satisfied man-as-animal, the *last man*” (Breazeale, 2000, p. 74-76). Breazeale does, however, find a less robust version of the *ächte Historiker* in the genealogist of *The Gay Science* who, by yoking the *Pathos der Richterum* to the *Pathos der Wahrheit*, is "more than a scientific historian or philosophical laborer." (Breazeale, 2000, p. 76). Rather, he traces "the genealogies of our
highest values, in the hope that new values will eventually arise to take the place made vacant by the critical (self-) destruction of the older ones” (Breazeale, 2000, p. 74). While Bambach is more sanguine about the *Pathos der Richterum*, he nevertheless asks, “If all past happenings are valued and re-valued according to the demands of the moment, then does history not merely become the mirror for Narcissus' ardent gaze” (Bambach, 1990, p. 266)? Bambach, like Breazeale, reads forward, as it were, and also finds a way around the impasse in *The Gay Science* where Nietzsche reformulates his critique of historicism. There Bambach finds a "historical ontology" able to address the "problems of language, interpretation, lived experience, and historical being" (p. 270).

8 Clearly, Nietzsche’s attribution of musical qualities to culture bears some similarity to Schopenhauer’s attribution of musical qualities to the will in his *World as Will and Representation*.


11 The matter of virtuosity again surfaces in notes from 1875 for a projected work, titled *The Struggle Between Science and Wisdom*, in which Nietzsche objects to the dialectical virtuosity of Plato’s Socrates. Here Nietzsche claims, echoing the line of argumentation developed in *The Birth of Tragedy*, that "Greek music and philosophy developed side by side" and continues with the observation, "So much depends upon the development of Greek culture, since our entire occidental world received its original impulse there from." However, "the more recent and decadent Hellenism has had the greatest historical power" thus “the older Hellenism was always falsely judged." "The danger for the Greeks lay in virtuosity in all genres. With Socrates the virtuosos of living begin. Socrates, the new dithyramb, the newer tragedy, the invention of the rhetorician. *The rhetorician is a Greek invention of later times!*” He concludes, “It is a splendid thing that the ancient philosophers were able to live so freely *without thereby turning themselves into fools and virtuosos*” (Nietzsche, 1979, p. 133-34). Likewise, Nietzsche speaks pejoratively of virtuosity in *Beyond Good and Evil*: “I specially mention Delacroix, the nearest related to Wagner; all of them great discoverers in the realm of the sublime, also of the loathsome and
dreadful, still greater discoverers in effect, in display, in the art of the show-shop; all of them talented far beyond their genius, out and out VIRTUOSI, with mysterious accesses to all that seduces, allures, constrains, and upsets; born enemies of logic and of the straight line…” (Nietzsche, 2002, p. 149). (Ich hebe Delacroix hervor, den Nächstverwandten Wagner's -, allesammt grosse Entdecker im Reiche des Erhabenen, auch des Hässlichen und Grässlichen, noch grössere Entdecker im Effekte, in der Schaustellung, in der Kunst der Schauläden, allesammt Talente weit über ihr Genie hinaus -, Virtuosen durch und durch, mit unheimlichen Zugängen zu Allem, was verführt, lockt, zwingt, umwirft, geborene Feinde der Logik und der geraden Linien… [Nietzsche, 1980a, p. 202-203]).

12 In dieser Weise die Geschichte objectiv denken ist die stille Arbeit des Dramatikers; nämlich Alles aneinander denken, das Vereinzelte zum Ganzen weben: überall mit der Voraussetzung, dass eine Einheit des Planes in die Dinge gelegt werden müsse, wann sie nicht darinnen sei (Nietzsche, 1980d, p. 290).

13 …ihre Arbeit ist, die Vergangenheit der zeitgemässen Trivialität anzupassen (Nietzsche, 1980d, p. 289).

14 Of course, rondo form is marked by repetitions of a single motive between which contrasting motives, or episodes, are interspersed. Throughout the 18th and 19th Centuries this lighthearted and often rollicking movement, that made fewer demands on listeners, was typically used as the conclusion of multi-movement, instrumental works.


17 Diabelli included the following introductory note in the 1823 edition: “We present here to the world Variations of no ordinary type, but a great and important masterpiece worthy to be ranked with the imperishable creations of the old Classics—such a work as only Beethoven, the greatest living representative of true art—only Beethoven, and no other, can produce. The most original
structures and ideas, the boldest musical idioms and harmonies are here exhausted; every pianoforte effect based on a solid technique is employed, and this work is the more interesting from the fact that it is elicited from a theme which no one would otherwise have supposed capable of a working-out of that character in which our exalted Master stands alone among his contemporaries. The splendid Fugues, Nos. 24 and 32, will astonish all friends and connoisseurs of serious style, as will Nos. 2, 6, 16, 17, 23, &c. the brilliant pianists; indeed all these variations, through the novelty of their ideas, care in working-out, and beauty in the most artful of their transitions, will entitle the work to a place beside Sebastian Bach's famous masterpiece in the same form. We are proud to have given occasion for this composition, and have, moreover, taken all possible pains with regard to the printing to combine elegance with the utmost accuracy."

18 The second volume contained the 50 variations by the other “Most Excellent Composers and Virtuosi in Vienna and the I. & R. Austrian States” and was titled Vaterländischer Künstlerverein.

19 The type of treatment Beethoven gives Diabelli's theme is now categorized as 'amplifying variations,' but it seems likely that op.120 occasioned the term.

20 In musicological parlance, the term parody is descriptive and more or less neutral; thus, strictly speaking, all of the variations in which Beethoven composes 'in the guise' of another musical style are parodies.

21 For a more complete discussion of Beethoven's op. 120, and references to the composer's op.111, see Beethoven's Diabelli Variations by William Kinderman (1987).

22 By 1820 Beethoven had composed over 60 theme and variation sets, either as separate works or as movements of larger works (Solomon, 2003, p. 302). Maynard Solomon (2003), Beethoven biographer with a pronounced psychoanalytic bent, says of the form, "[T]he theme is like the manifest dream—a simple, condensed sequence of images masking an infinity of latent dream thoughts. The manifest dream is deceptively simple, wrapped in disguises of distortion, censorship, condensation, and displacement. Analysis (variation) pierces these veils; recollection fills the dream (the theme) with a significance that illuminates the past and points toward future possibilities of transcendence and fulfillment" (p. 303).

23 According to Luca Crescenzi (1994), records show Nietzsche borrowed Helmholtz’s Die Lehre von den Tonempfindungen (1863) from the Basel library between 1870-73.

24 It is because most modern hearing aids cannot hear-out ambient noise that they are unsatisfactory to many with hearing deficits.

25 Dank der Geschichte, die ein solches Zusammenwirken zulässt, sie leben als die Genialen-Republik, von der einmal Schopenhauer erzählt; ein Riese ruft dem anderen durch die öden Zwischenräume der Zeiten zu… (Nietzsche, 1980d, p. 317).
Immerhin: es gibt jetzt vielleicht hundert Menschen mehr als vor hundert Jahren, welche wissen, was Poesie ist; vielleicht gibt es hundert Jahre später wieder hundert Menschen mehr, die inzwischen auch gelernt haben, was Cultur ist, und dass die Deutschen bis jetzt keine Cultur haben, so sehr sie auch reden und stolziren mögen. Ihnen wird das so allgemeine Behagen der Deutschen an ihrer "Bildung" ebenso ungläublich und läppisch vorkommen als uns die einstmalig anerkannte Klassicität Gottscheds oder die Geltung Ramlers als eines deutschen Pindar. Sie werden vielleicht urteilen, dass diese Bildung nur eine Art Wissen um die Bildung und dazu ein recht falsches und oberflächliches Wissen gewesen sei. Falsch und oberflächlich nämlich, weil man den Widerspruch von Leben und Wissen ertrug, weil man das Charakteristische an der Bildung wahrer Culturvölker gar nicht sah: dass die Cultur nur aus dem Leben hervorwachsen und herausblühen kann; während sie bei den Deutschen wie eine papierne Blume aufgesteckt oder wie eine Ueberzuckerung übergegossen wird und deshalb immer lügnerisch und unfrech bleiben muss. Die deutsche Jugenderziehung geht aber gerade von diesem falschen und unfrechen begriff der Cultur aus: ihr Ziel, recht rein und hoch gedacht, ist gar nicht der freie Gebildete, sondern der Gelehrte, der wissenschaftliche Mensch und zwar der möglichst früh nützliche wissenschaftliche Mensch, der sich abseits von dem Leben stellt, um es recht deutlich zu erkennen; ihr Resultat, recht empirisch-gemein angeschaut, ist der historisch-aesthetische Bildungphilister, der altkluge und neuweise Schwätzer über Staat, Kirche und Kunst, das Sensorium für tausenderlei Anempfindungen, der unersättliche Magen, der doch nicht weiss, was ein rechtschaffener Hunger und Durst ist. Dass eine Erziehung mit jenem Ziele und mit diesem Resultate eine widernatürliche ist, das fühlt nur der in ihr noch nicht fertig gewordene Mensch, das fühlt allein der Instinct der Jugend, weil sie noch den Instinct der Natur hat, der erst künstlich und gewaltsam durch jene Erziehung gebrochen wird. Wer aber diese Erziehung wiederum brechen will, der muss der Jugend zum Worte verhelfen, der muss ihrem unbewussten Widerstreben mit der Helligkeit der Begriffe voranleuchten und es zu einem bewussten und laut redenden Bewusstsein machen (Nietzsche, 1980d, p. 325-326).


Unsere moderne Bildung ist eben deshalb nichts Lebendiges, weil sie ohne jenen Gegensatz sich gar nicht begreifen lässt, das heisst: sie ist gar keine wirkliche Bildung, sondern nur eine Art Wissen um die Bildung (Nietzsche, 1980d, p. 273).

The entire passage reads: Von diesen Hoffenden weiss ich, dass sie alle diese Allgemeinheiten aus der Nähe verstehn und mit ihrer eigensten Erfahrung in eine persönlich gemeinte Lehre sich übersetzen werden; die Andern mögen einstweilen nichts als verdeckte Schüsseln wahrnehmen, die wohl auch leer sein können; bis sie einmal überrascht mit eignen Augen sehen, dass die Schüsseln gefüllt sind und dass Angriffe, Forderungen, Lebenstreibe, Leidenschaften in diesen Allgemeinheiten eingeschachtelt und zusammengedrückt lagen, die nicht lange Zeit so verdeckt liegen konnten. Diese Zweifler auf die Zeit, die alles an's Licht bringt, verweisend, wende ich mich zum Schluss an jene Gesellschaft der Hoffenden, um ihnen den Gang und Verlauf ihrer Heilung, ihrer Errettung von der historischen Krankheit und damit ihre eigne Geschichte bis zu
Translating the Impossible: Listening, Learning, and Art

Elias Schwieler and Cecilia Ferm Thorgersen

There is no meaning, of course, only a profound and inexplicable significance; why is that not enough for me?

(John Banville, *Ghosts*, p. 95)

For Heidegger, translation and interpretation are intimately related. Translation is not the simple transference of meaning from one language to another, but involves an act of authentic thinking, or reflection. The word Heidegger uses to designate reflection, for example in *Basic Concepts* (1998; 1981), is *Besinnung*, which has the sense of being thoughtful, thinking through, remembering, and also calming down, and even regaining consciousness. And the kind of thinking or reflection Heidegger has in mind always tries to create something new, or other.

Miles Groth (2004) defines Heidegger’s theory of translation in the following way: “Translation is the event that retraces the response to language that we call thinking” (p 121). From this it follows that the act of translating and the acts of learning about and interpreting art have many similarities. For one, they are performative acts; they do something with something else, be it language, words, sound, paint, clay, or even history. In turn, these ways of doing things are also ways of learning, since what comes about from the activity is something new or other. That is, the learner creates something that was not known to him or her by making use of what already exists.

In this paper we want to explore how the “basic” concepts of listening and translating can be seen as interrelated, and how they can have important effects on teaching and learning. We especially focus on how listening and translating are related to learning and art, and draw on our own subject areas (music education and literature) to exemplify our argument. More precisely, we will deal with poetry and music awareness, making use of our different experiences as teachers and learners. This means that our respective contributions here are quite different in tone and style, but we believe that this reflects each discipline’s specificity and our individual stances regarding the aims of this article.

When it comes to the section on music education, the text takes a more practical and at the same time more subjective perspective, reflecting the discipline’s focus on physically “doing” art. The section on literary study is more theoretical and wants, in contrast, to highlight the “doing” of art through reflective and analytical thinking. The contrast between the two disciplines is important since it shows how listening and translating, and the subsequent production of meaning, involve different perspectives on philosophical thought and how they can be used to promote learning. Despite, or perhaps because of, the differences between the two sections, our aim is to show that they mutually imply each other—that they, to use one of the basic concepts we examine, translate each other. Nevertheless, our overall aim is to investigate how the philosophical thinking around these concepts in Heidegger’s later philosophy can illuminate and inform the interpretation and creation of art from a pedagogical perspective. This means, furthermore, taking into account the subject relations involved in
teaching and learning: the relations between teacher and student, but also the relations between each student and other students, which in consequence means involving the social context for learning. What is at stake in learning about and teaching art is in this instance the ability to listen—to listen to what the work of art calls us to think, and also, equally importantly, to listen to others (teachers/students) in order to grasp, question, and interpret the shared experiences of listening to the work of art under scrutiny. This, in turn, implies a creative act, an act of making, shaping, and performing in the form of, for example, music or text. It means translating by listening to the unknown, and thus, by way of translating, learning the language of the other.4

What does it mean to learn to interpret and/or create art? And how can we teach the skills these acts involve? What is the difference between the one who creates art and the one who experiences art?5 We would like to suggest that to answer these questions, the concept of translation is essential, because, as Heidegger points out, a translation is never finished; it is a process and a way of thinking (Groth, 2004, p. 121) that implies the act of listening authentically to the language of the other (be it the other as another human being or the other as a work of art), which means translating by interpreting to faithfully transpose what we hear into another language. This happens, Heidegger says, not only when we consciously translate from one language into another, but whenever we hear another human being speak to us (Groth, 2004, p. 134-135). If the act of translation is viewed with a Heideggerian eye, then we are in a sense almost always in the process of translating, because we are always already in language. Translation thus becomes the way we as human beings interpret and transfigure the world; in other words, it is how we learn, in the most basic sense of the term.6 Groth (2004) explains that Heidegger’s philosophy of translation “implies that all use of us by language implicates us in translating, and that translating that begins with a written text is only a special case of what is going on all the time when language speaks” (p. 135). This view of translation is interesting to explore in relation to the creation and interpretation of art, and also in order to make it possible to use the process of translation in art education.

In consequence, we suggest that when it comes to learning to interpret or to create art, translation can have important pedagogical implications. In order to create we must learn, and in order to learn we must create by going back to listen to what is not there in what is; that is, we must listen to the nothing in what exists. “Da-sein means,” writes Heidegger in “What Is Metaphysics?” (1993c) “being held out into the nothing” (p. 103) [Da-sein heisst: Hineingehaltenheit in das Nichts (Heidegger, 1976, p. 115)]. That is, Da-sein is transcendence; it is beyond beings in order to be able to relate to other beings and to ourselves. In comparison, when we encounter a work of art, we encounter something completely new or other; we encounter the nothing, since the work does not provide us with meaning in and of itself. We are being held out into the nothing, without footing, being obliged to listen to the language of the work by translating it and so creating it again as something other than what it “is”; and in this way the work acquires a meaning, however tentative and provisional. The work of art becomes what it is only by being something else, by being foreign and other, through our act of translating it. In this way we learn, not only what the work of art can mean, but how to go about learning. As Heidegger puts it in Basic Concepts, we have to “learn ‘learning’” [“das Lernen’ zu lernen”] again (Heidegger, 1998, p. 11; Heidegger, 1981, p. 13).

Through a thoughtful, reflective translation of the work of art, truth as the truth of Being [Sein] appears as an unconcealment. Heidegger, in “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1993b), calls this a happening or event.8 The work of art thus comes into being as art, which means that the work at the same time reveals the truth of Being [Sein] as art. This movement is
similar to what happens in translating from one language into another: language is at the same
time unveiled or unconcealed and hidden away or concealed—we come to learn the meaning
of the words, but we do this by transforming the language, by concealing it as other. This
double movement can also be seen in the context of Heidegger’s essay “Building, Dwelling,
Thinking” (1993a). Here Heidegger points out the etymological relatedness of building
[Bauen] and dwelling [Wohnen], but also importantly shows their relation with Being [Sein].
Dwelling is, according to Heidegger, how human beings essentially are on the earth. Dwelling
means being in such a way that we are in tune with our environment, which implies
that I, as a subject, am already related to whatever inheres in the space in which I am. We
would like to suggest that the Heideggerian sense of dwelling can be analogous to how we as
teachers and students relate to art through the performative act of translating art into a
learning experience.

To make the philosophical perspective outlined above more tangible, we will, in the following
sections, share examples from our specific academic disciplines and describe instances where
possibilities for learning inspired by Heidegger’s thinking are put into educational practice.
Notions of language and art from a Heideggerian perspective will be related to notions of
learning. We will conclude by indicating some possibilities for teaching and learning about
art from our outlined philosophical perspectives.

**The Pressure of Reality: Translation, Learning and the Poetry of Wallace Stevens**

How can we teach Wallace Stevens’ poetry? How can we, as teachers, provide a space in
which learning Stevens’ poetry becomes a thoughtful and creative reflection on the essence of
Stevens’ work? How can we as students of Stevens’ poetry at the same time be true to his
words and make them our own? That is, how can we (both students and teachers) translate
the work of Wallace Stevens?

In order to investigate how reading Stevens’ poetry can become a philosophically relevant
learning experience, I want to begin by looking briefly at Heidegger’s translations of
Hölderlin. In the lecture course published as Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister” (1996), Heidegger’s
approach is one of both interpreting and translating Hölderlin, which in turn
leads him to a method of philosophical reflection. He is concerned with poetry, and
specifically with Hölderlin’s poetry, as an instance (a happening, occurrence, ereignis) of
language that can be said to respond to the call of Being. To respond to the call of Being
involves going back to the origin, to what Heidegger calls the inception of history. This going
back to listen to the inception is to listen authentically to the call of Being.

According to Heidegger’s remarks in his discussion of Hölderlin’s poetry, this poetry, as a response to
Being, goes beyond any metaphysical interpretation of Being and art, since for Heidegger
Hölderlin’s poetry is not concerned with symbolic language. As Heidegger (1996) puts it,

> if Hölderlin’s hymnal poetry is a naming, and if naming first elevates and poetizes
what is named into its essence, then the river poems cannot be poems “about” rivers,
in which the rivers are already familiar in their essence and are taken as images or
emblems signifying something else. This is why we are claiming that Hölderlin’s
river poetry, indeed his hymnal poetry as a whole, is not concerned with symbolic
images. This entails the wider claim that this poetic art is not metaphysical. To the
extent that, according to the strict Western conception of art, art exists only as
metaphysical art, Hölderlin’s poetry, if it is no longer metaphysical, is no longer “art”
either. The essences of art and of metaphysics are not sufficient to lend this poetry the
essential space appropriate to it. If it is not metaphysical, however, then this poetry is
Hölderlin’s poetry, then, according to Heidegger, consists of a naming that names the essence of what is named by elevating and poetizing it: “[W]e use the word ‘naming’ in Hölderlin’s sense. For Hölderlin, naming means something higher. ‘Naming’ means: to call to its essence that which is named in the word of poetizing, and to ground this essence as poetic word. Here, ‘naming’ is the name for poetic telling. Such telling, in being a naming, receives a unique vocation that does not allow itself to be straightforwardly transferred to other poetry or other poets” (Heidegger, 1996, p. 21). This naming, moreover, goes beyond the Western conceptions of metaphysics and art, which Heidegger holds makes it neither art nor poetry as conceived within metaphysics. Naming the essence, furthermore, is both a vanishing and an intimation, Heidegger says. With this, he suggests that Hölderlin’s poetry, as naming, is at the same time a looking into the future and a going back into the past. Thus when Hölderlin names the river in “The Ister” he is telling about the river as a journeying that both goes back into the past and forward into the future: “As vanishing, the river is underway into what has been. As full of intimation, it proceeds into what is coming. The river is a singular kind of journey, insofar as it simultaneously proceeds into what has been and what is to come” (Heidegger, 1996, p. 29). Heidegger then connects the essence of the river to his thoughts on dwelling: “Becoming homely and dwelling upon the earth are of another essence. We may approach it in giving thought to the essence of the rivers. The river is the locality for dwelling. The river is the journeying of becoming homely. To put it more clearly: the river is that very locality that is attained in and through journeying” (p. 31). Heidegger continues: “Our claim is this: the river is the locality of the dwelling of human beings as historical upon this earth. The river is the journeying of a historical coming to be at home at the locale of this locality. The river is locality and journeying” (p. 33). About this seemingly circular argument, Heidegger notes,

The said statements are always incomprehensible within a certain realm of comprehension, and there is an essential reason for this. The incomprehensibility of such statements is not grounded in some contingent lack of knowledge that would be otherwise attainable. Even those who once understand such statements are not able to understand them at any hour whatsoever. We are excluded from comprehending such statements so long as the appropriation of an essential transformation in our essence has not “occurred” [sich “ereignet”]. (p. 34)

In order to understand Hölderlin’s poetical telling of the river, that is, its naming, one must have transformed one’s essence—such a transformation has to have occurred. It could thus be argued that Heidegger’s remarks on Hölderlin’s poetry are an attempt to “learn” what this kind of transformation entails, while at the same time enacting such a transformation by reflecting on and translating (in Heidegger’s sense of the term) Hölderlin’s poetry. More precisely, the lecture course on Hölderlin’s hymn “The Ister” is an attempt to teach philosophy and poetry beyond metaphysics, that is, philosophy and poetry as Heidegger conceives of them. And he does this by focusing on what he considers Hölderlin’s singularity and the uniqueness of his poetry. This singularity and uniqueness make the reflection on and translation of Hölderlin’s poetry equally singular and unique, since, according to Heidegger, what can be said of Hölderlin cannot be generalized into a generic method for philosophizing or reading poetry. The singularity of Hölderlin’s poetry is what shapes the method (if one can still call it that).
However, this is far from being a novel approach to analyzing poetry. The singularity of poetry is well known among literary scholars, and it is also in many instances what shapes the teaching of poetry. Nevertheless, in the following I would like to make some remarks on Wallace Stevens by way of comparing and contrasting these remarks with Heidegger’s thoughts on poetry and translation. Stevens’ thoughts on poetry, or what could be called his theory or philosophy of poetry, are abundantly present in his poetic practice. My aim is to intimate what teaching Stevens can imply in terms of his poetry’s singularity. I want to do this by looking at similarities and differences between Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin and a reading of Stevens’ poetry, using Heidegger’s thoughts on translation as an inception to teaching poetry—not forgetting the singularity of every poet and every instance of poetry.

In Stevens’ work, the relation between the imagination and reality is well known. The tension between the two has been traced back to Santanaya, Emerson, and transcendentalism, and to the romantics, especially Coleridge, and by extension to Kant and German idealism. In the essay “The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words,” from his collection The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination, Stevens (1953) describes the relation between the imagination and reality in the following way: “It is not only that the imagination adheres to reality, but, also, that reality adheres to the imagination and that the interdependence is essential” (p. 33). In relation to this, Stevens notes about the function of the poet:

The poet refuses to allow his task to be set for him. He denies that he has a task and considers that the organization of materia poetica is a contradiction in terms. Yet the imagination gives to everything that it touches a peculiarity, and it seems to me that the peculiarity of the imagination is nobility, of which there are many degrees. (p. 33)

This nobility of the imagination, Stevens says, in not something that can be fixed and determined: “as a wave is a force and not the water of which it is composed, which is never the same, so nobility is a force and not the manifestations of which it is composed, which are never the same.... It is the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality” (p. 35-36). Here Stevens points to what he calls the peculiarity of the imagination, and how this peculiarity can be seen as the nobility of the imagination. This nobility is precisely the force of the interplay between and interdependence of reality and the imagination. The peculiarity of the imagination can also, I suggest, be compared to the singularity of poetry—every poem is peculiar, just as is every signature of one’s name; it is always the same but each time unique. The poem, just like the signature, calls for translation. And the translation has to take into consideration the peculiarity of the imagination and the generality of reality.

In order to begin an explication of the peculiarity of Stevens’ poetry, his poem “The Snow Man” from his Collected Poems (1990, p. 9-10) can serve as an example:

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,
Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens to the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

Just as Heidegger insists on transforming one’s essence in order to understand what Hölderlin tells about the river, so Stevens here prescribes, by the words “One must,” how one must be in order to genuinely (or authentically, to invoke Heidegger) see, hear and feel the winter. One must become winter in order to perceive the essence of winter, and one must become nothing to behold “Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.” This becoming nothing can be compared to Heidegger’s description of “Being held out into the nothing” in “What Is Metaphysics?” which implies transcending the everyday world so as to become open to the unknown, the nothing, which is the essence of what Stevens calls reality; that is, the force in the tension between the imagination and reality.

Stevens’ imperative that “One must have a mind of winter” also carries with it a call to learn: one must learn to become winter; one must learn to become nothing to behold it. The transformation of one’s essence required in order to be able to perceive winter must be learned. And this learning comes about by paying attention to Stevens’ poetry as naming, or rather, to heeding to and translating the peculiarity of Stevens’ poetry.

In one of Stevens’ most well known long poems, “Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction” (Stevens, 1990, p. 380-408), the question of how a supreme fiction can be conceived is set up through a master poet/teacher speaking to an aspiring poet/student. The poem begins with the teacher telling the student that he “must become an ignorant man again / And see the sun again with an ignorant eye / And see it clearly in the idea of it” (p. 380). As in “The Snow Man,” we have here a question of learning how to transform one’s essence to be able to listen to what the poem says. One has to be in the right mood, as it were, or Stimmung, to use Heidegger’s term. In Stevens’ terms, one must have a “mind” of winter or the sun; one must become “ignorant” to be able to hear the nothing that is. Stevens’ poetry thus explicitly stages what Heidegger finds in poetry such as Hölderlin’s. Both Heidegger and Stevens are concerned with translating the experience of being and/as art—all their differences set aside. They do this through two different modes of translation—Heidegger through philosophy, Stevens through poetry. However, they both stress the need to transform one’s essence to become in tune with the peculiarity of the specific instance of poetry or philosophy one is dealing with. In both Heidegger and Stevens, then, there is a question of learning again; of going back to learn learning again by listening, and so translating what one hears.

Given the notions proposed above, some possibilities for teaching and learning about Stevens’ poetry could be the following: Teaching Stevens from a Heideggerian perspective can focus on the transformation of oneself in learning, on the concept of naming, and on the singularity or peculiarity of works of art and poetry. It can also focus on translation as the translation of reality by the imagination, and on the reader’s translation of poetry into a new reality—a new language. By beginning with the nothing and emphasizing the non-meaning of the poem that the teacher has chosen to read with the students, each student can be encouraged to listen to the poem via the basic concepts of Stevens’ poetry. The students and the teacher will be obliged to learn again, even to learn learning again, since the learning of the poem is as
unique and singular as the poem itself. In reading the chosen poem, each member of the class will have to become ignorant again and work to transform his or her mind to be able to hear the poem authentically, and thus build a translation from dwelling with the poem. This work of translation can become an ereignis that will cause the poem to take on meaning and become unconcealed—the poem’s significance will be made to sound through a thoughtful listening to it. And listening as translation will provide the poem with a language that can be read, understood and shared—a language that can be learned, and so communicated and translated again within the process of reading and listening to Stevens’ poetry. This sense of teaching and learning about Stevens’ poetry is, in other words, a form of aesthetic communication, using the concepts of translation and listening both performatively and conceptually, to learn again from the nothing that is.

**Listening as Musical Dwelling—Translation and Learning a Language of Art**

What can it mean—being “in tune” with our environment? What can it mean—Being as music? The aim of this section of the article is to investigate how reasoning about Being and art in Heidegger’s later works can be used for investigating possibilities for arts education. From a musical perspective, a work of art can be a world where music making can take place. Performers, listeners, and composers dwell in the world music creates. This kind of dwelling can best be characterized as “improvisation,” which includes creating what is conveniently at hand as well as cultivating, that is, discovering and expressing at the same time. Thus, it could be said that dwelling “transforms the space in which one dwells” (Benson, 2003, p. 32). A work of art can also be an opening to the world, something that “strikes” us and makes our history change, and offers a way of being (Heidegger, 1993b; Leijonhuvud & Ferm Thorgersen, forthcoming). In consequence we have to ask ourselves: How can we offer our students this kind of Being that dwells? How can we offer them a way to be struck by music as art? How can we offer a way for their histories to change?

Our reading of Heidegger’s later philosophy suggests that listening is an essential, performative act within the possibility of being as art. Listening is an essential action in all musical ways of being that human beings take part in as active musicians, composers, and listeners. As we stated in the beginning of the article, being as art is related to translation and interpretation, two concepts that are intimately related with one another. From a Heideggerian perspective, translation involves an act of authentic thinking—or reflection—in which something new is created. In this section I want to give an example of what Being as music can be, and try to show what I have learned from listening to and translating my experience of music, and still learn when being struck by music. The first person perspective in this part of the article is chosen to provide the reader with a possibility of understanding the process from within.

Through an act of listening authentically to a piece of music that has followed me for almost 40 years, I try in this text to translate my inner understanding of Heidegger’s thinking about music as an opening to the world and about learning art. The example can be seen as a description of how conceptual knowledge can be developed from an approach to the musical world that is expressed as an engaged and deeply rooted immersedness in the world (Pio, 2009, p. 139-166). I will try to transpose my reflections, my responses to the music, and also my learning about music by going into the dimensions of calming down, making, interpreting, and handling the world by being as art and being as other. I ask, What have I learned about music, what have I learned about learning, and what have I learned through and about the language, or expression, of the other? By extension, this understanding can hopefully provide some useful implications for teaching music.
Some time before the listening activity I decided which song to focus on. The song is a blues-waltz within the jazz genre recorded by Swedish jazz musicians—playing the drums, vibraphone, piano, and horns—with the famous jazz singer Monica Zetterlund. This particular recording from the 60s by Owe Törnqvist has been played in my home since I was a little girl, and it has functioned as an opening to the world for me. It changed my history. The lyrics are in Swedish, and the song is called *Mister Kelly*. The singer in the song is betrayed by Mister Kelly, who is visiting the same pub where the blues is being played with his new girl. It should be noted that the two “languages” of the piece, music and lyrics, are intimately interwoven; they influence and underline each other, and as such create a shared meaning. They are separated here to let the theoretical analysis be more nuanced.

From the time I decided to listen to this particular song in my authentic listening, it frequently presented itself in my mind, and more and more frequently the closer the day of listening came. With the presence of the song in my mind, I mostly heard and felt the lyrics, the phrasing, and the tunings of the singer, together with the saxophone “licks,” which I know by heart. I also experienced the feeling of being abandoned. Being in the music also influenced my being-in-the-world in my daily life.

On the day of the listening session I tried to create a setting that would allow me to listen to what the work of art, the song recorded in the style of Swedish jazz of the sixties, called me to think. I attempted to create a setting where I could calm down, listen to the unknown, and reflect creatively. I was alone at home, lying on the sofa with my eyes closed. I directed myself in an open way toward the music and listened to the song four times. Between each listening I made notes on my computer. I really felt that the rest of the world was bracketed; the music opened the world to me once more.

In the first listening session my directedness was toward the horns, the vibraphone, and the piano. I had never before noticed, or embodied, the vibraphone in my “everyday” listening to the song. The timbre of the brass horn harmony and the expressions of the bass-trombone (together with the saxophone’s long notes and the vibraphone's timbre) are an important part of the characteristics of the song. Through my reflected listening I understood that this sound, or the feeling that the sound offers, is something that I have had in my mind, functioning as a model, in different musical settings, but that I did not exactly know what it consisted of. Another thing that the first listening made me aware of was why I have always loved the sound of a salient bass-trombonist. When it came to my directedness toward the piano and the vibraphone, I became aware that the vibraphone played fill-ins in the first verse, and the piano in the second. In the following verse the saxophone had that function, which was no surprise to me. I understand now that I have learned much about “taking turns” in music by listening to this song, and I had also created a model for how music in this style should be sounding. Every time I hear a new version of this song, I translate and interpret it based on this specific recording as a starting-point. The timbre, the phrasing, the tuning, and the instrumentation have contributed to my experience of the song, and also the other way around—the recorded piece as a “whole” has influenced my learning of musical parameters. Consequently, my experience of the music is important to my way of being in the (musical) world.

In my second listening session, it was impossible to bracket out the first one, though I wanted to listen to the saxophone and the singer specifically. I decided to turn my directedness to the saxophone first, since the singer is more complicated, as she uses both musical and spoken language. The saxophone part is so familiar to me that it was hard to listen to the language of
the other. I know every note, phrasing, and tuning. I sense how I can complement the singer and contribute to the atmosphere of being abandoned. In my listening, trying to understand the other, I translate this experience into a mix of feelings of anger and sadness. At the same time it is impossible not to listen to the contrast that the phrasing of the singer creates. The feeling of the laid-back stance of the singer and the sense of contrast is obvious and is embodied within me. I have learned the function of “fill-ins” and how they can be used to express feelings. I also recognize that the way of playing and combining the notes is something that I have tried to make my own when playing saxophone. I have tried to transpose the expressions onto other settings in creating my musical language together with others. The expression concerns the intervals between the notes: which ones should be “under pitch” and which “on pitch,” which notes in the phrase should be “after time” and which “on time,” which should be long and which should be short, and what saxophone sound should be used on different occasions. I have learned where my space of playing as opposed to silence is, where my space for “licking” as opposed to “back-grounding” is, etc. And finally, I have learned how I, as a saxophonist, can contribute to the musical expression as a whole. By taking part in the work of art (through reflected listening, translation of musical structures, tensions and acoustics, and emotional responses), existence is taking place: through my involvement with the work of art, I come to dwell in the (musical) world.

In the third listening session I concentrated on the singer’s musical-verbal language. Listening to the singer was even harder than listening to the saxophone. But when listening, what I heard is that Zetterlund uses all her voice, all variations of her voice, as a musical instrument. She does this so as to translate the message of the song, the sense of unhappy love and abandonment. But of course, her translation is always related to the interaction with all the other musicians. She varies between and combines lightness and darkness, being-in-tune with “blueness,” clearness with humbleness, being laid back with being even more laid back, exact timing with pushing forward, heaviness with lightness, straightness with vibrato, roughness with fragility—all in combination with the lyrics. Through these listening activities, it has become clear that I have always tried to translate her expression into my singing when singing in a similar style. But I can’t handle all the dimensions of her voice, which becomes very clear in my translation of my reflected listening into written words. I know that I am not a very good singer, but it becomes clear how complex it is to be able to sing like this woman. I also translate her singing into life in general, into love and breaking up and betrayal. I experience myself in different roles in situations like this by feeling the singer together with the musicians and how they “speak” to me—being as others. I sense the feelings of the betrayer and the betrayed, and the music gives me tools for handling and empathizing with the different roles.

In the fourth and last listening session I tried to listen to “the whole” of the recorded work of art, which also includes listening to what is not there. It became clear how the musicians together translate the message of the song into a common expression, or language. But it also became obvious how they listen to the language of “the others,” and try to respond to what they think the others express in their different instrumental-musical languages, how they respond to and complete and deepen the others’ expressions. All the four listening sessions have made it clear to me that a piece of music, as art, expression, impression, parameters (e.g. form, harmony, timbre, tension, dynamics), constitutes a work of art that functions as an opener to the world learned as musical “wholes” in different settings or styles. The parts are combined and experienced in different ways together with the “gaps” between the musical parameters, as well as between the musicians and the listeners.
All my life I have been dwelling in those kinds of musical expressions or spaces. I have listened, translated, and acted in the (musical) world. My example here takes place in an individual setting, but the learning of the work, that is, the processes of translating it, took place in different situations, mostly in the company of other human beings. I have also been exposed to music in many other ways in which the music, as well as my ability to translate it, has been limited and diminished in different ways and for different reasons. What I have learned about learning music through authentic listening is to have a deeper understanding of how important, and hard, it is to offer learners musical spaces for dwelling in which calming down and reflection are combined in perfect balance, where learners have the chance to develop what the work of art calls them to think. Spaces where they have the chance to listen to the unknown, making, shaping, and composing music through translation, and so finding their own musical language, can help them handle the world and make them feel like musical beings. We underline the weight of creating such places in the classroom, as well as in all one-to-one teaching sessions of music.

Final Words

In this paper, we have tried to examine the aesthetic space in which teachers and students find themselves and how this space can be associated with Heidegger’s idea of translation—that is, how translation is related to dwelling as the interrelatedness of human beings and space from an aesthetic-pedagogical perspective. This is a space where creativity as cultivating takes place, and it entails translating as learning. Each subject in this space must be encouraged to find his or her own way of belonging authentically, or as Heidegger says in Basic Concepts, “We must listen our way into that place where we ourselves belong” [Es gilt hineinzu hören in das, wohin wir selbst gehören] (Heidegger, 1998, p. 16; Heidegger, 1981, p. 20). In this space, teachers and students are engaged in the ongoing process of translating each other, and so are learning from one another, either by some kind of aesthetic expression (such as music or poetry), or by translating, or, de facto, interpreting a work of art. In order for each student to find the place in which he or she belongs authentically, the teacher must serve as an example and provide a path for the students to follow, but also to stray from, since straying implies listening to what is unknown and is presently not “there.” This straying, however, only occurs within the aesthetic space in which learning and/as translating can take place.

The two last parts of the paper are meant to mutually imply each other, so that the phenomenological listening to music in the last section of the paper could inform how listening to poetry could be staged. Similarly, the section dealing with Stevens’ poetry could function as a way into the subjective, phenomenological experience of authentic listening in order to learn (again) what the work of art calls us to think.
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Notes

1 The idea that translation is related to learning can be compared to Bowden & Marton’s (1998) notion of transfer: “Anything you learn, you must make use of in other situations. You can never re-enter the very situation which gave birth to learning. Transfer is involved in every instance of learning; questions of transfer are simply questions of learning” (p. 25).

2 We use the word “performative” here in the Austinian sense to indicate how art, learning about art, and creating art are activities that make something happen by being staged, as in for example saying “I promise” or saying “Yes” to the one you are marrying. These examples are expressions in which the expression in itself signifies the doing of an action (Austin, 1975).

3 It is perhaps interesting to note the interrelatedness of music and poetry from a philosophical perspective as deriving from the arts of the muses. According to OED the etymology of music reads as follows: “ancient Greek μουσική art presided over by the Muses, especially poetry sung to music, use as noun (short for μουσική τέχνη; compare classical Latin ars mūsica) of feminine of μουσικός relating to the Muse or Muses (applied generally to artistic culture, poetry, etc., but also spec. to music).”

4 Miles Groth (2004) notes that hearing [hören] in Heidegger goes beyond merely auditory listening: “For Heidegger, hearing is belonging to (Gehören) what language says” (p. 130).

5 Discussing the poetry of Wallace Stevens, Simon Critchley (2005) notes concerning this relation that “the imagination is a power over external objects, or the transformation of the external into the internal through the work of subjective creation, a creation that is given sensuous form and is therefore rendered external in the work of art, the poem. I take it that this is what Hegel means when he speaks of art being born of the spirit and then reborn in being aesthetically regarded. Art is born twice” (p. 25). Critchley is referring to Hegel’s Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics (1993), p. 4.

6 In Heidegger’s perhaps most extensive account of his thoughts on education, published as “Heidegger on the Art of Teaching” (2002), he notes concerning the thinkers of the past that ”those thinkers are the rhetors of being. Our relation to tradition must be a hearing, or rather, a rehearing of thought’s oration…. We need to hear the words, hear their oratory, hear their metaphors as for the first time” (p. 37).

7 This can also be compared to what Heidegger says about the university in “Heidegger on the Art of Teaching” (2002): “As a mustering into appearance, the essence of education is ... inextricably bound to the meaning of being [Sinn des Seins] with the result that the university emerges as a clearing [Lichtung] in which the relation between teacher and student takes on different shapes and forms. In a movement of transcendence, Dasein is torn and dislocated from its world by entry into the clearing of the university. It loses its substance, which stands constant and sturdy beneath the daily flux of moods and petty duties that preoccupy” (p. 35).

8 See for example p. 196. For an explication of Heidegger’s developed thoughts on event or happening as appropriation [Ereignis], see for example Heidegger 2009).

9 I have chosen this work by Heidegger because it forms an analysis of poetry that is relevant
to my thoughts on reading Stevens’ poetry and also contains an extensive elaboration on translation.

10 Bart Eeckhout (2001) discusses how critics have traced the influence of different philosophical schools on Stevens’ poetry, and argues that the most tangible influence comes from Nietzsche and Coleridge.

11 J. Hillis Miller (1990) points out that Stevens poetizes rivers in two late poems, “Metaphor as Degeneration” and “The River of Rivers in Connecticut”: “Stevens sees being as a river, hidden behind all the appearances that tell of it, and yet flowing everywhere, through all space and time, and through all the contents of space and time. In these two poems he gives his most succinct expression of his apprehension of being” (p. 46).

12 In his essay “Stevens’ Poetry of Being” (1990) J. Hillis Miller shows the importance of the nothing in Stevens’ poetry. The nothing, Miller points out, is what is—that is, it is being. It is the ground without ground for existence, and thus for both the real and the imagination.

13 An earlier version of this text was presented at the 12th International Conference on Philosophy of Education, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia, 28th to 31th July 2010.
Together and Apart in the Time of Study: 
Teaching, Learning, Listening in Online Courses 
(An Application of the Technology of Difference)

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Mas las sirenas tienen un arma mucho mas terrible que su canto, esto es, su silencio.
—Franz Kafka, "El Silencio de las Sirenas"¹

Learning Together and Apart in the Time of Study

Heidegger has been the principle source of my attempt to understand how and why listening is at the center of teaching. For me a key moment in Heidegger’s work occurs when he is speaking to the students at Freiberg University upon returning to the seminar room for the first time since his infamous and inglorious departure and subsequent ban from teaching. In the first of the lectures that would later be published as a volume under the title What is Called Thinking? (1968) Heidegger sets the agenda for the course of study: he and his students are there, together, “attempting to learn thinking. We are all on the way together” (p. 14). I will come back to this ‘togetherness,’ and to what it means to be both included in and excluded from the ‘we’ who are on the way together. First, however, a few more words on Heidegger’s setting of the agenda for the seminar where they are attempting to learn thinking.

In setting this agenda Heidegger draws our attention to the condition of listening as necessary for all who are participating in the seminar, but especially for the teacher, who is guiding the group as they undertake this difficult challenge of learning thinking. If they are going to learn thinking, which sounds like a process and also a language, but which is, of course, an ontology or a way of being, or what Foucault (1984) called an ‘attitude,’ they must first learn to become aware of what is addressing them essentially. In other words, they must learn to learn, because “to learn means to make everything we do answer to whatever essentials address themselves to us at a given time” (Heidegger, 1968, p. 14; my emphasis). Here, the time that is “given” is the time when that which is essential is unfolding or presenting itself to us.

What stands out for me as significant is the identification of a particular kind of time, or, put more succinctly, the discovery of a temporal horizon, a unique place marked by a unique time, where we learn thinking. Through my work on Arendt (Duarte, 2010b), I have explored this unique time of learning as a time of radical possibility, or as the temporality of kairos when the linear flow of time, kronos, is interrupted by an opening that allows something wholly different to emerge. Learning happens when we find ourselves in that unique time of possibility, and by discovering ourselves there, perhaps
unexpectedly, we find ourselves ready to receive the address of the essential.\(^2\) Learning has its own temporality, and in this paper I want to indicate how listening operates as a way of perceiving that unique time, and, in turn, of cultivating and/or maintaining it (to the extent this is ever possible!).

Teachers learn to listen closely in order to ‘teach’ their students to learn thinking. Both kinds of learning happen in a specific time and through a specific practice. Indeed, learning involves ‘discovering’ oneself in that time when the essential is addressing us, or when we find ourselves engaged in what Tyson Lewis (2011; 2013), following Agamben, calls study. In study, as Agamben (1995) in concert with Heidegger might say, we are taken up by the address of the essential, ‘stupefied’ by the questions that present themselves to us. For Heidegger, learning thinking follows from the recognition that we are on our way, and that we are not yet thinking. For Agamben, study is the recognition of our potentiality, which is an ontology of both possibility—or natality, to use Arendt’s (1977) language—and impossibility, or what Heidegger (1995) would call the withdrawal of presencing into das nichts (the nothing). Study is the play of potentiality, the feeling of power or plenitude (as Nietzsche might put it; cf. Heidegger, 1991) co-arising with the feeling of weakness or impotency (as Socrates appears to have experienced\(^3\)). “Most thought provoking is that we are not yet thinking” (Heidegger, 1968, p. 4, emphasis in original) is Heidegger’s mantra for study, where, in being stupefied, we recognize our inability to think (properly), and yet from this recognition we are spurred on the way of learning. Learning thinking happens in study. As Agamben (1995) puts it, “Studying and stupefying are in this sense akin: those who study are in the situation of people who have received a shock and are stupefied by what has struck them, unable to grasp it and at the same time powerless to leave hold” (p. 64). Teachers learning to listen closely are caught up in the process of their students’ learning. They are absorbed in letting their students learn, and in this sense are studying their learning. Learning to listen closely is the ongoing study of their students’ learning. (Phrasing here is important: learning to listen closely expresses the play of potentiality [possibility/impossibility, potency/impotence]).

Learning depends, as Heidegger (1968) puts it, on “the presence of some teacher who can make the apprentice comprehend” (p. 15) the address of the essential. What this suggests is that teachers, in learning to listen closely, are already located in the time of study.

Teaching, as a form of study, is occurring ‘ahead,’ which here means further forward in time, but not in the sense of being more experienced, and thus more ‘advanced.’ Rather, the teacher is ‘ahead’ in the sense of dwelling or being in that time where the essential is presenting itself: “The teacher is ahead of his apprentices in this alone, that he has still far more to learn than they—he has to learn to let them learn” (Heidegger, 1968, p. 15). To be ‘ahead’ is thus to be (more caught up, entangled) in the time of learning. The challenge or difficulty of teaching is that the teacher must remain both with and apart from the students. Learning is a process, or way, that the teacher and students are in-and-on together. Yet, the teacher is always ‘ahead’ of the students, and thus apart from them.
because he still always has more to learn than they do: “The teacher must be capable of being more teachable than the apprentices” (Heidegger, 1968, p. 15).

While it seems clear that the capacity of being more teachable implies that the teacher dwells in ‘the near future,’ always projected into the time of possibility, natality, ‘ahead’ of the students, where learning happens, it is not clear who or what is ‘throwing’ the teacher ahead into the time of study. If the learning of the students “depends obviously on the presence of some teacher,” does it follow that the learning of the teacher, the one who “has still far more to learn than they,” also depends on the presence of one who can make him comprehend, can turn him towards the address of the essential? And if it does, who or what is this ‘teacher’ who teaches the teacher?

It is my conjecture that it is the students themselves who re-present this turning back of the teacher (in the sense of turning him away from them, pushing him apart), and who, in this re-presentation, teach the teacher to be teachable by projecting him into ‘the near future,’ the time of learning and study. If the teacher must learn to let the students learn, then this learning happens when the students teach him to remain silent. The projection of the teacher into the near future is a re-turning of the teacher to the place of study, where he must remain apart yet together with the students whom he must continue to study. Teaching in this way is the silent contemplation of the students’ learning. Being a teacher in this sense depends on the capacity of the teacher to receive this teaching. And this capacity is a form of receptivity, or close listening, that enables the teacher to remain in the place of study, steadfast in the ‘draft,’ as Heidegger describes the place where Socrates stood. In the remainder of this paper, I would like to share how I came to ‘discover’ this way of teaching by undergoing the experience of being thrown by my students when I unexpectedly ‘heard’ my students ignoring me, or listened to their silence in response to my professorial voice. But first, I’d like to make an excursus on silence.

An Excursus on Silence

How does one ‘hear’ silence? Recalling the composer John Cage, one is tempted to respond, by listening to it being performed. Can one perform silence, in the sense of enacting it or making it, as in the performance of Cage’s groundbreaking piece 4’33”? As I will discuss in my next section, I learned to hear silence by encountering my students’ performance of silence. I encountered the active production of silence in the learning space, and thereby learned how to listen to it. What does it mean to listen to silence, and why is this so important for educators? And why might the online learning context be one where educators can learn to listen to silence? The last question will be taken up in my next section. Here I want to turn to the work of Luce Irigaray, who not only emphasizes the centrality of listening in teaching, but also, like Heidegger, identifies silence as a human phenomenon (production) that must be cultivated in the learning context as a way of affirming the singularity of each person who is present. With this affirmation teachers take up what we might call, after Arendt, the conservation of natality and plurality. For Irigaray, listening is not only the result of silence, in the sense of ‘not speaking,’ but the result of a silence that is both always present and always being produced. Listening is the perception of this already existing and always unfolding...
silence. In turn, ‘hearing’ silence requires that we perceive it. Yet, this requirement demands new forms of perception, which emerge when we heed what Irigaray (2008) identifies as the imperative to construct an alternative logic.

In her essay “Listening, Thinking, Teaching” (2008), Irigaray insists that as educators, “we have no alternative but to invent another logic” (p. 238). For her, this is the most urgent project for educators, who have no choice but to lead the way in making a path toward a philosophical horizon where the teachings of western and eastern philosophy can appear both side by side and in relation to one another. Writing in a way that is close to Heidegger’s writing, Irigaray (2008) says, “The problem for us, as Westerners, is that it is no longer a question of mastery, but one in which we have now to let be done as well as to do, to let be as well as to be. We then imperceptibly enter another logic, another culture” (p. 232). If listening is the manner through which we move into this ‘other’ culture, then the movement we make into this ‘new’ horizon happens as we perceive what Heidegger calls “the inner essence of ‘logic’” itself (qtd. in Inwood, 1999, p. 22). This perception, which is a way of listening that Heidegger describes as the “speculative-hermeneutic experience of language,” is grounded in a more fundamental practice that he calls “sigetics [die Sigetik, the ‘art of silence,’ from the Greek signan, ‘to keep silent.’]” (qtd. in Inwood, 1999, p. 22).

The art of silence may be one way of describing the listening that is moving toward the other, and for Irigaray (2008), this is the educational form of listening, or the kind of listening that happens when teachers and students are not attempting to “[grasp] something in order to integrate and order it into [their] own world,” but are, rather, opening up their world “to something or someone external and strange to it. Listening-to is a way of opening ourselves to the other and of welcoming this other, its truth and its world as different from us, from ours” (p. 232). But such listening is always already made possible by the more fundamental presence of a silence that arises in-between teachers and students. The alterity appearing with listening-to is always dependent upon a gap or space that conserves the difference that mediates the experience of alterity, the strangeness of the new. The art of listening is thus what we might call a secondary art, because it proceeds from and/or is dependent upon the primary art of silence.

To speak of the ‘art of silence’ is evocative but also misleading, because the silence that mediates the fundamental difference between teachers and students is not one that is entirely ‘produced.’ This is why it is better to speak of ‘cultivation,’ which describes a process of dynamic interaction between what is ‘found’ and the gathering of this already existing. Silence is always already present, but once perceived as such, it needs to be protected, cared for, cultivated.

The art of silence is ultimately about maintaining the space for the proper reception of language. In turn, the productive activity of this art is first and foremost one of perceiving silence. For Irigaray, the art of silence is the conservational work that involves “the protection of a space, a place of silence” (Irigaray, 2001, p. 62). She calls this work conceiving silence.
Irigary writes, “to love each other between us ... requires the protection of a space, a place of silence.... The origin, if I can say this, of the love between us is silence” (Irigaray, 2001, p. 62). The conception of silence is less a speculation than a conservation or preservation of a space, a gap, where we can dwell together yet differently, free, in our singularity, in peace. Thus for Irigaray (2001), to conceive silence is to take up a way of teaching and learning “how to look at or listen to the other as subject” (p. 42).

As understood through Irigaray’s work, to teach and to learn are to cultivate a space that safeguards difference. This space, for Irigaray, is a place of silence, cultivated through perception, and preserved through a dwelling that remains radically tolerant. Perception is a way of relating on a deeply subjective and spiritual level, and for Irigaray, of safeguarding the becoming (growth and development) of each of us, separately and together. Perception is thereby a form of ‘letting’—“To leave the other to be, not to possess him in any way, to contemplate him as an irreducible presence, to relish him as an inappropriable good, to see him, to listen to him, to touch him, knowing that what I perceive is not mine” (Irigaray, 2001, p. 46).

**Being Thrown by the Silence of Students**

Heidegger (1968) writes, “if the relation between the teacher and the taught is genuine ... there is never a place in it for the authority of the know-it-all or the authoritative sway of the official” (p. 15). Within the pedagogy of Gelassenheit (letting-be) that I have been attempting to understand and practice, listening to one’s students is a key component. I have written on the need to take up a path of silence so as to open up the space for receptivity, for listening (Duarte, 2011, March). And it would seem to follow that this path enables one, in part, to avoid that authoritative modality that Heidegger identifies as having no place in teaching. But the teacher must speak. And so the question arises, how does one come to hear one’s own voice as expressing the ‘authoritative sway of the official’? How does one, as a teacher, learn how to listen to oneself, and to be capable of hearing when one takes up the position of the ‘know-it-all’?

These questions frame for me the focus of this paper, and also frame the kind of listening I have been learning when teaching online—taking up what we at Hofstra call distance learning, courses. Let me give a brief overview of the way I set up my distance learning courses, and then describe how I came to learn to listen to myself speaking in the voice of the authoritative official, the know-it-all, and why, as Heidegger indicated, there is no place for this voice once the students have arrived at the place of learning, and are dwelling in the time of study.

Indeed, the teacher must speak, and it is the necessity of speaking, or saying something edifying, evocative, provocative, and, in the end, thought-provoking, that was the primary motivation for me to accept the invitation to design and implement a set of distance learning courses. Over the years of teaching what we now call ‘traditional’ face-to-face courses, I enjoyed the freedom of spontaneity, of teaching ‘in the moment,’ and of attempting to keep it real and fresh each time I entered the classroom. My inspiration
was, and continues to be, the genius of improvisational musicians, who, it seems to me, never play the same note or the same beat in the same way twice. While having its undeniable moments of euphoria, and one could even say ecstatic freedom, teaching improvisationally always happens in the Jetzt-Zeit (the now-time), and, as such, leaves behind only the memory of the event, the happening of learning, the performance, perhaps as a recording, and some notes taken by diligent students. But by design, the temporality of the improvisational learning event permits no repetition. While this can feel liberating, over time it produces a particular kind of novelty fatigue, where the expectation to always be ‘on’ is exhausting. Novelty fatigue also produces the desire to have a record of one’s teaching, and what I experienced was a kind of ‘rebound effect,’ or what Foucault (2005) describes as the “effects of the truth on the subject” (p. 16). The ‘truth’ of the practices of improvisational teaching rebounded to me, producing in me the desire not simply to say something, but to record this saying, or to say something that I could say again. Thus the desire for some kind of permanence in my teaching led me into the studios of Hofstra’s radio station where I host a weekly music show. And there, in WRHU’s studio north, I recorded ten lectures for my introduction to philosophy of education course, which examines the questions “What does it mean to be a philosophical educator? What does it mean to be educated by philosophy?”

The lectures are the starting point for my distance learning courses. My design of the course begins with the recording of the lectures. And the learning in the course begins with my students listening to these lectures. In terms of the process, I ask the students first to listen to my lecture, then to do the assigned reading, and then to participate in an online seminar that is mediated by VoiceThread (VT), a software program that allows students to leave written, audio, and video posts.

With some context now presented, I can return to questions about the ‘teachability’ of the teacher, and, specifically, how I came to learn to listen to myself speaking in the voice of the authoritative official, and was projected into the near future by my students.

The teacher must speak. And in my lectures, I spoke, mindful of the expectation I had for myself to say something I could ‘say again.’ Here, one might anticipate that I learned to hear myself speaking as the ‘know-it-all’ when I replayed and listened to my lectures during the course. But if this had happened, then I would only have been ‘hearing’ myself through myself, and been trapped in a solipsistic feedback loop. On the contrary, to become teachable requires that we learn to hear ourselves by listening to the way others hear us. So it was neither in listening to my lectures nor in reading the students’ responses to them that my teachability resided. Rather, it was in the VT seminar that I learned to hear myself as an official, embodying, insofar as one can be embodied in a distance learning class, the kind of official that has become normative in education today: the accountant who is monitoring the learning so as to insure that the projected outcomes are being met.

In describing to a colleague how I came to experience the rebound effect when I heard myself by hearing my students listen to and ignore me, I likened the experience to walking along the wide expanse of the sidewalk on Broadway in Manhattan, where small
groups of people walking and talking are able to remain totally engaged and focused on a conversation while moving forward along the sidewalk at a steady pace, all the while weaving around others who are not part of their group. This is precisely how I felt as I attempted to enter into the online seminar space where my students were engaged in conversation about my lectures and readings. Despite my efforts to lead or steer the conversation in a particular direction—out of a desire to have them take up a particular section of the reading, or a question that I raised in lecture—my students moved along as a group, weaving around my posts as if they were part of a conversation that was moving in another direction. Indeed, as I told my colleague, after two consecutive weeks of posting comments that were ignored, I recognized that I was not entirely together with my students. Paradoxically, in their posts, my students referred directly to me when making a comment in response to my lecture, while ignoring the posts I made during the online seminar.

After the second week, I arrived at the conclusion, and decided to continue under its working hypothesis, that the authority I was granted by my students to organize and prompt the seminar did not permit me to participate in the seminar, which they reserved as their space of learning.

In essence, my students taught me to let them learn by remaining silent toward me. They moved together around my voice—a voice that expressed a kind of authoritative sway, in the sense of rule or control. By remaining silent toward this voice, they withheld recognition of my presence with them in their time of learning. And in listening to their silence I was compelled to understand that I wasn’t excluded, but rather I had been placed elsewhere. I had been thrown into the near future, into the time of teaching when, in contrast to the time of learning, we let learning be learned by remaining apart from our students. Being ahead, our work involves cultivating and maintaining that gap, in time, that demarcates the ones who study from the ones who protect their right to do so.

“In Almost Absolute Silence”

In the foregoing I have suggested that within the context of distance learning a new kind of pedagogical relationship has been revealed to me, one that is much more consistent with the principles of education I have been working under in the past eighteen years of teaching at the university. The pedagogy of Gelassenheit, of letting learning be learned, had created what Foucault (2005) calls the ‘rebound effect’ (le retour) (p. 16). Indeed, the practice of letting my students learn on their own turned back on me, rebounding so that it was the students who were teaching me, who were letting me learn, and who were letting me be apart from and distinct from them. In granting me a freedom from a particular kind of power, they were enacting the principle of academic freedom. From its inception at the University of Bologna, this principle has always been generated from above and beyond by an external authority that grants the university en toto freedom from the intrusion of external authority (a strange paradox, for sure), but also from within, by the students who retain a kind of local authority over the teaching and learning practices within the university. The faculty, for their part, remain in control and have authority of
scholarship, research, etc., and thus we have with academic freedom a kind of balance of power between students and faculty.

The pedagogy of Gelassenheit rebounded to me when, as I said above, my students taught me how to remain silent. It was a rebound effect because I had already been enacting a form of listening that was grounded on what I understood to be a generative silence. Here ‘rebound’ should be understood in the sense of a recovery and amplification of strength, as well as of value. The principle of ‘letting be’ was returned, and it empowered me to understand anew the pedagogy that unfolds from listening and the generative silence that this receptivity is grounded in.

What did this renewed understanding of listening and silence reveal to me?

In her book I Love to You (1996), Luce Irigaray takes us back to the originary question that has been present throughout this essay: as she puts it, “Let us begin with: how am I to listen to you?” (p. 115). This question is ‘originary’ because we must constantly raise it and reflect upon it. It is the ‘first’ question, so to speak, not only in the sense of where we begin, but in terms of an origin and ground for teaching. Irigaray's response to this fundamental question echoes what she writes in “Listening, Thinking, Teaching” (2008), but also what Heidegger (1968) says in the first lecture of What is Called Thinking?—especially when he says that what is most thought provoking is that he and his student are not yet thinking. Thus, in response to the question “How am I to listen to you?” Irigaray (1996) says that the statement I am listening to you means “to listen to your words as something unique, irreducible, especially to my own, as something new, as yet unknown” (p. 116). For me, to understand the implications of the rebound effect, the empowerment received from the return of the pedagogy of letting be, it is necessary to think about listening as both grounded in a generative form of silence and generating a form of silence, one that is precisely that building/dwelling where the freedom of the student is conserved. Listening is the building/dwelling that conserves the space of thinking, being and becoming, and is the basis of a teaching that cultivates what we might describe as the conservatory of learning (see Duarte 2010a).

Here we gather new insights into what Irigaray (1996) is indicating when she writes of the need and the necessity to move into a new logic. I am listening to you, she writes, “requires a transition to a new dimension” (p. 116). But in order for this movement, process, transition to occur, we have to think in terms of what Heidegger calls “the inner essence of ‘logic’” itself. This position we take towards logic does not make a new logic, but rather allows us to form a different relation to logic itself. As I noted above, we perceive this ‘inner essence’ of logic through a “speculative-hermeneutic experience of language,” which is itself grounded in a more fundamental practice that Heidegger calls sigetics.” However, for Irigaray, this art of silence is more radical in the sense that it is not an artistic practice (poeisis), but the artwork of silence. This is why she insists that listening produces a silence that conserves possibility, that preserves the space for learning in the sense of protecting the place of the unknown, the unexpected, and the not yet. Learning happens in that time and place where improvisation, spontaneity, or what Arendt calls the revolutionary power of natality unfolds. I am listening to you means I,
teacher, am receiving you, student, “as someone and something I do not know yet, on the basis of a freedom and an openness put aside for this moment. I am listening to you: I encourage something unexpected to emerge, some becoming, some growth, some new dawn, perhaps. I am listening to you prepares the way for the not-yet-coded, for silence, for a space for existence, initiative, free intentionality, and support for your becoming” (Irigaray, 1996, p. 116-117; emphasis mine).

The effect of the pedagogy of letting-be rebounding to me offered the possibility of taking up a new way of understanding listening by indicating a new way of relating to a logic of listening. The ‘old’ presumption that a generative silence allows for listening, and thus letting be, is reversed, and the ‘new’ presumption is that silence is generated by listening. However, if we follow Irigaray, this silence remains a kind of gift offered to the student(s) from the teacher, an offer to remain apart from them in the sense of not interfering with their learning by imposing a direction upon it, but yet remaining together with them in the sense of bearing witness to this learning, to their becoming. It is precisely the taking up of a phenomenological stance that Heidegger calls the speculative-hermeneutic experience of language in the sense that in listening to the student, the teacher, me, is listening to you, student(s), “as the revelation of a truth that has yet to manifest itself —yours and that of the world revealed through and by you. I give you a silence in which your future—and perhaps my own, but with you and not as you and without you—may emerge and lay its foundation” (Irigaray, 1996, p. 117).

How can a silence be ‘given’ to the students? How can listening indicate silence as a place that holds open the future? How is it that I, ‘teacher,’ can return the silence enacted by my students in a way that more powerfully enables them to learn how to learn?

Listening offers up a silence, and in doing so silence reveals itself as the space-time of learning. In this topos of learning the stress is laid on an ontology of becoming, and for Irigaray (1996), this implies that the silence offered by the teacher is given with “no a priori, no pre-established truth or ritual” (p. 117). Given the experience I have recounted in this essay, this giving of silence is an act of reciprocity. And because learning is an event that captures both ‘teachers’ and ‘students,’ it is appropriate to describe listening and the silence it offers an event of inter-subjectivity. This designation should not be misunderstood as somehow closing that essential gap which, for Irigaray, is necessary for there to be a listening that receives each and every appearance of language (in the existential sense) as unique, irreducible, new and yet unknown. However, we must recognize that, as Irigaray consistently emphasizes, listening happens between people. Inter-subjectivity designates both the place and process of learning via listening that offers up a silence.

Inter denotes first and foremost the topological character of the silence that appears from listening — learning qua listening as dwelling/building that appears as a place. Inter used in this sense of going to the roots (i.e., into the ground: both earth and ontological foundation) captures the topology of listening as an enactment of a horizon, an ontology of being-there in the sense of Da-sein. To think in this way is to recall the Old French roots of inter, enterrer, which is based on Latin in – ‘into’ + terra ‘earth.’

Learning
with-in silence is a way to describe the culture that is cultivated (the dynamic interaction between what is ‘found’ and its gathering) in a particular field of education. And ‘field’ should be understood here as a particular branch of study or sphere of activity or interest. In turn, I am indicating/inculcating learning with-in silence as a field within the philosophy of education. Inter also denotes the processual character of the silence that appears from listening. Here ‘inter-‘ is the prefix that denotes ‘between,’ ‘among,’ but also suggests ‘mutuality’ and ‘reciprocity.’ Here the origin to be recalled is Old French entre, which evolved from the Latin inter ‘between, among.’ In this sense silence is inter-subjective because it appears between and among teachers and students, who should now all be designated under the common title of ‘learners,’ or those who are enacting study. Thus silence

is the condition… It ... assumes that the already existing world, even in its philosophical or religious form, should not be considered complete, already revealed or made manifest…. [T]he world must not be sealed already, it must still be open, the future not determined by the past. (Irigaray, 1996, p. 117)

In sum, the silence that appears from listening is both a process and a place of learning. It is a condition both in the sense of a particular way of existence of and for human being qua learning, and in the sense of being a particular location (circumstance, atmosphere) of human existence in learning. And when we think of silence as a condition we remember that the inter-subjectivity of learning is, ultimately, dialogic. Indeed, our listening and the silence it offers conserves and cultivates the possibility of saying (speaking, writing, etc.). So, when we describe silence as a condition we recall the roots of ‘condition’ in the Old French condicion (noun), conditionner (verb), from Latin condicio(n) ‘agreement,’ from condicere ‘agree upon,’ from con ‘with’ + dicere ‘say.’ The condition of silence offers up the possibility of a speculative-hermeneutic experience of language. Indeed, if the ground of learning thinking (study) is cultivated by the ‘art of silence,’ then the fruit of this ground is dialogue. Put otherwise, learning/study is the dynamic dialectic of receptivity (listening, reading, etc.) and expressivity (saying, writing, etc.).

**Conclusion: Learning to Listen Closely, Possibility/Impossibility of Teaching**

In the Summary to and Transition from the first to the second lecture in What is Called Thinking? (1968), Heidegger identifies the three themes that concerned the first meeting of his course. Of those, the second is the relation between teaching and learning. When he takes up this relation during the summary and transition, Heidegger links learning thinking with the address of the essential. In learning thinking, he tells his students, they may or may not “attain relatedness to what is most thought-provoking” (Heidegger, 1968, p. 25). This, he says, is “altogether out of the hands of those who practice the craft of thinking” (p. 25). What is in their hands, however, is the preparatory work that happens by learning to listen closely. So we can and must, if we are to learn thinking and ready ourselves for the possibility of being related to what is most thought-provoking, learn to listen closely. And in this endeavor, teacher and students are together because “to learn listening ... is the common concern of student and teacher” (p. 25).
However, with his concluding words on the second major theme of lecture one, Heidegger reminds his students that potential for failure is always close at hand. Indeed, because they are learning thinking, and, in that process, are learning to listen closely, they remain on the way, potential and im-potential thinkers and listeners. He tells them, “No one is to be blamed ... if he is not yet capable of listening” (Heidegger, 1968, p. 25). Put differently, when they dwell together and apart in the time(s) of study, they remain learners who may or may not attain the relatedness to the address of the essential, which, in the end, is not yet happening in the seminar, not yet happening in close examinations of text, ideas, or words, both written and spoken. Most thought-provoking is that we are not yet thinking, and the ‘not yet’ names the time of study as a time defined by the play of potentiality/impotentiality happening in between past and future.

As Heidegger suggests at the end of this part of the summary, because the learning of close listening is the common concern of student and teacher, the res publica, if you will, the commons or public sphere of learning where they dwell together, they also share in the being together in temporality that defines the studio of learning. And so, Heidegger reminds his students, they are together in the play of potentiality/impotentiality, together learning close listening. Further, because the teacher is ‘ahead’ of the students in maintaining the studio so they can learn, he is also apart from and ahead in the play of potentiality/impotentiality. “[Y]ou must concede,” he says to them, “that the teacher’s attempt may go wrong and that, where he happens not to go wrong, he must often resign himself to the fact that he can not lay before you in each instance all that should be stated” (Heidegger, 1968, pp. 25-26).

What Heidegger might have said, and what I hear as implied in what he is saying, is, first, that teaching is a play of right/wrong, success/failure, potentiality/impotentiality, and, second, that in the midst of this play, this dynamic, silences must be perceived and attended to. In fact, if learning thinking begins with learning to listen closely, then the silences must be anticipated, cultivated, and maintained. The teacher’s attempt to let learning happen may go wrong, and he may find himself impotent with regard to letting his students learn to listen closely. He may, as I discovered, overstep his boundaries, and speak too much, or with the voice of the know-it-all, and, thereby, reinstate the temporality of knowledge, the linear and chronological instrumental time. The silence that is heard in these occasions is the silencing of the students, and the closure of the space of study, the shutting down of the time of learning. The other silence that is heard, and one that the students must attend to, is the one that emerges in what cannot be said by the teacher.9

The teacher must speak. But, at times, his speaking does not communicate, and he remains impotent to engage students in learning to listen closely. In these cases we are reminded of the other sense of the teacher being apart from the students, or the apartness of the teacher and students. The teacher must speak but he cannot say all that needs to be said, because in teaching he remains related to the ‘not yet’ of study. He is offering his students something to listen to, to respond to, and in doing so he cannot say, nor should he attempt to say, all that needs to be said because there is still more to be said, most
importantly, in response to what the students are saying. The ‘not yet’ bounds us to remain silent to the future response, and thus, the time of study is always in relation to the time that remains, the future arrival of the ‘now moment,’ which we must anticipate as the next time in the studio of learning. The silence of the teacher is thus also the silence of dwelling ‘ahead’ of his students, in the near future, where he waits for and anticipates their return, waiting upon their responses, listening closely to their learning.¹⁰
References


Notes

1 Franz Kafka, “El Silencio de las Sirenas” (1984), p. 11. “The Sirens have a still more fatal weapon than their song, namely their silence.” These words from Kafka’s meditation provide a perfect marquee announcement for this paper, calling our attention, as they do, to a moment in ancient mythology where the man of cunning, Odysseus, is confronted with yet another fateful challenge. I’m tempted to describe the teacher persona I perform as a spiritual descendant of Odysseus, navigating the complex and sometime treacherous waters of academia. But in this case, with Kafka, I’m reminded that the most ‘awful weapon’ I face is the silence that emerges in the learning space. The power of those silences manifests when one ignores or underestimates their threat, which is always a present danger of dismantling the authority of the one who speaks too much. To pay heed to the silences, to be attentive to them, is to remain humble in the face of the task at hand, which is to teach by letting learning happen, and thereby to open up a way into the time of study. The threat from the silence of study is always a potential to silence the voice of authority that interrupts and disrupts the freedom of study.

2 Here it is important to note that this exceptional time, which I argue is one of the conditions necessary for the learning event to happen, is a temporal horizon. In turn, the educator cannot ‘stage’ but can only indicate or point to through what I will be exploring in this paper, following Heidegger, as a pedagogy of letting. Now, insofar as this pedagogy is possible at all, and specifically in the online educational platform, the actuality of this possibility is always dependent on the desire and willingness, no less than the capability, of an educator to take the risk of stepping-back and letting learning be. And this risk is happening in the ‘ethical sphere’ insofar as it grounded in unspoken trust, a leap of faith in the students to undertake learning in the horizon that has been signaled to them. And with this clarification I am registering a strong note of dissent against Dreyfus’ (2002) Kierkegaardian critique of online education, a critique which contends that the ethical sphere cannot be ‘simulated,’ and thus the crucial ‘risk taking’ allowed and supported by authentic (face-to-face, embodied) education is absent from inauthentic (virtual, online) education.

3 I explore Socrates’ ‘impotence’ in my essay "Kant, the Nomad, and the Publicity of Thinking: Finding a Cure for Socrates’ Narration Sickness" (Duarte, 2009).

4 This ‘being ahead’ is one of the most persistent and consistent ways that Heidegger explores be-ing through a temporality that is qualified as movement. From this early lecture in 1924, published bilingually as The Concept of Time (1992), through Being and Time (1962), and, subsequently, On Time and Being (1972), Heidegger maintained that exploring the question of the meaning of being, or fundamental thinking, was a matter of a way and of how (Wie) that entangled us in what I call the strange present (present extraño), which is that temporal horizon where, first, we can experience the simultaneity of multiple traditions, or heritages, and, second, we ‘leap ahead’ into the ‘original past.’
My project of originary thinking is an attempt to take up this strange present through a set of pedagogical protocols, as well as through experimental forms of writing. My book *Being and Learning* (Duarte, 2012a) is an extended example of thinking in the strange present.

5“All through his life and right into his death, Socrates did nothing else than place himself into this draft, this current, and maintain himself in it. This is why he is the purest thinker of the West. This is why he wrote nothing. For anyone who begins to write out of thoughtfulness must inevitably be like those people who run to seek refuge from any draft too strong for them” (Heidegger, 1968, p. 17). I’d like to examine how Socrates’ steadfastness, specifically his withholding of writing, is an example of study in the form of teaching. In not writing, Socrates stood in the midst of the play of potentiality/impotentiality.

6I have written a paper that explores the origins of academic freedom in medieval Bologna, and the implications of thinking that history (Duarte 2012b). The paper focuses, in part, on The Habita: the first or originary right granted to the university, articulated in the “imperial constitution” of 1158, at the Diet of Raoncaglia, willed by Frederick Barbarossa, and granted to the students and faculty of the university of Bologna. As cited in Compayré (1893): “We will ... that the students, and above all, the professors of divine and sacred laws, may be able to establish themselves and dwell in entire security in the cities where the study of letters is practiced. It is fitting that we should shelter them from all harm. Who would not have compassion on these men who exile themselves through love of learning, who expose themselves to a thousand dangers, and who, far from their kindred and their families, remain defenseless among persons who are sometimes of the vilest?” (p. 11).

7If we follow Foucault’s insights, the rebound effect is an important and dare I say ‘measurable outcome’ of the teaching and learning happening via a pedagogy of *Gelassenheit*. This paper is an attempt to indicate a possible set of terms for describing a way of assessing the learning. However, what can’t be emphasized enough here is that the one learning in this case is the teacher. If the rebound effect is registered as an occurrence of learning, then it is the teacher that we are focused on. There is some movement to account for the teacher as learner (e.g., the Teacher Education Accreditation Council [TEAC] Quality Principles for Teacher Education Programs (2010) identifies as the first of its ‘cross-cutting themes’ “learning how to learn”). But this remains a marginal notion in a time when ‘learner’ is almost everywhere designated as ‘student,’ which designation is, in turn, always assigned in contrast to ‘teacher.” Lost in this logic is the sense that learning is a process that does not flow from a fixed subject position (teacher). In the dialogue published as “Conversations Along a Country Path,” Heidegger does well to describe and document this pre-subjective learning process as always already taking hold of us. This work, along with two other conversations, is published as volume 77 of Heidegger’s complete works (*Gesamtausgabe*) in German, and in English as *Country Path Conversations* (Heidegger, 2010). In this dialogue, *Gelassenheit* is presented as the composure, calmness and repose of an en-opened
thinking, but also as the en-opening of that thinking. Put differently, if *Gelassenheit* means something like the result of the pre-subjective process of ‘having been released into the open/openness,’ then letting (*lassen*) is the way we might subjectively indicate this pre-subjective process.

8Here it is difficult not to think of Arendt’s (1998) claim that “the earth is the very quintessence of the human condition, and earthly nature, for all we know, may be unique in the universe in providing human beings with a habitat in which they can move and breathe without effort and without artifice” (p. 2).

9After reading an early draft of this paper, Tyson Lewis called my attention to a relevant section in Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (1962), writing, “have you thought of connecting your comments on listening to Heidegger's ontological analysis of silence in *Being and Time*? In his analysis of the existential constitute of the 'there,' H. argues that 'reticence articulates the intelligibility of *Dasein* in so primordial a manner that it gives rise to a potentiality-for-hearing which is genuine, and to a being-with-one-another which is transparent' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 165). Here I am reading reticence as a kind of privation of language—a privation in the sense that it speaks equally to the capability to and not to speak. It is this im-potentiality of silence (an activity that is also an inactivity) that enables us to have a community.” In my response to Lewis I wrote, “thanks for your *Being and Time* citation, which, yes, connects to what I'm exploring in this paper. 'Reticence' seems to relate to with-holding, or the decision to 'not speak', but also being thrown into silence. In either case, what arises is the potential for hearing, which, as you suggest, creates the conditions for the possibility of a community, or, in the case of our field of interest, a learning community. And this raises some questions with respect to the positionality of the teacher in relation to the community, specifically, how the power of the teacher's 'voice' is rendered 'moot,' or to play on the phonetics (here a double pun?), the teacher's voice is rendered 'mute.' In this sense, the teacher (as authoritative know it all) is 'deprived' of voice, and, as you suggest, the reticence he undergoes is a kind of privation. I suppose my point is, in part, to show how the community of learning must (I insist!) be a gathering of equals (in terms of Ranciere's (1991) sense of equality of intelligence). And thus, the emphasis on the teacher being first and foremost one who listens, and whose listening ultimately conserves (in the Arendtian sense) the space for learning. So, like Ranciere puts it, the teacher retains the responsibility that learning is happening. Might we say that the teacher is thus 'more' deprived of voice? (this would be a radical suggestion, for sure, given that the teacher must speak!” Email correspondence, March, 2012.

10The experimental research documented and explored in this paper, as well as the opportunity to take up some of the initial findings with colleagues in the 2013 Orrs Island Philosophy of Education Summer Institute, is made possible in large part by a Hofstra University Provost Diversity Initiative grant. This paper is the first published account of the project *A Chance for a New Human Togetherness: “The Technology of Difference: Thinking Multi-culturally.”* The aim of this project is to invite scholars, faculty and students into the process of creating new understandings of self and others through an
Irigaray-/Heidegger-inspired phenomenology of difference. Difference is a reverential phenomenon that provides a ground for our being together. In turn, what is unfolding here is thinking as a way of being, an ontology of receptivity and affirmation of diversity, a letting-be (*Gelassenheit*), without discrimination or judgment, of the plurality that appears before and beyond us. The *techne* of this phenomenology is a *technology of difference*, which, in the words of Irigaray (2008), arises through “a logic of coexistence in difference” (p. 237). Further, it implies a pedagogical initiative: “the most important thing we have to learn and teach is: how to communicate in difference…. And this is a crucial step for reaching another logic and entering into multiculturalism” (Irigaray, 2008, p. 237).
Huebner’s Heidegger: 
Toward an Authentic Conception of Learning and “Historicity” for Contemporary Education

James Magrini

1. Introducing the Topic: Reading Huebner’s “Curriculum as Concern for Man’s Temporality”

This essay interprets the concepts that Dwayne Huebner originally adopted in his curriculum philosophy by examining “Curriculum as Concern for Man’s Temporality,” a groundbreaking essay that introduced phenomenology to curriculum studies in the late 1960s (Pinar, 1992). The concepts that Huebner incorporates emerge directly from Heidegger’s philosophy, e.g., the phenomenological fundamental-ontology of Dasein as well as themes arising from Heidegger’s later writings of the “Turn” (Kerhe). It is evident that Huebner’s purpose is to inspire a new direction in thinking on education by turning to the philosophy of Heidegger and the phenomena of “temporality” and “historicity.” However, as Huebner (1999a) explicitly states, “I do not intend or propose to provide either a presentation or an interpretation of this phenomenological ontology as [Heidegger] develops Dasein’s temporality” (p. 136). As a result, crucial aspects of Heidegger’s fundamental ontology, while certainly thought by Huebner, remain unsaid because they are neither explicated nor formally developed.

In what follows, using Huebner’s work as a springboard, I formalize the crucial role Heidegger’s philosophy plays in inspiring Huebner’s reconceived understanding of the curriculum along with speculating on the potential impact this philosophy has for a reinterpretation and reevaluation of our conceptions of knowledge, students, and learning. By tracing Huebner’s curriculum philosophy back to its origin, in relating his language and concepts to a unique way of naming the truth of our historical Being as related to our educational practices, I hope to demonstrate several ways that educators might draw inspiration from Huebner’s reconceived understanding of education. The authentic understanding of education emerging from Huebner’s critical encounter with Heidegger holds the promise to enlighten and inspire educators in the direction of understanding, interpreting, and discoursing with and about students in terms of their own potentiality-for-Being as grounded in the unfolding and the enactment of their historical reality. For both thinkers, it is the authentic understanding of time (temporality) and history (historicity) that inspires the unique possibilities for human transcendence and potential educational reform.

2. Huebner’s Authentic View of Education Through Heidegger’s Conceptual Lens: The Phenomenological Concern with Temporality and Historicity
A. Deconstructing the Tradition in Education

Huebner’s (1999a) work in phenomenology aims to rethink and ultimately redefine the categories of goals, purposes, and learning in education, which according to Huebner have been, and continue to be, misunderstood by educational professionals to the detriment of students. Goals and purposes in education, when conceived in an inauthentic manner, relate exclusively to the future development of the student, where the “educator looks ahead to expected outcomes, plans for tomorrow, and attempts to specify the future behavior of the student” in terms that are precise and unambiguous (p. 132). The category of learning, as “learning theory” employed by advocates of social efficiency, is concerned primarily with behavioral science. This view to education ominously equates “learning” with “the change in behavior of an organism” (p. 132). Social efficiency educators are also primarily concerned with one type of learning, or way of knowing the world, namely an objective form of calculative knowledge associated with the process of abstract generalization (p. 133). In this form of knowing, “certain patterns, assumed to exist in the object world, are abstracted by the individual and carried into new situations” (p. 135). This engenders the mistaken notion that learning transpires within the individual, leading to the erroneous conclusion that there is “the individual and there is the world, and that the individual develops in such a way that he has power over the world or to act upon the world. Such thinking leads to the consideration of the individual as something distinct” (p. 134-135).

Huebner’s critique of learning in education can be traced to both Heidegger’s early critique of knowledge in Being and Time and his later philosophy relating to the problem of technology. Heidegger’s philosophy (1) addresses the problematic notion that all viable learning is reducible to abstract conceptualization, or scientific thematizing—calculative thought as described by Heidegger—valued for its use in mastering objective, empirical reality, and (2) sees this knowledge as grounded in the problematic Cartesian understanding of the human as an interiorized subject who resides at a metaphysical and epistemological remove from the objective world. As Heidegger (1962) indicates, when we approach entities in the world in terms of representing abstract scientific-mathematical relationships, we reduce them to a mere present-at-hand existence, or as Heidegger states, “Being-just-present-at-hand-and-no-more,” and such entities, in a pejorative sense, have their “properties defined mathematically in ‘functional concepts’” (p. 122). This is what Heidegger refers to as the impoverished Cartesian world, which is sharply contrasted with the world in its authentic ontological-existential manifestation, which is linked with the worldhood of Dasein. The Cartesian “world” represents an ontical concept and signifies the totality of those entities which can be present-at-hand within the world” as objects situated in time-space (p. 93).

It is possible to articulate Huebner’s phenomenological project in terms of what Heidegger (1982) calls Destruktion (deconstruction), which represents the “critical process in which the traditional concepts, which at first must necessarily be applied, are de-constructed down to the sources from which they are drawn” (p. 23). As Thomson (2005) points out in his analysis of Heidegger and ontological education, we must “reject the polemical reduction of ‘deconstruction’ (Destruktion) to ‘destruction’ (Zerstorung)” (p. 141). Rather, Destruktion as employed by Heidegger (1962) is an attempt to reveal and grant access to “those primary
‘sources’ from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 43). The tradition, be it in metaphysics or in historical institutions such as education, tends to cover over and obscure the primal sources that surge beneath it. When tradition, or the past, is accepted prima facie in an uncritical manner there is the danger that we are unable to return to the past in an authentic manner to reassess it and reinterpret it in light of our ontological potential for future change. When the past is conceived in an inauthentic manner, as either a point in time that is irretrievably gone or the locus of venerable and unquestioned traditions, “Dasein no longer understands the most elementary conditions which would alone enable it to go back to the past in a positive manner and make it productively its own” (p. 43).

What I have outlined above represents the concern for the loss of an ontological sense of meaning through a fundamental covering over, or obscuring, of the issue of temporality, which is central to understanding Dasein’s authentic “historizing” in the temporal “moment of vision” (Augenblick). In Heidegger’s (1962) fundamental ontology it is the “horizon” of time (temporality) that makes possible any understanding of Dasein’s Being, and the notion of a horizon, or “horizontal schema,” represents the boundary zone or limit within which our entire world manifests its presence in ways that are truly meaningful (p. 416-417). Huebner also embraces this notion of the “horizon” of time (temporality) as making possible any authentic understanding of the human and the processes of its historical development. This is evident as Huebner (1999a) laments the educator’s loss of the “basic awareness of historicity” as he urgently works to deconstruct and reinterpret traditional categories of “goals,” “purposes,” and “learning” as conceived within social efficiency. For as Huebner reasons, the “unquestioned acceptance” of the traditional definition and implementation of these categories “is one reason why the curriculum person has failed to generate the ideas necessary to keep educational institutions and the language abreast of the times” (p. 132). By means of deconstructing the language and concepts of the tradition in education and curriculum-making, Huebner (1999a) concludes, in Heideggerian fashion, that if we approach the understanding of education’s goals, purposes, and learning from an ontological perspective, as opposed to reducing and restricting them to the realm of epistemology (i.e., knowledge theory as related to cognitive and behavioral science), they point directly to “man’s temporality and the concern for it as the focus of curricular action” (p. 132).

**B. The Individual-World Dialectic and the Authentic Notion of Learning as Existential Understanding**

Huebner’s concern with temporality is far more complex than simply the issue of educators, who are designing and implementing curriculum, demonstrating a concern for the unfolding of time, or taking an interest in history as a dynamic process. These are concerns for historicist critique, and this is not what Huebner is engaged in. Historicist critique harbors the potential danger of devolving into a form of determinism, or worse, fatalism, where human agency is lost amidst a myriad of complex power structures and relations. In such a view, education as an institution of learning does not merely reflect the ideas and beliefs of society, it is determined and shaped by them; education, and along with it human subjectivity, is historically determined by political, economic, and institutional forces beyond the autonomous control of the individual.
Against this model, Huebner (1999a), on a primordial and ontological level, is concerned with how we enact our authentic existence in terms of the authentic unfolding of history via a dialectic interchange between the human and its world, where education is envisioned as the “manifestation of the historical process, meshing the unfolding biography of the individual with the unfolding history of his society” (p. 139). In addition, he is concerned with how our views of education might be enhanced when informed by the types of ontological-existential issues that emerge from Heidegger’s philosophy, which might contribute to the authentic understanding and enactment of both the students’ and educators’ Being-in-the-world as Being-with-Others.

According to Huebner (1999b), “Curricular practice is not simply the concern for the constellation of the educative environment.” More importantly, it is the “concern for the human events that occur within that environment” (p. 225). To fully grasp the significance of the individual-world dialectic, Huebner’s notion of educational “practice” must be elucidated in terms of practical human activity, which dynamically embodies the “essential temporal nature of man” as linked to history as a “major educational concern” (p. 225). Ultimately, it is the notion of the individual-world dialectic that serves as Huebner’s organizing philosophical force for reconceived curriculum design and is inspired by Heidegger’s notions of ecstatic temporality and historicity. Analyzing the individual-world dialectic will reveal the kinship between Huebner’s philosophy of education and Heidegger’s fundamental ontology, allowing for the elucidation and formalization of the manifold Heideggerian concepts at work below the surface of Huebner’s phenomenological analysis of education. I begin by unpacking the following quotation by Huebner (1999a), which reveals that his understanding of the individual-world dialectic springs from the founding ground of Heidegger’s thinking on the basic and interconnected themes of temporality and historicity:

The springs or sources of temporality do not reside in the individual, but in confrontation between the individual and other individuals, other material objects, and other ways of thinking as they are objectified in symbol and operation. Furthermore these springs or sources, although again not residing in society, are nevertheless unveiled, maintained, and protected by society. Thus man shapes the world, but the world also shapes man. This is the dialectical process in which cause is effect, and effect is cause. The world calls forth new responses from the individual, who in turn calls forth new responses from the world. (p. 137-138)

The dialectic as referenced above is neither Socratic nor Hegelian in nature; rather it represents the historical working out of our collective fates, or better, the ecumenical enactment of our destiny. Specifically, the individual-world dialectic unfolds in terms of the temporal activity of “historizing,” which is the moment of actualization, in the present “moment of vision,” of the individual’s ontological potential understood in terms of historicity, or the potential to openly and resolutely project one’s authentic and owned possibilities, gathered from the individual/communal past, or thrown-having-been, into the future as authentic possibility. Within the process of authentically enacting historical Being the “world responds by withholding or giving, yielding or resisting, punishing or criticizing, and supporting or negating” (Huebner, 1999a, p. 138). According to Huebner, the responsibility of the authentic educator is actually twofold, and amounts to (1) planning the environmental design of the curriculum so that it embodies the dialectical relationships that are at work and are valued within society, making this
environment express the “concern for the temporality and historicity of man and society” while simultaneously “encouraging the moment of vision, where the past and future are the horizons of the individual’s present so that his own potentiality for being is grasped”; and (2) planning the environmental design of the curriculum to include the traditions of the past comprising the heritage, or “collective wealth,” of the society of which the educational system is a manifestation, for importantly, the “past becomes the means by which the individual can project his own potentiality for being” (p. 138-139).

It is important to clarify Huebner’s notion of authentic learning, which as opposed to learning grounded in abstraction and generalization, is a more primordial form of knowledge, or better, understanding, through which students and educators interpret the world in meaningful ways. The reliance on learning through abstraction and inductive generalizations permeates the field of education, and there is the danger, as earlier outlined in relation to Heidegger, that when we approach entities, or human beings, in the world in terms of representing abstract scientific-mathematical relationships, we reduce them to a mere present-at-hand existence. We strip them of their ontological significance as temporal and historical beings. Huebner (1999c) is critical of equating abstract conceptualization with “authentic” learning in the curriculum, and in a deconstructive move echoing Heidegger, Huebner links the drive in education to privilege this form of calculative knowledge above other modes of world-disclosure directly to the loss of temporality. To conceive of objective knowledge as standing beyond the individual, capturing the so-called “real world” in veritable, irrefutable propositions, gives the false impression that the world is “relatively stable in time” (p. 39). Huebner, making the case for multiple forms of knowledge in the curriculum, argues that as opposed to seeking knowledge that is immutable and beyond all change, which might be acquired from the “perspective of nowhere” (sub specie aeternitas), educators “would do well to conceptualize change as the one constant thing and consistency as that which needs explanation” (p. 39).

Authentic learning for both Huebner and Heidegger represents activities whereby we deepen our understanding of the world. Analyzing this form of meaningful insight, which is refined through interpretation, will reveal for the reader the relational character of human existence in terms of Huebner’s understanding of the individual-world dialectic, which is the temporal-historical happening of our Being, comprising the totality of the environmental design of the curriculum. For Huebner (1999a), the environmental design structuring the curriculum, which engenders authentic learning, embodies the ontological “reinterpretation of the significance of the categories of purpose and learning in education” (p. 139). As related to Heideggerian thought, it represents the context, or “horizontal schema,” associated with temporality and the enactment of all Dasein’s authentic possibilities, which might be understood in terms of the individual’s projection of the past into the indeterminate future, or as Huebner writes, “onto a present to create the ‘moment of vision,’” which is the authentic appropriation and enactment of the individual’s historical Being-in-the-world (p. 139). This context, conceived in terms of what Heidegger calls Dasein’s referential totality, gives meaning to Dasein’s life, and it is also Dasein’s authentic world. Dasein, the only entity for whom Being is an issue, navigates this world by means of interpreting, discoursing, and understanding the possibilities and situations that are unique to it.
For Heidegger, understanding is both know-how and projection, or the manner in which Dasein, in its understanding, is always already-out-ahead-of-itself in its futural projection, directed toward the accomplishment of meaningful tasks. Dreyfus (2001) provides a clear and accessible explanation of understanding as know-how when writing that for Heidegger, understanding “makes possible skillful coping” and “relates some activities as doable, as making sense, and others as not, or better, it does not recognize these other possibilities as possibilities at all” (Dreyfus, 2001, p. 184-185). Understanding is directed toward accomplishing one or another task, “coping with the available proceeds by pressing into possibilities,” and Dasein’s “coping is organized by a for-the-sake-of-which,” and this for Heidegger is bound up with projection (Dreyfus, 2001, p. 186-187). Projection, it must be noted, is always involved with the entities with which Dasein deals, which of course includes Dasein’s dealings with other humans, in terms of understanding, and most importantly, ontological possibilities. However, as Heidegger (1962) is careful to point out, projection is not to be conflated with a willful “comporting oneself toward a plan that has been thought out” in a reasoned and thematic manner; rather, projection is “the existential structure” of understanding, which means that Dasein is always already in the world in such a way that it is projected out toward its possibilities as potential. Projection is the “kind of Being of Dasein in which it is its possibilities as possibilities” (p. 185).

Huebner (1974) also equates understanding with know-how, through which we are empowered to do something with the insights we glean by means of interpretative (hermeneutic) activity. However, as opposed to purely instrumental knowledge acquired through the application of one or another “scientific method,” Huebner views understanding as akin to existential, or meditative, insight, where “doing something” with understanding includes “new exploring, more satisfying expression, deeper and more meaningful encounters with others, greater awareness of what and who [we are], and more ability to build and transform the world” (p. 40). This relates directly to Heidegger’s (1962) claim that Dasein’s understanding “is not cognition at all in the sense of grasping something thematically” (p. 385). Rather, it is linked to the “Being of the ‘there’ [of Dasein’s disclosedness],” and is “primordially existential, it means to be projecting towards a potentiality-for-Being for the sake of which Dasein exists” (p. 385). Through understanding, Dasein projects its for-the-sake-of-which when it is open to futural possibilities that are on the approach, which acquire meaning only in relation to the significance of the structure, or referential totality, of the for-the-sake-of-which, the towards-this, and the in-order-to of the authentic “worldhood of its current world” (p. 185).

As related to the previous discussion of Dasein’s projection, this for-the-sake-of-which is not a determinative goal or end that Dasein posits in advance of its activities. Rather, it is a way of understanding the meaning-schemata of Dasein’s Being-in-the-world, where all projects and involvements are conceived as “potential” possibilities for Dasein’s Being. The system of relations (referential totality) that Heidegger describes pertains to Dasein’s Being-in-the-world as a whole. In addition, it must be noted that Dasein’s for-the-sake-of-which is always being projected within a community, for Dasein can never have self-knowledge or authentic knowledge of its world at a remove from its communal dwelling. Heidegger (1962) is clear on this matter when writing, “The world of Dasein is a world-with [Mitwelt]. Being-in is Being-with-others. Their Being-in-themselves-within-the-world is Dasein with [Mit-Dasein]” (p. 155). Specifically, in relation to the process of education envisioned by Huebner, it is possible to state that the for-the-sake-of-which of authentic learning represents the ever-changing and ever-
renewed ground of the authentic learning environment, because it is always rich with future potential, where educational goals, purposes, and aims for student achievement are imminent within and emerge from the unfolding of the processes of learning. This represents an anti-foundational view of both the human and the world, where our continued questioning puts the notion of solid ground into question. This also represents an anti-foundational view of education and the curriculum. For Thomson (2005), this view is consistent with the merging of ontology and education, which indicates that when “our understanding of what beings are changes historically, our understanding of what ‘education’ is transforms as well” (p. 248).

Interpretation for Heidegger (1962) works to clarify what is ambiguously given in understanding, and is never a “presuppositionless apprehending” of things, because all of our interpretations begin as “something,” in terms of Dasein’s fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception (p. 190-191). Prior to engaging the world, we possess a veiled and incomplete understanding of the things we seek to interpret and eventually come to know. This pre-understanding is at once “something we have in advance ... something we see in advance [and] something we grasp in advance” (p. 191). All three terms Heidegger employs represent the various presuppositions (and the ways of gathering these) that we have about that which is to be interrogated and interpreted. The things we seek to know always already speak to us, revealing something of their nature, in advance of our inquiries: “Inquiry, as a kind of seeking, must be guided beforehand by what is sought” (p. 25). In educational terms, we might refer to this as the communal “store of knowledge” that we bring to the issues at hand in the present context of inquiry, which precedes and is indeed essential to all interpretive endeavors.

For example, in Being and Time Heidegger (1962) asks the fundamental question: “What is the meaning of Being?” It is possible to approach this issue in the first instance because the meaning of Being is already available to us in some form, which allows us to ask the question and enter into the hermeneutic circle. Although our pre-understanding of Being is incomplete, as Heidegger states, “this vague average understanding of Being is still a Fact” (p. 25). Thus, we approach the problem of Being qua Being guided in the first instance by its uniqueness as well as by a preconception of what it might be, seeking to clarify the adumbrated presence of Being as it already exists within our “everyday” ways of knowing in order to eventually deepen and solidify our understanding of it. This is accomplished through hermeneutic interpretation, where our pre-understanding of things, as it were, allows us to step into the circle, or spiral, of interpretation. When things, in relation to our Being, are understood, “we say that they have meaning [Sinn]” (p. 190-191). As we work to clarify our understanding through interpretation we produce or construct meaning, and as Heidegger claims, meaning represents “the ‘upon which’ of a projection in terms of which something becomes interrogated as something; it gets its structure from a fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception” (p. 193).

Indeed, this form of making-meaning is precisely what Huebner (1974) has in mind when he talks of hermeneutic activity in education as central to the dialectic between individuals, their history, and world in terms of a “confrontation,” which he describes as the rhythmic continuity-change of the individual’s understanding as it is dynamically shaped through his involvement with the world. For Huebner, hermeneutical activity is a communal art, interpretation is an ongoing process and is always at work in education, and “whether by asking questions, establishing written assignments, reading to the child, or pronouncing words for him, educators
are introducing him to traditions of interpretations” (p. 48). However, interpretation for Huebner is never limited to purely academic issues, never a privileged practice within the classrooms of the institutions. Rather, Huebner (1999a) claims that hermeneutic interpretation is in fact a public practice, or discourse, that transcends the bounds of the classroom and is always open to “consider the different rhythms of continuity-change between society as a whole, and the individuals who compose it” (p. 140). Speculating on curriculum content, Huebner claims that when selecting programs of study educators must keep in mind that the “educational environment is consequently related to the forces controlling the continuity-change rhythms” of society, and Huebner embraces the notion that there is a reciprocity, and beyond, a symbiotic relationship, between education, the human, and its historical world (p. 140).

C. Heidegger’s Interpretation of Dasein’s Temporality

No reading of “Curriculum as Concern for Man’s Temporality” would be complete without an explanation of temporality. Huebner (1999a) states that in Being and Time Heidegger presents this groundbreaking philosophical notion in a most fruitful manner, and goes on to observe that the complexity of Heidegger’s presentation of temporality “almost equals the complexity of the phenomenon of time” (Huebner, 1999a, p. 136). Huebner provides a succinct explication of Heidegger’s ecstatic temporality, which indicates that “human life is never fixed but is always emergent as the past and future become horizons of the present” (p. 137). Although Huebner talks of the present in terms of the “moment of vision,” where “past and future are the horizons of the individual’s present so that his own potentiality for being is grasped,” in Huebner’s essay, it is unclear exactly how this complex phenomenon occurs (p. 141). Considering Huebner’s claim that the “moment of vision” represents the “essential ingredient of the educational environment,” it is crucial to elucidate Heidegger’s philosophy of ecstatic temporality for the reader (Huebner, 1999a, p. 141). In attempting to do so, I pose the following compound question, to which I provide a response in the sections that follow: How are we to understand and formalize this difficult, if not elusive, view of time, not only in terms that are conceptually clear, but also in terms of this phenomenon having potential meaning for our educational practices?

Heidegger (1992a) boldly makes the following declaration: “Dasein, conceived in its most extreme possibility of Being, is time itself, not in time” (p. 13e-14e). Time is not objective, for the duration or length of time cannot be measured scientifically by way of mathematical symbols, for time has no length. Time is not linear, and neither wall-clock nor wristwatch properly presents time, and according to Heidegger, by treating time as a quantitative phenomenon, measurable in length, in its extension, the clock attempts to show us “what” time is, but misses the more substantial ontological-existential matter of how time is, which is to say, the way in which we enact our time when living as temporal, existential beings. Heidegger claims that our Dasein is inextricably grounded in ecstatic temporality, wherein past, present, and future are united, indivisible, perpetually working in concert within the moment of our present.

For Heidegger, this moment of the present is the authentic moment of vision (Augenblick), i.e., the revelation of truth and subsequent appropriation of our authentic Being-in-the-world. It is not “present” in terms of a point that is situated between future and past. It is the moment when world, beings, and entities reveal themselves in ways that matter within the “there,” or disclosedness, of Dasein. As Heidegger (1962) states, this moment of vision is possible due to
the convergence of past and future, and this suggests that the past circles round to meet us, “the coming [Kunft] in which Dasein, in its ownmost potentiality-for-being, comes toward itself” from out of the indeterminate future (p. 373). In Heidegger’s model the past is never legitimately gone and thus the fact that we have a past cannot be overlooked or skirted, as it represents our being thrown-into-the-world in a specific and unique manner. However, the past acquires meaning only when we authentically project it into the future, and when “authentically futural, Dasein is authentically as ‘having-been,’ as its own thrown past” (p. 373).

Authenticity for Heidegger (1992a) represents our “most extreme possibility” of enacting our existence; it is a life in praxis, a temporal process of taking over our existence through interpretive decision-making, whereby we legitimize our thrown-past (having-been) in the service of making (and re-making) our future Being with others (p. 10e). Dasein’s authentic Selfhood is only to be found in the “authentic-potentiality-for-being-one’s-self—that is to say, in the authenticity of Dasein’s Being as care” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 369). For Heidegger (1992a), the “primordial unity of the structure of care lies in temporality,” and this relates to the Being of Dasein (p. 14e). The “Care-structure” embodies the three moments, or horizons, of ecstatic temporality: (1) we are always out-ahead-of-ourselves in the projection of a future, (2) we are always along side both entities and others in the world, and (3) we are always already in the world as a thrown, living being, as someone with a past, a history and heritage. When considering this model of temporality, of which “clock time” is merely derivative, it is crucial to acknowledge that the past, which constitutes our living history as heritage, is sewn into the very fabric of our Being. The past is continually at work influencing and shaping the moment of vision through its ever-attendant presence. The past serves as the source of our historical life and future; it allows us to redefine our existence by choosing to choose possibilities that emerge from our heritage, which represents, for Heidegger, one of the ontological-existential structures, along with fate and destiny, comprising our historicity, or authentic historical Being.

It is possible to grasp temporality in the following manner: In the moment of resolute openness (Entschlossenheit), the mood of Angst individuates Dasein for its death and ownmost possibilities for Being, opening what Heidegger terms the “Situation,” or the authentic way of “Being-there.” Conceived as a temporal phenomenon, the Situation is Dasein’s moment of vision or instant of authenticity. “In the instant as an ectases,” writes Heidegger (1992b), “the existent Dasein is carried away, as resolved, into the factically determined possibilities, circumstances, contingencies of the situation of action” (p. 297). This is the authentic present of ecstatic temporality, when Dasein, accessible and free, projects itself into its possibilities within the factual and distinct circumstances of its own unique life. Such an authentic resolute openness to worldly encounters is only possible because Dasein, as a temporal being that temporalizes, is at once its future, past, and present as thrown-projecting Being-in-the-world.

The present, for Heidegger (1992b), which is held within authentic temporality, is the sustaining form of Dasein’s authentic choices, representing the “resolute rapture with which Dasein is carried away to whatever possibilities and circumstances are encountered in the Situation as possible objects of concern” (p. 287). The authentic temporalizing of Dasein occurs as it projects its finite possibilities, which initiates a forward movement towards itself as resolute Being-towards-death in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, and this movement secures a “repetition,” or authentic retrieval, of Dasein’s past, its having-been. In coming to or toward
itself, from out of its indeterminate future, as engendered by its own past, Dasein discloses the meaning of authentic Being within the instant of the present, or moment of vision (Augenblick), of the Situation. This ecstatic temporal process is “ecstatical” because it represents an existence wherein Dasein “stands-out” from the temporal moment it currently embodies, e.g., in the present (horizon), Dasein is always already standing-out ahead of itself into the future (horizon) while at once embodying (standing-out as) its past (horizon) in anticipation of its projection. When Dasein exists authentically, it temporalizes the “moment of vision” and it experiences the world in its basic “unconcealment”—allowing that which shows itself from itself to be seen—now not disclosing beings as present-at-hand entities, or objects, but the phenomenon of world as such, the worldhood of the world, i.e., the overarching matrix of meaning and purpose structuring Dasein’s Being-in-the-world, which understanding and interpretation have in great part made possible. The process of temporalizing, as described above, along with the concepts and terms I have introduced relating to Dasein’s authentic historical existence (historicity), will be further explained and developed as I move to address Huebner’s individual-world dialectic in its relation to the environmental design of the curriculum.

D. The Ontological Grounds of the Individual-World Dialectic and Authentic Historical Existence: Curriculum as Environmental Design

For Huebner (1999a), the individual-world dialectic inspires the authentic environmental design of the curriculum. The environmental design is bound by the horizon of temporality and, as outlined, it engenders the most important aspect of the educational environment, the “moment of vision.” For Huebner, the ideal learning environment requires three components and represents the unfolding of human temporality as historicity. The authentic curriculum (1) calls forth a response from the student, (2) is reactive, and (3) makes possible authentic moments of vision, “when the student and/or those responsible to him, project his potentiality-for-Being into the present, thus tying together the future and the past into the present” (p. 139). The educative process conceived by Huebner emerges directly from Heidegger’s philosophy in Being and Time, which details the processes by which Dasein becomes as an authentically historical being. As previously stated, this includes the understanding of Dasein’s authentic historicity and the notions of heritage, fate, and destiny—the invariant ontological-existential structures that make possible the enactment of Dasein’s authentic historical existence, or the process of historicizing (the stretching out between Dasein’s birth and death), all of which correspond to the human’s temporal Being presented by Heidegger in terms of the “Care-structure,” or the Being of Dasein as temporality.

It is crucial to note that Huebner envisions the environmental design of the curriculum in terms of a model in tripartite, wherein each component might be related to a specific horizon of the temporal structure of Dasein (past, future, and present). The environmental design of the curriculum, we might say, along with Heidegger’s (1962) understanding of temporality, “has a unity of a future which makes present in the process of having been” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 374). Huebner looks to Heidegger in order to indicate that educators should be concerned with a curriculum design organized around the understanding that learning unfolds authentically in terms of a temporal phenomenon, where the student’s Being is embraced as primordially constituting “the totality of the structure of care” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 376). In this way, Huebner provides us not only with a reconfigured view of education, but also with a radically
new ontological conception of the student in terms of Heidegger’s rendering of “care,” which, as Dasein’s “primordial structural totality, lies before [vor] every factual ‘attitude’ and ‘situation’ of Dasein” (p. 238).

(1) The calling forth of a response from the student, as Huebner (1999a) writes, entails the recognition that the “individual is thrown into a world, not necessarily of his own making, but an embodiment of the past” (p. 139). This relates to Heidegger’s notion of heritage, which contributes to the makeup of Dasein’s world because it is an inherited form of life that it shares with its community. When living authentically, Dasein enacts the possibilities that it draws from its heritage, which are taken up in the process of “repetition” (wiederholen), i.e., repeating through appropriation (interpretation and understanding) some possibility from its past. However, repetition is not to be thought of as merely accepting, or worse, aping, the traditions, beliefs, and ways of life that are inherited. Rather, the process of repeating our heritage amounts to creatively reinterpreting the past, drawing on the collective ethos of our society, and then either selecting or rejecting, affirming or denying certain aspects as they relate to our ownmost possibilities for Being. To be authentically “historical” involves taking on the responsibility for the choices and decisions of our forebears, and for this reason Heidegger stresses the burden of our heritage. Dasein distances itself from the status quo, from the vulgar interpretations of the “They-self,” when authentically repeating the heritage of its possibilities in resoluteness. Repetition might be conceived in terms of appropriating the possibilities that have been “handed down” to me from my heritage; in “repeating” my possibilities, I am freely and creatively reinterpreting my heritage in light of my specific and unique potential for Being. By repeating my heritage, as Heidegger (1962) indicates, I am explicitly “going back to the possibilities of the Dasein that has-been-there” (p. 437).

The curriculum as conceived by Huebner represents the authentic dwelling of students and educators in the midst of living traditions, wherein they consider questions about what is valued, what traditions should be preserved or altered, and what traditions should remain as part of the collective memory now and in the future. This is not simply about teaching students about our past and its traditions, not simply about deciding what knowledge from our past is most valuable and therefore should be learned and passed along. Rather, authentic education represents a collective decision between students and educators about what aspects of our tradition, or collective ethos, are in fact worthy to be taken up and appropriated in “repetition” and projected, as authentic possibility, into the future as our authentic destiny, which occurs through creative acts of interpretation. In order to call forth responses from students the living aspects of their heritage must be embraced and must be recognized as forming the authentic past, for in such a view our heritage alone is worthy enough to demand and warrant a response, a rejoinder that takes seriously the responsibility we have to our own unique potentiality-for-Being. Heritage, as we will see, plays a crucial role in the fateful enactment of Dasein’s authentic destiny.

Huebner (1999a) refers to heritage as the students’ “collective wealth,” which includes speech patterns, forms of dialogue, language of the curriculum, and the structural forms of various disciplines. Heritage includes everything from the “social customs shaping interacting patterns” to the “man-made things ... that makeup much of the man’s world” (p. 139). Our heritage, according to Huebner (1974), contains “the stuff for our hermeneutic and world-building arts,” which informs the fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception that students bring to the context.
of interpretation (p. 37). The authentic environmental design of the curriculum, structured around the understanding of temporality, fosters learning wherein memories of the student’s existence are set within a “caring collectivity in which individuals share memories and intentions,” and through the process of hermeneutic interpretation, “form a bridge between self and other; a linkage among past, present, and future; the vehicle by which individuals, in community, arrive at mutual understanding in the conduct of their public affairs,” and enact their collective destiny through education (p. 37). The past becomes the means by which students project their own potentiality-for-Being as historical, and the educational environment must be designed with the understanding that the past is always present as the basis for our futural projection. This relates to what Heidegger (1962) claims about heritage and “the possibility that Dasein might choose its hero” from out of the myriad of historical possibilities that the past has made available for potential appropriation (p. 437). In order for Dasein to choose its hero, as Inwood (1997) claims, it “must return to the past, perhaps to its own birth, but more likely beyond. There are great philosophers, generals, statesmen, artists, saints, and lovers whose deeds and works are part of Dasein’s heritage” (p. 92).

(2) According to Huebner (1999a), in addition to calling forth a response from students, the educational environment “must be reactive, or else the student must question it so that it responds to him” (p. 139). This aspect also concerns the values that are part of the heritage of students and educators’ past being brought into the present. This facet of the curriculum design involves the interaction between the individual and the community, representing the “shaping component of the world,” which allows us to channel and project our personal transcendence into “accepted patterns of social transcendence” (p. 139). It is possible to relate this component of curriculum design to Heidegger’s notion of fate (Schicksal). Fate is that aspect of historicity that is at once individual and potentially communal, in terms of Dasein’s collective destiny, for as Heidegger (1962) states, “fateful Dasein as Being-in-the-world exists essentially in Being-with-Others” (p. 436). With the notion of fate, Heidegger is not referring to the common understanding of the term, i.e., a predetermined destiny, where our lives are measured out and determined through providence. For Heidegger, fate is related to Dasein’s authentic understanding of its radical limitations, or finitude, and is determinative of Dasein’s futural projection and the enpresenting (or opening up) of the “moment of vision.” Fate is the manner in which Dasein opens the present and experiences its freedom as an occurrence. Dasein’s freedom, which is a freedom towards its authentic possibilities, arises from the limitations and finitude of its existence. Fate is the how of comportment when Dasein enacts its authentic existence as thrown-projection (heritage); it is, as Heidegger claims, “the authentic resoluteness in which Dasein holds itself free for death, in a possibility it has inherited and yet chosen” (p. 435).

In fate, there is a recognition of and resoluteness to the fact that we must draw upon a limited number of possibilities from our heritage, along with the understanding that our ability to choose from among those possibilities is also limited, and in the extreme, we are faced with death, the end of all possibilities. The two notions of resoluteness (Entschlossenheit) and death (vorlaufen—anticipating, or running-ahead-to death) will require a bit of unpacking for the reader as they are crucial terms and relate intimately to Heidegger’s rendering of historicity. The ontological experience of death provides us with unique insight into our Dasein, according to Thomson (2004):
we experience ourselves as an existential [ontological] projecting without any existentiell [ontic-practical] projects to project ourselves upon, and so come to understand ourselves as, at bottom, an existential projecting, a projecting which is more basic than and independent of any particular projects which usually give our lives content and meaning. (p. 452)

In running-ahead-to-death we embody our existential potential to enact a unique and communal existence as authentic Dasein. The notion of death in Heidegger must not be read in terms of “demise,” for he is not referring to the literal biological event of our physical extinction, but rather he is referring to death’s ontological significance as human mortality. For as Thomson (2004) points out, death is clearly “something I live through” (p. 453). However, living through death in an authentic manner amounts to experiencing a break down of all our worldly projects, which occurs, according to Heidegger (1998), in the mode of attunement of Angst, the alienating mood of the “not-at-home” (Unheimlichkeit). The break down of our projects is best grasped in terms of the moment when our everyday ways of (inauthentic) existing fall into a state of confusion; meanings and interrelations are lost, our life no longer makes sense, and a slipping away of beings occurs (p. 103). Thomson (2004) argues that this “actual experience of complete world-collapse and subsequent passage through death is what Heidegger calls ‘resoluteness,’ and it is the second structural moment in his phenomenological account of authenticity” (p. 453).

Resoluteness unlocks our potential to reconnect with the world of our possibilities in an enlightened and reflective manner; we are changed in our Being, and we are free to choose authentically the possibilities that have been given over to us for appropriation (through repetition) by heritage. Thomson (2004) gives a clear elucidation of this concept when stating,

“Its (Entschlossenheit) is Heidegger’s name for such free decisions, by which we recognize that the self, as a (projectless) projecting, is more powerful than (that is, survives) death (the collapse of its world projects), and so become capable of “choosing to choose,” making a lucid reconnection to the world. (p. 454)

Thomson reiterates what I previously stated, namely, that the freedom for enacting our possibilities is always finite, and in some manner determined, or better, “constrained,” by our facticity, i.e., “our inherited talents, cares, and predispositions” can be altered through interpretation, but cannot simply be discarded or transcended, for facticity is comprised of the “pre-existing concerns of our time and ‘generation’” (p. 454). As related specifically to the discussion of fate, Heidegger (1962) states, “it is not necessary that in resoluteness one should explicitly know the origin of the possibilities upon which the resoluteness projects itself,” and so he refrains from discussing the tangible and concrete possibilities that are made available to the resolute Dasein for its comportment when analyzing the phenomena of Being-towards-death and historicity (p. 435). This leaves the reader wondering: From where do Dasein’s authentic possibilities arise? Heidegger claims that it is in fact from the past, as heritage, that Dasein’s factual possibilities, in terms of its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, first arise, representing the so-called “content” of authentic existence to which form is provided by Dasein through the autonomous enactment of its communal and historical destiny: “The resoluteness in which
Dasein comes back to itself, discloses current factical possibilities of authentic existing, and discloses them in terms of the heritage” (p. 435).

There is another aspect of resoluteness that deserves attention, is linked with fate, and is crucial to fully understanding the authentically historical Dasein, and it is to be found within the following claim by Heidegger (1962): “Resoluteness [Entschlossenheit] is a distinctive mode of Dasein’s disclosure [Erschlossenheit]” (p. 343). The mode of disclosure that is resoluteness is Dasein’s authentic self-disclosure, and what is revealed provides Dasein with insight into its Being-in-the-world as Being-with-Others. Heidegger states that resoluteness, “as authentic Being-one’s-Self, does not detach Dasein from its world, nor does it isolate it so that it becomes a free-floating ‘I’; rather, resoluteness first “brings the Self right into its current concernful Being-alongside what is ready-to-hand, and pushes it into its solicitous Being with Others” (p. 344). With this notion of solicitous Being-with-Others, Heidegger indicates that when existing in an authentic manner, we are attentive to others and the world we inhabit. Indeed, the resoluteness of fate provides the emergence of the ontological understanding, which is always antecedent to the enactment of Dasein’s authentic possibilities—that Dasein is at once beholden to its past as heritage and responsible for the future as it relates to the past through its intimate and solicitous communal relations. Thus, we see how the ontological-existential structures of heritage and fate are related in Heidegger’s treatment of historicity.

What Heidegger claims about the beholden and responsible nature of Dasein clearly informs Huebner’s understanding of the authentic environmental design of the curriculum, and is expressed by Huebner (1999a) in terms of the educator demonstrating care for the past and its valued memories and traditions—the collective wealth of the society—and expressing a dutiful responsibility for the future development of the collective wealth in terms of the pilgrimage (destiny) of the society as inspired by the authentic educative processes. The authentic environmental design of the curriculum fosters a reactive (fateful) component, which manifests in the reciprocal counter-striving between the student and his world. This is because authentic education acknowledges temporality and historicity, and embraces the shared collective wealth, the “valued past,” as it is “brought into the present of the student” (p. 139). Huebner (1974) is clear, as related to Heideggerian thought, that education cannot effectively begin its “thinking with the individual,” in terms of the isolated free-floating subject, making the “past and the community secondary,” for this is a disingenuous way to conceive the human being (p. 41). In order to address the ontological concerns of the student’s Being, Huebner insists that educators “must start with all three: The individual, the past, and the community” (p. 41). Then the task becomes, for education, finding ways of inquiring into the ontological interrelatedness between these three components of historicity (p. 41).

(3) In order to facilitate moments of vision in the curriculum, moments where the student’s authentic possibilities for Being manifest for appropriation, the environment “must provide opportunities for the student to become aware of his temporality,” encouraging the student to actively “participate in a history,” which represents the “continual creation of the world” along with the recognition of his fateful and autonomous involvement “as an ingredient in the transcendency of the world” (Huebner, 1999a, p. 139). Here, we have Heidegger’s notion of destiny, which refers to the historizing of a community in which people draw from a collective heritage and fatefully enact their existence through “communication” and “struggle.” Destiny is
not merely a collection of disparate, individual fates, for it is guided in advance by the fact that Dasein’s existence is Being-with-Others. With this treatment of destiny, Heidegger brings the discussion of historicity in Being and Time to a close, as this discussion represents the totality of Dasein’s authentic existence. It is possible to view destiny as an inspired mode of praxis, in terms of choice, deliberation, and struggle: When heritage is revealed to Dasein as its given endowment (as thrownness), it is Dasein’s fate to enact collectively its destiny. Heidegger (1962) sums up this authentic phenomenon in the following succinct manner when stating that Dasein’s authentic historizing is a co-historizing and is determinative for it as destiny [Geschick]. This is how we designate the historizing of the community, of a people. Destiny is not something that puts itself together out of individual fates, any more than Being-with-one-another can be conceived as the occurring together of several Subjects... Dasein’s fateful destiny in and with its “generation” goes to make up the full authentic historizing of Dasein. (p. 436)

Within the authentic environmental design of the curriculum, as Huebner (1999c) argues, educators must work with students in order to ready and liberate them in moments of resolute openness, to enact their authentic possibilities, moments where the indeterminate future approaches to converge with their past, which is carried into, and thereby breaking open, the authentic present, or the moment of vision. In light of the ground covered, it is possible to imagine authentic education as conceived by Huebner unfolding by means of hermeneutic meaning-making, informed by the student’s authentic potential-for-Being. Authentic education makes possible the emergence of the student’s authentic possibilities, and in the moment of vision, through appropriation (as repetition), the student enacts his authentic way of Being-in-the-world as Being-with Others. In terms of Heidegger’s (1962) understanding of destiny, it is possible to envision the classroom as a place of dwelling wherein “our fates have already been guided in advance, in our Being with one another in the same world and in our resoluteness for definite possibilities” (p. 436). According to Huebner (1974), the fateful repetition of our heritage as destiny is expressed within and worked out through the reciprocal tension between the individual, the society, and its collective wealth, which in terms echoing Heidegger’s conception of destiny, “is lived out in the community and in the struggles among diverse communities” (p. 40). The design of the classroom environment, within an authentic view to education, seeks to ensure the collective destiny of its students and sets up the solicitous context, which reveals the presence of a community with traditions of care for people and for collective wealth, a community that honors and develops individual and collective wealth, a community that honors and develops individual and collective memory, that articulates and acts our intentions. (p. 40)

It is possible to conceive Heidegger’s notion of destiny, as enacted within the individual-world dialectic, as the ecumenical pursuit of authentic learning in terms of what Huebner calls education’s pilgrimage, which is the journey of educators and students toward their authentic historical selfhood within an educational dwelling resembling an originary community of learners. In this learning community, as Heidegger’s (2004) philosophy suggests, students and educators are beholden to and responsible for the processes of education because “each
individual is bound up in advance to something that binds and determines each individual by exceeding them,” and this occurs within an atmosphere of solicitous care that unfolds through the process of interpretive meaning-making (p. 74). Here, student and educator care for the communal archive of knowledge that is developing within various learning experiences, which is bound up with care for both the student’s store of knowledge and the student’s unique cultural heritage as related to his own unique possibility for existence, which grows and evolves within the flux, flow, and dynamic unfolding of education as a temporal-historical phenomenon. When learning authentically with others, we share a like-minded sense of care for our common fate as learners. Destiny is the authentic enactment of our potentiality-for-Being as historical, when through communication and struggle we make and remake our world as a people, and it culminates in the “repetition,” or appropriation, of a possibility from our past in a reinterpreted and renewed form. It is only in the moment of vision that this authentic appropriation of our past is possible.

The repetition of our heritage in fateful destiny should be conceived as a dialogue with the past, and this is precisely how Huebner (1999d) conceives of Being-in-the-world, for through discourse man articulates his being-in-the-world as thrown and as possibility. Discourse puts into words the totality of significations, the related instruments and entities which man can use for his own sake. In all talk, man talks about something. At the same time, his being is expressed and “explicitly shared” with others. (p. 147)

In similar terms, Inwood (1997) suggests that the repetition of our heritage is a “conversation with the past or with some past hero,” e.g., “Alexander or Plato makes certain suggestions” to us through their exploits or written words, and we “make a rejoinder to them” (p. 92). Ultimately, through communal discourse as hermeneutic interpretation, repetition becomes a legitimate possibility of our Being, and through developing and deepening our interpretations of the world, which emerge through a confrontation with the past and past-as-present, we are in the position to authentically choose to choose ourselves through communal decision-making. We are only truly beholden to our heritage when we approach the past in order to see, understand, and beyond, envision ways in which it might be reinterpreted in light of our authentic potentiality-for-Being and taken up, through “repetition,” in an authentic mode of historical appropriation, which both Heidegger and Huebner understand in terms of the human being’s authentic enactment of its destiny through the process of historizing.

3. Huebner’s Heidegger: Potential Implications for an Authentic Education

A. Authentic Understanding and Education

Inauthentic learning, as found in the social efficiency model for education, is concerned with knowledge that is both instrumental and of a distinct variety, namely, logical-rational-scientific, and education that lives in the shadow of positivism runs the ever-present risk of degenerating into a form of curriculum-making where technicalization and hyperrationalization dominate. The former focuses on the utility of our knowledge at the exclusion of the concern for meanings, for why we do things and why they are meaningful to us; the latter favors the application of reason alone to our analyses of the world at the exclusion of the concern for the emotional and
spiritual dimensions of our Being. Education in this view is reduced to students navigating the world of present-at-hand entities with the goal of mastering and controlling the environment and the things therein by means of the power they gain through acquiring objective knowledge. Not that educators should avoid experiences that focus on the empirically verifiable aspects of reality, but this form of learning-knowledge should not be privileged above all other ways of knowing, understanding, and intuiting the crucial dimensions of the student’s Being. Hermeneutic interpretive meaning-making should be an integral part of the learning experience in the classroom, and educators should demonstrate a genuine concern for the many intangible aspects of the learner’s Being-in-the-world, which cannot be quantifiably measured or validated by means of the traditional epistemological model grounded in the differentiation between a priori-analytic and a posteriori-synthetic.

Authentic education organizes learning experiences so as to encourage students to inhabit and interact with the world of the classroom in terms of being “open” to the world they encounter within the various activities that comprise their learning experience. Students should be encouraged to allow things to come to presence in truth, in the very light of their own self-showing, and most importantly, in ways that matter to them, in ways that have meaning for their Being. Educators should resolutely pursue the formation of students by letting them be, as it were, allowing their unique possibilities for Being to shine forth. The essence of truth, and hence knowledge and understanding, should not be thought of as residing in propositions, formulae, standardized tests, or other such vehicles for packaging, transmitting, and assessing the validity of truth, all of which express the correspondence between the internal representation (idea) of the subject and the existing (real) objective state-of-affairs. Rather, the essential way in which we are “in-truth” occurs through disclosure, as we are “there” in moments of authentic discovery, which is the occurrence of both students and educators actively uncovering their authentic possibilities as related to their Being within the authentic context of navigating solutions to the problems they encounter.

B. Authentic Temporality and Education

Due to an inauthentic understanding of time, educators orient the curriculum and the learning experience contained therein toward the future, which is conceived as knowable and determinate, creating an education program wherein goals, aims, and purposes are posited in advance of the authentic experience of education in its practical enactment, and toward which students are then led. Such a strict product-process model for curriculum assumes that it can specify the student’s future behavior because it is determinate and thus predictable. In many instances, the student’s authentic possibilities are defined in advance by professionals residing at an external and temporal remove from the authentic unfolding of the student’s Being in the processes of learning. For example, private foundations (Carnegie Corporation) and accrediting testing agencies (ETS–Education Testing Service), situated at a remove from the classroom, represent professional organizations that are in charge of establishing the standards for learning within educational institutions. This expression of the inauthentic understanding of time covers over and obscures the student’s genuine potentiality-for-Being. Conversely, the authentic understanding of temporality makes possible moments of resolute openness, wherein students choose to enact their authentic possibilities, within a learning environment facilitating the autonomous and self-
directed revelation and appropriation of their authentic possibilities for the enactment of their Being.

Due to the inauthentic understanding of time, it is also possible for educators to remain locked within a view to the present, which presupposes an understanding of time where the past is gone and irretrievable and the future has not yet arrived. This represents a form of linear-presentism in education, in which the current conception and inception of educational systems, institutions, philosophies, and theories are conceived as existing “in time,” and since they are viewed only through the lens of the present, as making-present, they assume eternal, indelible, and hypostatic characteristics, making the possibility for authentic educational reform not only a daunting task, but a fatalistic impossibility. This view of time remains blind to the crucial role that the past plays, as heritage, in the historizing process of the student, which represents her unique potentiality-for-Being as related to her living past (and not merely a historical past), which is always alive with the potential for growth and transcendence, and is taken up into the authentic learning experience, which is the convergence of past and future in the moment of vision.

There are also models for curriculum-making that are situated in the present while demonstrating an unquestioned reverence for the past and its educational traditions, where change is viewed in terms of superficial improvements to a grounding, foundational form that essentially remains unchallenged and unchanged. These philosophies of education have firm roots in the thought of the past and present. When conceiving an essential education for students, in terms of a perennial or permanent curriculum, they are really imitating the past, aping the past, recreating the past in the present without attempting to reassess or reinterpret it in light of the students’ needs and wants, in terms of their unique and futural potential-for-Being. This inauthentic view of education embraces the status quo in curriculum, its content, pedagogical methodology, and assessment strategies, and in no way represents the emancipatory move, inspired by qualitative research in phenomenology, beyond the current manner in which students, education, and society are conceived.

**C. Authentic Historicity and Education**

Authentic education, conceived as unfolding within the individual-world dialectic, does not adopt the procedural method of establishing goals, aims, and purposes of education in advance of learning experiences, as is consistent with product-process curriculum design. Rather, it is possible to imagine, in line with process-product models for curriculum, the goals and aims for learning and authentic standards for education always already imminent as potential in the authentic unfolding of the curriculum in progress, e.g., the for-the-sake-of-which that education is concerned with does not provide a determinate and immutable goal or purpose in advance of the learning. In line with the phenomenological method, it is possible to imagine educational goals and purposes emerging through a process of hermeneutic interpretation, where educators begin with a pre-supposition concerning goals and outcomes, but these goals and outcomes are fluid and protean in nature; they change, evolve, develop and are reworked as knowledge and understanding of the student’s needs, wants, desires, and abilities are revealed and interpreted by the educator. Although the educational aims for student achievement are set forth at the outset of the learning, they are more akin to informed suggestions, path-marks for learning, and are always subject to revision and elaboration as the educator deepens and clarifies his
understanding of that which emerges from the learning experience, which is always at work shaping and being shaped by the dynamic flux and flow of the society and culture.

There are crucial ethical implications bound up with authentic education concerned with the manner in which we dwell in community with others. Since the environmental design of the curriculum is grounded in the ontological understanding of temporality and historicity, i.e., the authentic heritage, fate, and destiny of educators and students, learning transpires within an inclusive, multi-cultural environment, and beyond, depends for its authenticity on the educator’s embracing the inclusion of the language and cultural forms of knowledge that each student brings to the context of learning. The notion of heritage as embodying our living past, the unique collective ethos of the student’s given culture, our collective ethos as members of a community, state, and nation, the store of unique cultural possibilities that allow for the authentic projection into our future as destiny, testifies that education must avoid leveling down or excluding the diverse cultural histories and values of our students. Understanding heritage as a legitimate component for our future growth and development should awaken educators to the necessity of transcending unethical and inauthentic practices and policies that socially, culturally, and linguistically marginalize students. For example, curriculums designed in the tradition of scholar academic philosophy, where goals, purposes, and learning are defined in terms of cultural literacy or the “Great Books” of the Western canon, do violence to the understanding of the inclusion of diverse cultural traditions in the curriculum, and represent forms of inauthentic education.

Authentic learning within the individual-world dialectic also embodies the ethical aspects of social-based learning, where students learn from each other and indeed teach each other in a variety of ways, and is concerned with the respectful exchange of ideas in ways that demonstrate care, tolerance, and a critical conscious awareness. The educational environment should be understood in terms of sustaining both epistemological and axiological, or normative, concerns. Authentic student learning is never reducible to the implementation of hyper-efficient methods for assimilating and processing knowledge, as if training up the student’s web of neural circuitry. Authentic learning is more akin to the process of Bildung, or “learning as formation,” which happens through the process of dialogue and is the very opposite of “training,” the filling up of empty vessels with knowledge, or the passing along of skills. Rather, it is a monumental transformative process whereby the student assists actively in the process of education, which includes, importantly, the formation of the student’s disposition and character. Since authentic learning stresses self-development and group development through communicative debate, the communal character of the classroom includes the all-important concern for moral development and engenders learning through a process of arduous and respectful discourse, which plays out in the dialogical process of accepting, rejecting, refining, validating, and honing the various interpretations that are offered up for debate in shared moments of problem-solving. There is recognition of the strengths and weaknesses that are either beneficial or detrimental to the personal development of the self and group. Educators and students work to arrive at common, agreeable solutions to the problems they attempt to solve through a process of critical debate, which is always rooted in the ever-changing needs of our students and their historical reality, and represents an ever-renewed ethical quest for knowledge, understanding, and meaning.
Students bring both their heritage and vast stores of intellectual and emotional experience to the learning context, which holds vast potential to make a contribution to ever-growing, ever-developing communal archive of student knowledge. This represents the *fore-having*, *fore-sight*, and *fore-conception* necessary for educators and students to step into the hermeneutic circle of authentic interpretation where meaning is constructed within a context composed of a multiplicity of “perspectives.” Through the unfolding hermeneutic and heuristic activities, student’s interpretations are composed of clusters of interpretations, because individual interpretations always develop along with, and indeed because of, those with whom the student participates within the process of authentic learning. Thus, there is an all-important bridge constructed between prior knowledge, which is valued as legitimately contributing to the learning, and new knowledge. Authentic education also embraces alternative forms of knowledge in the curriculum, e.g., “human wisdom” and *meditative* thought, which allow educators and students to approach ontological aspects of their existence in a philosophical manner through a rigorous form of non-conceptual and non-systematic thought.

4. Concluding Thoughts: Transcendence, Liberation, and Emancipation

According to Huebner, authentic discourse on education reform cannot begin until educational professionals seriously consider the individual’s relation to society and its cultural traditions. In light of these aforementioned concerns, in “Curriculum as a Concern for Man’s Temporality,” Huebner (1999a) focuses specifically on the need for educators to gain a basic awareness of both *temporality* and *historicity*. Huebner (1974) digs below the surface of the curriculum as currently conceived, *deconstructing* and “penetrating the realities that the everyday educator takes for granted,” and illuminating, through a phenomenological approach in thought and language, the ways the “educator has decided to live in the world and what he sees as possible futures” (p. 37). Huebner seeks out new and unique ways to think and speak poetically about the phenomenon of education, as opposed to merely seeing it as a tool for being “socialized into the existing institutions or the language generated by them” (p. 36).

It is not about educators merely finding or inventing new words, resorting to catch phrases, or producing new terms for antiquated educational theories. Instead, what is required is a radical reconceptualization of education from the ground up, and for Huebner, this involves educators awakening to the primordial power of “essential” language. Huebner, writing on language and teaching, speaks of the enduring nature of language and seeks to understand the *originary* naming power of language as it might relate to inspiring authentic reforms in education. Language is not the equivalent of expressing or verbalizing knowledge through propositions, it is not merely a system of codes, signs, symbols, and signifiers; rather, in its essence, “language is neither expression nor an activity of man,” for language in its authentic manifestation “speaks” through us in order to, by means of essential naming, bring the “presence of what was previously uncalled into a nearness” (Heidegger, 1971, p. 197-198).

Indeed, this is how Huebner conceives language, which allows us to bring what is concealed into the open by *naming* the world. In tracing Huebner’s curriculum philosophy back to its origin or source, in relating his language and concepts to a unique way of naming the truth of our historical Being as related to our educational practices, I have tried to demonstrate several ways in which educators might benefit from experiencing Huebner’s critical encounter with
Heidegger’s philosophy. It is my hope that readers draw inspiration from a reconceived understanding of education so as to feel empowered to reconsider the ways in which they view students and themselves in terms of their own potentiality-for-Being as grounded in their historical realities, which hold the potential of offering unique possibilities for educational reform, which for Huebner (1974) amounts to a concern for “transcendence, liberation, emancipation” (p. 39).
References


Evaluating Kieran Egan’s Rationale for Curriculum Reform

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Introduction

From his defense of rote learning as a legitimate teaching option to his condemnation of empirical research, Kieran Egan frequently challenges longstanding assumptions about education. These various criticisms of commonly held assumptions about education are intended to pave the way for the curriculum reform he envisions. In this article, we evaluate Egan’s major critiques of education, and consider whether these analyses constitute appropriate justification for curriculum change. We examine Egan’s views on stage development theory, incompatibilities in curricular objectives, progressive education practices, and evidence-based research. Following our review, we suggest that although Egan’s critiques of progressive education and curriculum incompatibilities are unconvincing, his concerns about stage development theory and empirical research appear warranted. We also suggest that many of the pedagogical imperatives Egan advances are valuable regardless of his challenges to mainstream education practice.

Stage Development Theory: Egan vs. Piaget

In a 1983 publication entitled “What Does Piaget’s Theory Describe?” Egan shares an experience that transformed his previous assumptions about teaching and learning. While teaching an educational psychology graduate course, Egan reflected on the tenability of the Piagetian stage development model so influential in schools and teacher education programs. Based on his personal experience with children, something seemed terribly amiss with the claim that young children progress as they age in linear fashion toward greater levels of cognitive capability. Egan (2002) explains the problem as follows: “The view does not allow for any possibility except a gradually improving mind. This progressive view hides any irregularities, backtracking or convolutions of our development and cannot accommodate the possibility that young children are intellectually superior to adults in any way” (p. 102).

The considerable evidence Egan compiled in the 1983 article mounts a convincing case against stage development theory. There is, of course, the predictable mention of Piaget’s experimental study group, comprised exclusively of children from upper middle class Geneva backgrounds. Since the children shared common cultural and educational experiences, it is unremarkable, if not predictable, that they also shared certain knowledge, as well as mutual linguistic and cognitive abilities. Egan contends that Piaget mistook the descriptive elements of his observation for the prescriptive model of child development he adopted. In other words, the culture, knowledge and understanding acquired via social experience were incorrectly construed by Piaget as the product of
innate cognitive structures that unfolded in parallel with physical development.

From the Piagetian perspective, cognitive development is largely a function of the organism, with the environment playing only a minor role. Such a view runs contrary to Egan’s contention that culture is the predominant influence on learning and development. Indeed, when faced with a host of environmentally induced instances of developmental unevenness in performance, Piaget himself admitted he could not explain them (Piaget, 1971, p. 11).

Egan also raises the problem for Piaget that when children are formally instructed in competencies above their theorized stage level, many can successfully complete the task in question. For example, children initially unable to understand the concept of conservation may fully grasp the idea after guided instruction. If a definitive cognitive stage within the organism actually determines learning ability, as Piaget proposed, then merely teaching children about the concept should prove inadequate in enhancing their understanding of conservation.

Perhaps the most compelling criticism of Piaget’s theory involves Egan's experience of children not as cognitively inferior versions of adults, but as dynamic intellectual sponges absorbing tremendous quantities of information as they learn language and related concepts demanding precisely the type of abstract thinking that Piaget’s theory disallows. Moreover, the imagination, central to Egan’s pedagogical agenda, is a cognitive ability he deems far more active in children than in adults. Hence, according to Egan, human development is not some linear process of cognitive growth as Piaget contends, but rather a series of gains, convolutions and losses as we move from childhood to adulthood.

Egan points out that as a result of Piagetian assumptions, teachers too often hold a tacit perspective of children that is rooted in recapitulation theory, limiting children's academic challenges. Herbert Spencer introduced recapitulation theory into education when he suggested that the education of the child should reflect the historical development of humankind. From this perspective, the developing child recapitulates all the stages of development of our species, from the primitive and simple to the civilized and complex (Egan, 2002, p. 27). When children are understood as incomplete versions of adults, Piaget’s theory becomes a series of hypotheses about what children are unable to achieve. Rather than encouraging young learners to aim toward greater academic heights, teachers following Piagetian dictums may adopt lower expectations and, accordingly, retard the intellectual and academic growth of students. Egan also claims that teachers pay a tremendous professional price for adopting Piagetian assumptions, since when children fail to learn instructors are often blamed for not teaching to the appropriate level of stage development (Egan, 2002, p. 51).

The problems Egan cited with Piagetian theory eventually led him to investigate the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, whose wealth of contributions to education was only posthumously recognized. In his seminal work *Mind in Society* (1978), Vygotsky, a social constructivist, argues that human development, rather than being a function of innate cognitive structures, is actually the product of acquired cultural tools, or language.
operating in conjunction with socially shared knowledge and understanding. An extension of this position, Vygotsky’s *zone of proximal development*, suggests that student learning is constrained only by the level of current achievement plus the potential level of achievement realized with the assistance of competent guided instruction. Egan’s rejection of Piaget’s stage development theory—an idea he actually traces to Rousseau’s *Emile* (1979)—and his subsequent embracing of Vygotsky is most visible in Egan’s *The Educated Mind: How Cognitive Tools Shape our Understanding* (1998).

**Cultural Tools and Education**

Egan begins *The Educated Mind* (1998) by reviewing the three central aims he claims dominate the organization of public school curricula. These aims are the socializing responsibility of education to inculcate children with the norms, values and beliefs of the prevailing culture; the penchant for improving what Egan refers to as “critical thinking,” or the “search for truth” through rational orientation he traces to Plato and the Allegory of the Cave; and, finally, the desire for children to develop their inherent potential “naturally,” another aim that Egan links to Rousseau’s *Emile*. Egan argues that these three orientations dominate discussions about educational aims, but actually work in opposition to each other, thereby creating conflicting and incoherent curriculum objectives:

In the case of the modern school, three distinctive aims have attended its development. It is expected to serve as a significant agency in socializing the young, to teach particular forms of knowledge that will bring about a realistic and rational view of the world, and to help realize the unique potential of each child. These goals are generally taken to be consistent with one another, somewhat overlapping, and mutually supportive. However ... the more we work to achieve one of the schools’ aims, the more difficult it becomes to achieve the others. (Egan, 1998, p. 10)

In Egan’s view, the fundamental incompatibilities generate chronic pedagogical confusions that impede student learning and ultimately prevent teachers from achieving any single curriculum aim. However, some of the incompatibilities Egan identifies misrepresent the corresponding curriculum orientations.

Egan (1998) argues that the child-centered, natural learning approach rooted in Rousseau’s philosophy of education is fundamentally incompatible with the socializing responsibility of schools: “They are incompatible because socializing has a distinct end in view and is a shaping, homogenizing, narrowing process toward that end, whereas supporting the fullest development of student potential involves releasing students to explore and discover their uniqueness” (p. 22). Egan also claims that integrating the socializing objective of education with the “search for truth/rational” curriculum orientation is similarly incoherent. He argues that designing school programs to achieve both the socializing and critical goals of education inevitably generates curricular and pedagogical confusion: “The homogenizing aim of socialization, which is to reproduce in each student a particular set of beliefs, conventions, commitments, norms of behavior,
and values is necessarily at odds with a process that aims to show their hollowness and inadequacy” (p. 18). However, Egan’s conviction that socializing and critical curricular aims are necessarily incompatible reflects a conceptual misunderstanding. His view is predicated on the assumption that social values will be deemed ipso facto “hollow and inadequate” upon student critique, and on a contestable, narrow, Durkheim-driven conception of socialization. In The Rules of the Sociological Method (1958), Durkheim advanced a biological analogy for the study and explanation of society. Individuals within society are like cells within the body. The cells depend on the smooth and uninterrupted functioning of other cells and organs that ensure the survival of the organism. A well functioning society, then, becomes one based on social and normative cohesion rather than one founded on perpetual critique.

The problem with Durkheim’s structural functionalism is that complete emphasis on social cohesion ignores the normative particularities of a given society. Indeed, one need not search far to discover historical examples where an efficient and morally united society was neither ethically acceptable nor democratic. It’s a serious problem for structural functionalism, and one that encouraging democratic social critique from students is designed to redress.

There is no obvious reason why social beliefs, norms and conventions would be necessarily deemed inappropriate following student examination, and there is no reasonable explanation why socialization ought to include the uncritical inculcation of norms and beliefs in students. In fact, a primary socializing responsibility of schools within a democracy is promoting the full political participation of students by encouraging social critique and, when necessary, inviting some measure of structural transformation. This need not be a disruptive pedagogical objective, but rather can be a reflective, formative and purely educative one. For example, Henry Giroux (2003) argues that the moral dimension of democratic education “means giving students the knowledge and skills to enable them to interrogate and defend the values and norms that are crucial to recognizing anti-democratic forms of power and expanding the operations of freedom and democracy” (p. 94). Contrary to Egan’s contention, then, it is perfectly coherent for teachers to convey prevailing social beliefs and conventions to students, while still subjecting them to the light beyond the cave. Democratic socialization is conceptually and practically distinct from indoctrination precisely because the former invites criticism and change while the latter obviates these possibilities.

In spite of this difficulty with The Educated Mind’s rationale for curriculum reform, Egan’s cognitive tools approach offers a sophisticated alternative to popular thinking about education. He describes the concept of cognitive tools in the following fashion:

cognitive tools are the things that enable our brains to do cultural work. Our brains, like those of any animal, are responsible for an array of physiological and social work. But we have also amassed that external symbolic material that constitutes our culture. As we learn features of our cultural inheritance, the brain is provided with the tools that enable it to realize its various capacities. Alone, no one learns to speak, to read and write, or to think with theoretic abstractions.
These potentials of human brains are actualized only by the brain learning, and learning to use, particular pieces from our cultural storehouse. Culture, as it were, programs the brain. (Egan, 2008)

Although he rejects recapitulation theory as implied in the views of Herbert Spencer and Jean Piaget, Egan’s cultural tools model reflects a similar approach in which progressive historical periods parallel various types of understanding. Egan’s cultural tools include mythic, romantic, philosophic, ironic and somatic understanding, and each tool contributes to learning by affording students different ways to describe their experience.

As we have indicated, recapitulation theory suggests that the development of the individual mimics the development of civilization, with the latter being viewed in a progressive linear sense. Consistent with this idea, mythic understanding connects student learning to the earliest forms of explanatory beliefs about human experience. Mythic understanding includes learning about ideas and concepts through binaries, metaphor, abstract thinking, imagination and fantasy. Romantic understanding embraces the limits of human knowledge, and draws upon our powerful personal relationships to environmental forces and influences: “Central to Romantic understanding is a sense of an autonomous self and a relatedly autonomous reality” (Egan, 1998, p. 22). Philosophic understanding incorporates many of the tools of logical analysis, science, and explanation supporting metaphysical structures or grand narratives such as Marxism, religion and evolutionary theory. Egan suggests that these narratives are most likely epistemologically flawed, a suspicion shaping the foundation for the ultimate cultural tool, ironic understanding.

Ironic understanding, the apparent pinnacle of Egan’s cultural tool inventory, emerges from the alleged failure of philosophic understanding, and by extension of science, to deliver an epistemological foundation for objective knowledge. Embodying many of the insights offered by Richard Rorty’s pragmatism, ironic understanding appreciates the limits of human cognition and adopts a skeptical if nevertheless pragmatic attitude toward truth. Rorty (1989) has argued that “truth” is what is good or useful for us to believe. Ironic understanding, similarly, assumes that attempts to identify an objective reality accessible to humans are most probably doomed to failure. Finally, somatic understanding operates at a pre- or non-linguistic level, interacting with and shaping the other categories of understanding. It includes understanding of basic human drives such as hunger and sex, and the emotional responses these feelings precipitate.

**Flaws and Virtues of Progressive Education**

Egan’s attack on conventional thinking about education and the legacy it follows is intensified in *Getting it Wrong From the Beginning: Our Progressivist Inheritance From Herbert Spencer, John Dewey and Jean Piaget* (2002). Egan begins his analysis in this work with the assumption that schools as presently designed represent a huge educational failure. The actual evidence offered to support the claim may be thin and anecdotal, but Egan would have little difficulty building a cohort of subscribers to his view. The overarching theme in the book may be summarized as follows: Contemporary education
pursues flawed progressivist practices that hinder rather than help student academic development. Egan reiterates his claim that curriculum should cultivate student mastery over various cognitive tools: “Understanding how these tools shape our learning can give us a better set of principles for improving the effectiveness of students’ learning than anything progressivism can provide” (Egan, 2002, p. 75). *Getting It Wrong from the Beginning* challenges many progressivist pedagogical practices, but overlooks the important democratic dispositions fostered through the progressive approach to schooling. Indeed, there are two distinct strands to the progressive education movement. One is the scientific strand Egan attacks, while the other is the student-centered strand concerned with fostering democratic dispositions that he ignores.

Egan argues that many of the misguided progressivist ideas about teaching and learning originate with the pseudo-scientific theories of 19th-century British philosopher Herbert Spencer. A leading proponent of Lamarckian evolutionary theory in the mid-19th century, Spencer’s reputation briefly rivaled that of Charles Darwin. Lamarckian theory incorrectly held that organisms changed as a result of use and disuse of body parts that were incorporated into subsequent generations of the species. For example, the long necks possessed by Giraffes supposedly resulted from continual stretching to obtain leaves and twigs located in high trees. Spencer was most recognized during the period for applying survival-of-the-fittest principles to philosophy, psychology, and the general investigation of society. Although he is typically remembered in contemporary academic circles for his controversial support of social Darwinian assumptions, he also devoted significant philosophical energy to improving education based on “scientific” principles (Spencer, 1928; Spencer, 1966).

Egan claims that many of the education principles Spencer developed influenced the subsequent work of Dewey and Piaget. Although he admits that establishing causal connections between historically related ideas is difficult, Egan provides plenty of circumstantial evidence to support his thesis. He speculates that progressivist scholars refused to acknowledge their indebtedness to Spencer because of the latter’s morally offensive positions on race and social class. Spencer assumed that poor people were biologically inferior to wealthy people, and that any attempt to improve the former’s circumstances through education merely wasted available resources. His distasteful remedy for addressing social disparity discouraged poor people from procreating. Spencer’s objectionable beliefs about race and class eventually fell from grace, but his ideas about education endured and, as Egan points out, attained considerable academic influence.

One especially influential principle developed by Spencer maintains that children’s learning begins with simple ideas and progressively advances to more complex conceptions. This remains a widely accepted view in education and is most notably reflected in Piaget’s claim that young children are primarily concrete thinkers who only later acquire the cognitive capacity for abstract thought. According to Egan, this principle actually originated with an inference Spencer drew from Karl Ernst von Baer’s cosmological speculation that humans “are part of an immense process that moves inexorably from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous” (Egan, 2002, p. 26). This
hypothesis collapsed with the introduction of Helmholtz’s second law of thermodynamics, but its influence on education endured. In the mid-19th century, Helmholtz theorized that the universe is actually moving toward increased homogeneity rather than toward greater degrees of complexity, thereby undermining the premise supporting Spencer’s simple-to-complex postulation on learning.

Spencer also suggested that rote learning renders “the pupil a mere recipient of other’s ideas” (Egan, 2002, p. 17). Although the rejection of rote learning remains a common feature of contemporary teacher education programs, Egan suggests that this approach embodies a grave misunderstanding about how learning and knowledge acquisition influence human experience. Memorizing a Romantic poem by Wordsworth or the “quality of mercy” passage from Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice affords students more than an accumulated pool of inert information. Such learning shapes character by influencing perceptions about experience, or by potentially modifying entire worldviews. As Egan observes, knowledge acquired during rote learning often becomes part of our “living tissue” (Egan, 2002, p. 68).

Egan’s work on learning and education is rich with insight. For instance, he points out that the pervasive influence of psychology on current curriculum development is another legacy of Spencer’s belief that science offers the optimum method to enrich learning. Apart from advancing the ubiquitous critique that social science methods are unable to grasp the complexity of human experience, Egan believes that most claims emerging from educational research amount to analytic propositions. Analytic propositions are trivial tautologies where the predicate is contained within the subject (i.e. all bachelors are unmarried men). His criticism of empirical research in education is based on an article published by Jan Smedslund in the Scandinavian Journal of Psychology in 1979. Smedslund argued that the empirical generalizations emerging from social science research merely explicate the analytical relationships between ordinary language concepts:

The theoretical analysis contains elements of both the analytic and the arbitrary, but neither is overtly acknowledged. The analytic element is incompatible with the aspiration to empirical testing, and the arbitrary element is incompatible with the aspiration to generality and timelessness. These latent contradictions can remain generally undiscovered only as long as the standards for theoretical precision remain at their current low level. Meanwhile, the façade of scientific respectability is only maintained by the advanced technology for data gathering and analysis. (Smedslund, 1979, p. 140)

Thus, the truly empirical findings of social science research are arbitrary, or non-generalizable, while the generalizable propositions are simply logical necessities.

Egan employs the U.S. National Research Council (NRC) funded study How People Learn to illustrate his point. This well funded study sought to provide a research base for best practices in education that would supposedly improve classroom teaching. The somewhat banal findings that emerged from the extensive “research” included: “To
develop competence in an area of inquiry, students must (a) have a deep foundation of factual knowledge, (b) understand facts and ideas in the context of a conceptual framework, and (c) organize knowledge in ways that facilitate retrieval and application” (Donovan, Bransford, & Pellegrino, 1999, cited in Egan, 2002, p. 166-167). Egan correctly points out that these so-called principles of best practice are simply definitions of what is meant by competence within an area of inquiry since individuals lacking these abilities would not be considered competent within their respective fields.

Egan generally mounts a convincing case against the pseudo-scientific principles of Herbert Spencer and many of the progressivist pedagogical practices they occasioned. But the contribution of progressivist principles to contemporary education cannot be completely dismissed on this basis alone. Much of Dewey’s most valuable and influential scholarship such as that in Democracy and Education (1916) and The Public and Its Problems (1927) emphasizes the political relationship between democratically structured education, student agency, and participatory democratic citizenship. In Democracy and Education, for example, Dewey outlines the social importance of the democratic dispositions fostered through a properly structured education:

An undesirable society ... is one which internally and externally sets up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience. A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder. (1916, p. 49)

Indeed, the advocacy of generating democratic dispositions in students and identifying corresponding pedagogical practices to achieve that objective may comprise progressivism’s most important legacy to both education and society. Unfortunately, this central element of progressivism is missing from Egan’s analysis.

Summary and Conclusion

Egan’s ideas on the human imagination and his recent Learning in Depth (LiD) project (2013) hold considerable promise for teachers and educators seeking alternatives to mainstream pedagogical approaches: “‘Learning in Depth' is a simple though radical innovation in curriculum and instruction designed to ensure that all students become experts about something during their school years. Each child is given a particular topic to learn about through her or his whole school career, in addition to the usual curriculum, and builds a personal portfolio on the topic” (Egan, 2013). Furthermore, Egan’s challenge to Piaget and corresponding support of Vygotsky, as well as his critique of education research, constitute tremendously important insights on mainstream thinking about education. We are less convinced that the curriculum aims he identifies as fundamentally incompatible are necessarily so, and we worry that his strategy embracing various forms of cultural understanding adopts the same hierarchical recapitulation
assumptions he criticizes in Spencer’s views. More generally, though, there is abundant intellectual fodder in Egan’s scholarship on education and, at the very least, we hope this article inspires teachers, researchers and students to investigate, support, challenge and revise his rich collection of ideas about teaching and learning.
References


Notes

1 In *Emile*, Rousseau divides human development into five distinct stages and prescribed different learning approaches for each stage. He also argues, in a manner that foreshadows Piaget's approach, that children should not confront excessive expectations in their learning.

2 This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. We formally acknowledge and appreciate the council’s support.
Rousseau and Yoga: The Roles of Intelligence, Instinct, and Intuition in the Shaping of Consciousness

Guillemette Johnston

This paper is the fourth in a series of studies investigating comparisons between the pedagogical theories and practices advanced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the disciplines and beliefs developed in yogic philosophy. The first two studies (Johnston, 2009a; Johnston, 2009c) viewed Rousseau’s concepts of *amour de soi* (self love) and *amour-propre* (pride) in consideration of their relation to yogic interpretations of mind, ego, and intellect, and thus demonstrated parallels between Rousseau’s spiritual vision and yogic approaches to the self while looking at the fundamental principles regarding religious education that Rousseau presents in *Émile* in light of yogic beliefs. The second study (Johnston, 2009c) also incorporated Alexander Lowen’s exploration of the differences between understanding and knowing, along with Jungian theory and yogic theory, to demonstrate how Rousseau’s philosophy of teaching is based on methods that encourage both introverted and extraverted experiencing and aim at forming the child’s judgment and knowledge in relation to the early development of the body. This approach emphasizes the roles of feeling and sensing as they develop via the physical senses. The third paper (Johnston, 2012) started to analyze the intricacies involved in the use of elaborate faculties such as imagination, memory, and reason, though it did not look in depth at Rousseau’s theories on the workings of reason. It began to examine the human mental apparatus and described what Rousseau would consider to be an accurate mind (Rousseau, 1979, p. 203; p. 207), drawing a parallel between the notion of *ahamkar* or ego in yoga and *amour-propre* in Rousseau’s works as regards the acquisition of consciousness. (For a comparative discussion of the terms *ahamkar* and *amour-propre*, see Johnston 2012, p. 143.) A common point between the two theories was that both highlight the inflation of ego as a result of inaccurate or inappropriate uses of speech and memory. Yogic master B. K. S. Iyengar (2005), whose writings on yoga inform the current study, expresses it thus: “Communication and memory permit the ego to feed incessantly off the experiences relayed to it by mind. Naturally it puts on weight and falls sick” (p. 120).

Both yogic and Rousseauist theory acknowledge the pitfalls resulting from the overuse or misuse of faculties, which ends up deviating these faculties from their original function of aiding human survival and increasing the development of consciousness. Indeed the problems that Rousseau and yogic philosophy try to overcome are not only the loss of integration while becoming conscious, but also the loss of connection with the inner self while trying to establish singularity of awareness at the biological and other levels. Rousseau’s approach to addressing this loss is proactive, in that he is describing a pedagogy directed toward the development of a child, while yoga largely looks at a developed “adult” with already formed capacities that must be addressed, confronted, or surpassed to achieve integration. Both systems assume that through mind and senses, the
ego, here defined as the central expression of individualized consciousness in human existence, may achieve a level of autonomy which enables it to distinguish itself from others. This same ego, though, can frequently get inflated and forget in the process that it plays only a limited part in the overall picture of consciousness, since it is only a reflection of the self, or in Rousseauist speak a perversion of our natural, self-preserving passion amour de soi. Iyengar (2005) addresses this problem when exploring the notion of ahāmkar, or what he calls the “I-Shape”; “What is the point of having an individual I-shape…? The most natural answer is simply that singularity of body requires singularity of awareness…. Our ‘I-ness’ is an identifier. We need to identify with a certain particularity in order to maintain biological and mental integrity” (p. 119). But, as Iyengar adds, “The I-shape’s contact with the outer world is through mind and senses. All the treasure and glory and misery of that contact are passed back to ego, which accumulates them and declares, ‘This totality is me’…. The pure single identity succumbs to the disease of elephantiasis, in which our self becomes grossly enlarged, coarsened, and thickened” (p. 119-120).

Rousseau’s concept of amour-propre, which originally links with the notion of survival, describes the phenomenon of coarsening and thickening as an opacity or loss of transparency which expresses itself in the paradoxical situation of having to prefer ourselves over others while also, for our own sake, expecting others to prefer us over themselves (Rousseau, 1979, p. 213-214; for a fuller development of this theme, see Johnston, 2009a, p. 164). In the physical world, the world of matter in which multiplicity and difference rule over oneness, identity can paradoxically become reduced solely to the ego or to the concept of amour-propre. Yet in a manner close to yogic philosophy, Rousseau assumes that our universal and permanent identity is not contained by the limited concept of ego; hence the attempt at studying how the mind works, and how consciousness and conscience operate. Rousseau undertakes this enterprise in Emile by describing an imagined process of developmental education, while yoga (which we examine in this study both through the sacred aphorisms offered in the ancient Yoga Sutra of Patañjali (ca.200 BCE-200 CE), a comprehensive guide to the universal practice of yoga, and through the lens of contemporary yogic master B. K. S. Iyengar) elucidates specific disciplines and practices that promote a state of integrity and integration. After clarifying Rousseau’s understanding of the nature of reason, this paper will examine both Rousseau’s pedagogy and yogic practices and beliefs to see how these two systems offer parallel or similar practices and approaches regarding the role of mind and body in the development of the faculties of instinct, intuition, and intelligence, and how these faculties assist in fostering consciousness.

In an earlier study (Johnston, 2009a, p.169-171) we mentioned that if in yoga one has to perfect the withdrawal of the senses, pratyahara, to reach inner objectivity, in Rousseau’s educational system, the senses and their interactions with the outside world are meticulously monitored in order to prevent them from relating distorted knowledge in the first place. In other words, the teachings of yoga rely on a system that addresses all the idiosyncrasies of the mind and the intellect in the present, after the senses and mind have been exposed to the forces of corruption. Rousseau’s system, on the other hand, uses a more progressive and linear approach. Emile becomes a prototype of the human
whose faculties and functions, with the master’s assistance, should develop in such a way that he remains connected to his sense of *amour de soi*, without the interference or pollution of extra, unnecessary knowledge that would remove the child from his center. The mind and the intellect develop synchronically while being put to work only for the benefit of a well-engineered human machine that will not go astray and not get trapped in “confusing patterns of thinking” (Johnston, 2012, p. 120). Thus if yoga identifies three elements simultaneously at work in the processes of consciousness—mind, ego and intelligence—while associating the workings of mind and ego with the mental body and those of intelligence with the intellectual body, Rousseau establishes the premises of the child’s intellectual and mental development uniquely within the context of nature in the physical sense, for according to him this establishment of a foundation in nature is the only way to keep the child grounded, centered, integrated and satisfied. It is also the only way to give him a sense of natural freedom in which nature itself delineates for him what freedom signifies in terms of need and necessity, as opposed to desire and fancy linked to the suggestions of memory and to an imagination that is uselessly at work if it is not guided by nature’s demands.

Indeed, Rousseau sees three sources of influence in the domain of education: that of nature, that of objects and that of men. The only way to succeed is to submit the influence of things and men to the demands and influences of nature:

- Everything we do not have at our birth and which we need when we are grown is given us by education.
- This education comes to us from nature or from men or from things. The internal development of our faculties and our organs is the education of nature. The use that we are taught to make of this development is the education of men. And what we acquire from our own experience about the objects which affect us is the education of things.
- Each of us is thus formed by three kinds of masters. Now of these three different educations, the one coming from nature is in no way in our control; that coming from things is in our control only in certain respects; that coming from men is the only one of which we are truly the masters. Even if we are the masters only by hypothesis. For who can hope entirely to direct the speeches and the deeds of all those surrounding a child?

Therefore, when education becomes an art, it is almost impossible for it to succeed, since the conjunction of the elements necessary to its success is in no one’s control. All that one can do by dint of care is to come more or less close to the goal.... What is that goal? It is the very same as that of nature. This has just been proved. Since the conjunction of the three educations is necessary to their perfection, the two others must be directed toward the one over which we have no power. (Rousseau, 1979, p. 38-39)
Nature, need and necessity enable Rousseau to avoid the danger that his child will be guided exclusively by the pleasure/pain principle, regardless of the crucial demands of the body. For Rousseau it is by preserving the balance between the demands of the body and the development of the faculties that man succeeds in achieving harmony and contentment: “nature … gives [man] only the desires necessary to his preservation and the faculties sufficient to satisfy them…. Only in this original state are power and desire in equilibrium and man is not unhappy” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 80).

By limiting the aspirations of the child to the exclusive and necessary demands of nature, Rousseau aims at controlling the functions of mind and intelligence attributed to consciousness as components in gaining knowledge. These functions are also recognized by yogis, who acknowledge that in the processes of consciousness there are mental fluctuations and physical abilities at work. They include cognition, which enables man to perceive, know and recognize things; volition, which gives man “the impulse to initiate action”; and motion, which “expresses the fire nature of the mind” through the natural, flickering mental fluctuations by which “consciousness modifies itself” and shows its “vivacity” (Iyengar, 1995, p. 152). However, if all these fluctuations operate via impulses that no longer reflect the needs of the body, but only the workings of the mind without any connection to the inner environment of the individual and the practical outer environment of nature, one can be led to chaos resulting from the misuse of these functions. Rousseau attempts to remedy this problem by giving the child a practical education based on self-preservation and by excluding any unwanted theoretical applications from his curriculum:

Since man’s first natural movements are … to measure himself against everything surrounding him and to experience in each object he perceives all the qualities which can be sensed and relate to him, his first study is a sort of experimental physics relative to his own preservation…. While his delicate and flexible organs can adjust themselves to the bodies on which they must act, while his still pure senses are exempt from illusions, it is the time to exercise both in their proper functions, it is the time to teach the knowledge of the sensible relations which things have with us. Since everything which enters into the human understanding comes there through the senses, man’s first reason is a reason of the senses; this sensual reason serves as the basis of intellectual reason. Our first masters of philosophy are our feet, our hands, our eyes. To substitute books for all that is not to teach us to reason. It is to teach us to use the reason of others. It is to teach us to believe much and never to know anything.

To exercise an art one must begin by procuring for oneself the instruments for it; and, to be able to employ these instruments usefully, one has to make them solid enough to resist wear. To learn to think, therefore, it is necessary to exercise our limbs, our senses, our organs, which are the instruments of our intelligence. And to get the greatest possible advantage from these instruments, the body which provides them must be robust and healthy. Thus, far from man’s true reason being formed independently of the body, it is the body’s good constitution which makes the mind’s operations easy and sure. (Rousseau, 1979, p. 125)
Rousseau recognizes that to think adequately, without interferences prompted by the mind, one has to ensure that all instruments that assist intelligence remain unflawed. He contends that our pure senses are originally “exempt from illusions” and that in order to function well, our organs have to be used properly and be tuned to “the sensible relations which things have with us.” This factor is quintessential for Rousseau, since he asserts that human understanding is molded by perceptions that are the end results of the use of the senses, and by extension of the responses of the body. Besides its attempts to make sure that the senses function smoothly, Rousseau’s method relies basically on a natural sense of self preservation that is not one of the senses per se, yet is a basic instinct that provides the main necessary protective mechanism for an environmentally sensitive functioning of the organism.

Thus Rousseau’s theory maintains that one has to monitor the individual’s original relations to the environment within the context of basic survival, for it is this type of interaction, as opposed to reading about and speculating on abstract theories, that forms the background for the development of the child’s simple and complex faculties. Because it already requires evaluating and comparing situations through the senses, this approach can be seen as forming the premises for the child’s intellectual reason: “sensual reason serves as the basis of our intellectual reason” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 125). The goal of this method is to ensure that the mind of the child not be engaged too early in complex operations involving an overextended and unjustified use of memory and imagination, but only in situations in which need and necessity help form the ground for survival by bringing the child to develop aptitudes and skills attuned to realities that later in life will help form clear judgment. Hence theoretically good common sense prevails over useless movements of the mind and unnecessary relations, no matter how complex the situation. Thanks to this insistence on the deployment of instinct in the early development of the functions of the mind, when more elaborate situations demand the use of complex faculties to serve complex ends, intuitive knowledge will, in theory, take over, enabling the child to act with discernment. Indeed, Rousseau describes the well-regulated use of the senses as the process of cultivating a sixth sense that he calls common sense, one that becomes the main sense in acts of discerning, and that also serves as a reliable tool in what he calls intellectual reason or human reason:

_common sense_ … results from the well-regulated use of the other senses … because it instructs us about the nature of things by the conjunction of all their appearances. This sixth sense has consequently no special organ. It resides only in the brain, and its sensations, purely internal, are called _perceptions or ideas_. It is by the number of these ideas that the extent of our knowledge is measured. It is their distinctness, their clarity which constitutes the accuracy of the mind. It is the art of comparing them among themselves that is called _human reason_. Thus what I would call _sensual or childish_ reason consists in forming simple ideas by the conjunction of several sensations, and what I call _intellectual_ or _human reason_ consists in forming complex ideas by the conjunction of several simple ideas. (Rousseau, 1979, p. 157-158)
From this understanding we can see why Rousseau argues for keeping the child in tune with nature and his immediate environment in order to assist in the development of his future reason:

if instead of taking your pupil’s mind far away … you apply yourself to keeping him always within himself and attentive to what touches him immediately, then you will find him capable of perception, memory, and even reasoning. This is nature’s order. To the extent the sensitive being becomes active, he acquires a discernment proportionate to his strengths….

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[H]e judges, he foresees, he reasons in everything immediately related to him. He does not chatter; he acts….

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[S]o long as he is concerned only with his immediate and palpable interest, you will witness developing all the reason of which he is capable much better and in a way much more appropriate to him than it would in purely speculative studies. (Rousseau, 1979, p. 117-120)

Rousseau thinks of reason as a composite of all the other faculties (see Johnston, 2012). Thus his highlighting of sensual reason works as a way of preparing Emile for adult reason, in that the emphasis of this teaching is on direct and concrete experience that can be applied at any time. Says Rousseau of children, “they reason very well in everything they know that relates to their immediate and palpable interest” (1979, p. 108).

If in Rousseau’s method memory, imagination and language are seldom put to use in the context of the child’s world, and if when they are, they are solely applied to his survival, the development of habits is also proscribed from Emile’s educating, since “habit adds a new need to that of nature” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 63). This reaction against habit may seem unusually forced, but we must remember William James’s contention that “habit diminishes the conscious attention with which our acts are performed” and that habit “is not a thought or a perception, but the sensation occasioned by … muscular contraction” (James, 1890, p. 114-115; italics in original). For Rousseau, habit can only make the child more rigid and less open to the needs of the moment. He warns, “The only habit that a child should be allowed is to contract none…. Prepare from afar the reign of his freedom and the use of his forces by leaving natural habit to his body” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 63). Rousseau goes so far as to say that if the child is given a successful education, he will “not know what routine, custom, or habit is” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 160). He details why habit should be considered a vice:

The appeal of habit comes from the laziness natural to man, and that laziness increases in abandoning oneself to habit. One does more easily what one has already done; the trail once blazed becomes easier to follow. Thus it is to be observed that the empire of habit is very great over the aged and the indolent, very small over the young and the lively. This way of life is good only for weak souls
and weakens them more from day to day. The only habit useful to children is to subject themselves without difficulty to the necessity of things, and the only habit useful to men is to subject themselves without difficulty to reason. Every other habit is a vice. (Rousseau, 1979, p. 160)

It goes without saying that Rousseau wants to stimulate and continue alertness and consciousness in the individual. This desire bears close resemblance to similar intentions raised in yogic philosophy. According to B. K. S. Iyengar, consciousness for the yogi “means our capacity to be aware, both externally as well as internally” (Iyengar, 2005, p. 109). In fact, Iyengar translates the second sutra in the Yoga Sutra, where Patanjali defines yoga, as follows: “Yoga is the process of stilling the movements and fluctuations of mind that disturb our consciousness” (Iyengar, 2005, p. 108), using consciousness for the Sanskrit citta. Iyengar thus describes yogic intelligence as “making self-aware choices through informed discernment and the exercise of will” so that we can “initiate change and free ourselves from ingrained patterns of behavior”—i.e., habits—and steer ourselves incrementally toward illumination and freedom” (Iyengar, 2005, p. 108). Iyengar’s—and Rousseau’s—use of consciousness in these passages tones down or moves away from spiritualized understandings of consciousness as “transcendental ... not a product of the finite body-mind, [but] the ultimate identity of human beings” or “the Self” (Feuerstein, 1997, p. 77) that many associate with mystical spiritual practices such as those found in some forms of yoga. Nevertheless, it does link to citta, which Feuerstein defines as “an umbrella term for a variety of inner processes, primarily the capacity of attention” that in many yogic traditions stems from transcendental “Consciousness” (1997, p. 74). It thus stands between the yogic perception of transcendental self realization through consciousness and possible western interpretation of consciousness as individualized states of being aware, although one could argue that it comes closer to the Jungian definition of consciousness as “the product of a synthesis between consciousness and the unconscious” (Meier, 1989, p. 3) that nevertheless involves “a distinction between subject and object” (Meier, 1989, p. 9). Either way this interpretation supports both Rousseau’s and Iyengar’s use of consciousness in the limited sense of an awareness of one’s actions rather than habituated response, and Iyengar’s comments suggest a retrospective approach to Rousseau’s attempt to control the growth of habit early on in Emile’s development.

Iyengar also maintains, in a section in which he describes the role of intelligence, that yoga can “help us to truly innovate, to develop the intelligence that allows us to create a new relationship to our ego and our world” (1995, p. 123). He reminds us that the role of intelligence, conversely to that of the mind, which “produces thought and image all the time [but] cannot solve the problems caused by thought” (1995, p. 126), is “to stop, to discern, to discriminate, to intervene” (1995, p. 126). Intelligence, Sanskrit buddhi, associated with the intellectual sheath or vijnamaya kosa (see note above), thus is distinguished from the mental or emotional sheath (manomaya kosa, see note above) which is without buddhi’s capacity for discrimination, and must take over the egotistical, individualized self that sees situations from a limited and subjective point of view, since ego (Sanskrit ahamkar) is limited by its “pettiness, fears, [and] cravings” (1995, p. 125). Similarly, Rousseau argues for the development of discernment, declaring that
discernment starts in the proper use of the body, since the body is the basic instrument of our faculties. “[T]he more [the child] makes himself strong and robust, the more he becomes sensible and judicious” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 119).

The difficulties of defining terms such as consciousness, intelligence, ego and so on as used in these contexts should not be overlooked. Arguably, consciousness in the west largely confines itself to a capacity of individualized understanding that distinguishes subject and object, including the “objective” awareness of the self as an entity (a sense of ego) or of aspects of the self as separable content. An eastern, particularly Indian, understanding would see such “individuated” consciousness as preliminary to a larger state of “Consciousness” or transcendent (though not dualistic) Self-realization that in many interpretations unites the individuated self with Godhead. Intelligence, which in the west would refer to a capacity for understanding, in Indian tradition would more describe the capacity for discernment that is preliminary to the distinction of the “Seer” that simultaneously sees, knows, and is joined to the transcendental “Self.” Though the perspectives or approaches to these concepts differ, the difference is more in the underlying spiritual significance applied to these concepts rather than in the operations implicit in the concepts themselves. I would argue that Rousseau’s understanding of these terms approaches closer to the yogic interpretation than does that of many other participants in the historical western dialectic of philosophy. This fact, I would contend, is part of what makes Rousseau so important to the evolution of western thought since the eighteenth century.

With regard to intelligence, Iyengar reminds us that in the overall philosophy of yoga, hatha yoga, the corporeal discipline of practicing asana or poses that has become so popular in the west, serves as a basic stepping stone towards sharpening intelligence to make it freer. Practicing hatha yoga involves learning to be connected to and conscious of our outer and inner self. “What you [exercise], along with the components of body, is that too-often dormant component of consciousness, intelligence itself” (Iyengar, 1995, p. 127). The intelligence Iyengar writes of here is an intelligence of the body, a physical awareness of the functioning of muscles or of the coordination involved in certain positions with attention to their effect on the mind, emotions, and body. Reflecting many of the points Rousseau raises concerning connections between habit and discernment, Iyengar describes yoga as a method of freeing us from habit and enabling us to use faculties such as memory not as obstacles that clutter our judgment, but as means to evolve and live properly. Iyengar reminds us that memory is also part of what constitutes the mind, or manas, and sometimes, if it is not approached with discernment or buddhi, it tends to make us stagnate:

Mind and memory reinvoke past experiences of pain and pleasure and equate them to the present situation, however inappropriate. Whereas intelligence makes creative comparisons, mind makes destructive ones, destructive in the sense that they fix us in a rut, an imprisoning pattern.

Memory is useful if it helps to prepare you for the future, to know whether or not you are moving forward. Use it to develop. Memory is useless if it brings about
a repetition of the past. Repetition means to live in memory. If repetition is taking place, then memory retards the path of evolution. Do not live in memory. Memory is only the means to know whether we are fully aware and evolving…. Living in the past or longing to repeat previous experience will only stagnate intelligence. (Iyengar, 1995, p. 144)

It should be remembered here that if in western tradition memory is largely individualized except in such concepts as “cultural memory,” in yoga memory (at least in its traditional sense) can include deeper factors. As one of the five fluctuations of consciousness that the yogi tries to control in achieving the “stilling of consciousness,” memory can include “subliminal ‘activators’ (samskara) responsible for the karmic continuity in one’s life and also between the present existence and future embodiments” (Feuerstein, 1997, p. 291). Though the element of transmigration would certainly not apply in Rousseau’s case, Rousseau nevertheless understood some of the complexities associated with memory, and how active memory could be in preventing clarity of mind. Thus, as we pointed out previously, by facilitating the exercise of sensual reason Rousseau was trying to avoid the pitfalls that memory could generate. His pupil Emile “has less memory than judgment” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 160), and because he is in tune with nature, from the first he is instinctively connected, thanks to the exercise of his sensual reason. Later, he will become intuitively connected thanks to the use of adult or intellectual reason.

In the same way, though even to the point of addressing the organism at the micro level, we can see in yoga a method that tries to direct instinct and intuition to our best use, aiming at complete integration. One of the aims of hatha yoga is to bring awareness to our body, and even, as yogis believe, to each cell. Iyengar writes,

> We hear a lot about illumination of the Soul. [Hatha yoga] is illumination of the body. Our cells die by the million every minute, but at least if we bring life to them, they live before they die. When intelligence shines into the cells, then instinct is joined by the higher faculty of intuition. Instinct is memory and mind functioning for good or ill with reference only to the past, life preserving and life destroying jumbled together. When intelligence is awakened in the cells, then instinct is transformed into intuition and the past loses its deterministic grip on us, as our inner intelligence tells us what the future requires.

> Memory at the cellular level is at the service of intelligence in the form of intuition. At the conscious level it serves initially as a reference library for intelligence, to be consulted judiciously and with scholarly detachment. When intelligence consults spontaneously with memory at each moment, then conscious intuition arises, and the word we give to conscious intuition is wisdom. (Iyengar 145)

The idea that one can bring intelligence into the cells may seem controversial, as might the idea that bringing this “intelligence” into the cells changes “instinct ... into intuition.” Part of the difficulty with these concepts lies in a cultural context (like that of the west)
which tends to separate mind from body and intellect from intuition, and also to prioritize analysis over synthesis. In the yogic understanding, cellular intelligence is accepted, but from a western standpoint it would be approached from a metaphorical or symbolic perspective, in that it refers to processes that seem to affect the body on a microscopic level, but lacks observable data to prove that it does indeed operate in this way. Yet much contemporary mind-body research suggests that cells are central at least to our emotive and perceptual approach to the world, and that they even have a type of intelligence. For instance, neuropeptides and receptors affect awareness and our response to life, with “less than 2% of neuronal communication [occurring] at the synapse. Most communication happens at receptor sites on cell walls throughout the body” (Bragdon, 1998-2001). Dr. Candace Pert, who discovered the opiate receptors through which endorphins bind to brain cells, connects these cellular-level reactions directly to our emotions and intuition, and even links them to yoga, maintaining that “classical chakras areas [correspond to] ‘nodal points’—Places where lots of neurotransmitters and neuropeptides [are] released” (Helfer, 2010). Another researcher, Professor Guenter Albrecht-Buehler of Northwestern University and elsewhere, has conducted experimental work over 30 years that “suggests that single tissue cells have their own data- and signal-processing capacities that help them control their movements and orientation” (Albrecht-Buehler, 2012a). Albrecht-Buelher defines an “intelligent cell” as “capable of collecting and integrating a variety of physically different and unforeseeable signals as the basis of problem-solving decisions” (Albrecht-Buehler, 2012b), and suggests that cells measure space and time, order data, and perform other types of “intelligent” functions. Despite the “New-Age” tone of some of the writing that accompanies and promotes this area of research, there is some evidence for its validity.

Mind-body research also suggests how instinct, intelligence, and intuition might interact. The relation of intuition to intelligence (let alone instinct) has long been controversial in the west. The *Psychiatric Dictionary* defines instinct as an “organized and relatively complex mode of response, characteristic of a given species ... phylogenetically adapted to a specific type of environmental situation” (Hinsie & Campbell, 1970, p. 400) and intelligence as “the capacity to understand and manage abstract ideas and symbols ... to understand, invent and manage mechanisms [and] to act reasonably and wisely as regards human relations and social affairs” (Hinsie & Campbell, 1970, p. 406). In Jungian psychology, which addresses intuition more directly than many other established psychological approaches, intuition stands as a basic characterological function that comes from the unconscious and forms the foundation for first impressions, hunches, telepathic experiences, and other psychic experiences (Meier, 1989, p. 97). At the cellular level, instinct might represent the pure functioning of body parts in conjunction with various body-environmental stimuli such as the intake of food. According to Bragdon, Pert connects these cellular-level functions directly to the intuitive, suggesting that the “cellular information exchange with peptides,” arguably an unconscious experience for most people on the macro level, “is 98% of the biological basis of our emotions as well as ... our intuition” (Bragdon, 1998-2001). The relation of intellect to intuition thus can be seen as involving a dialectic that, taken with the introduction (metaphorical or not) of “instinct” into the cells, clarifies how awareness (an application of intelligence to perception of physiological phenomena) can lead to intuitive response.
Philosopher Henri Bergson contrasted instinct and intelligence by arguing that humans, unlike animals, “are not adequately equipped” (Lawlor & Moulard, 2011) with instinct to survive as animals do. Humans, that is, interact with the world more intelligently than instinctually. But by increasing awareness of the body through yogic or other practices, one might increase consciousness of and even control over instinctive or physiological reactions to the point of impacting breath intake, heartbeat, neurological functions, and so on. This opening to the bodily functions that for many operate at the unconscious level might increase the ability to interact with unconscious stimuli (bodily and other reactions at the subliminal level) that may assist in generating intuition by bringing unconscious or subliminal material into conscious awareness. This increased awareness might then seem to make one feel more “full of life.” Bergson, who was not a psychologist, let alone a Jungian, would have maintained that intuition lets humanity “turn intelligence against itself so as to seize life itself” and escape from the mechanistic or overly self-interested and pragmatic: “intuition reverses the normal working of intelligence, which is interested and analytic (synthesis being only a development of analysis)” (Lawlor & Moulard, 2011). Bergson writes, “in pure perception we are actually placed outside ourselves; we touch the reality of the object in an immediate intuition” (Bergson, 2005, p. 75). This type of insightful and immediate awareness spanning both conscious and the unconscious may link interior processes with intellectual perception and understanding, generating wisdom.

To recapitulate, both the teachings of Rousseau via his treatise on education and the teachings of yoga as presented in the Yoga Sutra (here interpreted and put into practice by Iyengar) aim at developing a greater understanding and manifestation of consciousness, as well as increasing reflection on the modes that foster integration of all the physiological, mental and intellectual levels of the human organism. Above all both aim at maintaining the inner integrity of the individual when he or she is interacting with the outer environment. Despite their differences in approach and terminology, yogic and Rousseauist approaches both look at the components that form the mental and the intellectual bodies or capacities, and try to find out how our physiological body can serve as a base for these attributes so as to enable man to live freely with both conscience and consciousness (antahkarana in Sanskrit, literally the “inner instrument” that describes the totality—buddhi, ahamkara, manas—of the psyche [Feuerstein, 1997, p. 26]), which for Iyengar serves as “the witness of the witness” by which we perceive “consequences ... from the deepest level, that of unity” (Iyengar, 2005, p. 178). Instinct, intuition, and intelligence are the main forces driving this process. A careful study of the use of these faculties suggests ways to remedy any lack of sense of unity in them, since their improper use forms the core of dysfunction.

When talking about conscience, Iyengar underlines the fact that conscience is the face of the lens that lets us see things in an introspective way. Because it faces our soul, conscience is less likely to be contaminated by our senses, which usually connect us with the outer world. Iyengar describes it thus: “conscience is the perception of consequences perceived from the deeper level, that of unity. This is where soul infuses matter, a bridge between Soul and Nature. That is why conscience will only ever tell you one thing, offer
one course of action, because it comes out of Oneness. Conscience is consciousness being able to tune in to the promptings of the individual soul (atma)” (Iyengar, 2005, p. 178). We can compare this with Rousseau’s philosophy of morals and order that tells us that “[t]he acts of conscience are not judgments but sentiments” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 290) that are directed towards a main center, “which is God” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 292). The notion of unity here expresses itself as a priority given to a whole as opposed to a fragment: “There is some moral order wherever there is sentiment and intelligence. The difference is that the good man orders himself in relation to the whole, and the wicked one orders the whole in relation to himself. The latter makes himself the center of all things; the former measures his radius and keeps to the circumference. Then he is ordered in relation to the common center, which is God, and in relation to all the concentric circles, which are the creatures” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 291-292).

Given the spiritual or religious imperatives suggested by these descriptions of conscience, one may wonder about this term and the phenomena it describes. It seems that for Rousseau, conscience is both instinct and intuition in that it already manifests itself potentially in the state of pure and pristine nature as a natural identity of the organism, expressing a sentiment in the notion of self-protection and self-preservation. The notion of amour de soi incorporates conscience and consciousness in their embryonic states, in that amour de soi is not inflated by external feelings stemming from the outside, as amour-propre is, since amour-propre is an outer-directed form of amour de soi. Initially, according to Rousseau, we have inborn ways of feeling such as sentiments that are naturally geared for our survival. Among those sentiments, Rousseau names “the love of self, the fear of pain, the horror of death, the desire of well-being” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 290).

Conscience, Rousseau tells us, is a “Divine instinct” that speaks to us in the language of nature (Rousseau, 1979, p. 290-291). One might ask what Rousseau means by “Divine instinct,” two words that in some traditions could express a priori opposite concepts. One must remember that, for Rousseau, in the ideal state of nature, instinct has its own integrity in that it works for the good of the organism. Even though it involves operations of the mind and to a certain extent of memory, its function is defined by the urge of self preservation, and in this definite context memory functions in synchrony with the body, using selected and limited resources from the mind to help accomplish acts geared toward survival.

As mentioned earlier, even though the yogic and Rousseauist systems have closely related aims, they tackle them from different angles. For Rousseau, unity and consciousness can occur if nature is well channeled from the start and if elaborate faculties develop proportionally with the needs of the individual. To reach consciousness one has to learn how to think and reason via the experiences of the body, which means that no unnecessary actions or thoughts should interfere with the demands of the environment on the organism. Instinct is gradually assisted by a rudimentary form of reason which puts at work discerning intelligence, an intelligence issued from innate sentiments in a very specific context where operations of the mind do not produce random ideas, but rather ideas that are useful and suited to physiological and emotional
demands. During this process negative education, or “refraining from controlling, directing, admonishing, or cramming the child at every turn” (Dent, 1995, p. 102), serves as a preventive measure to limit any compromising of the integrity of the individual. In yoga, on the other hand, experiencing of consciousness is achieved via a reversed process where one has to rediscover intelligence, intuition and instinct by developing a context where these faculties can operate smoothly without interferences from tendencies within them that uselessly activate the mind. Yoga takes the individual on a path of unlearning and abandoning the unnecessary clutter produced by mind and ego, thereby fostering the sharpening and cleansing of awakening intelligence. It does this by going progressively inwards and cleansing the physical, mental and intellectual bodies. To succeed in cleansing intelligence, the teachings of yoga try to make us aware of what might get in the way of realization.

In book two of The Yoga Sutra, Patanjali warns his readers against the forces of corruption, which are described as “ignorance, egoism, passion, hatred, and the will to live” (Sutra 2:3, Stoler Miller, 1995, p. 44). Ignorance is seen as “misperceiving permanence in transience … pleasure in suffering, [and] an essential self where there is no self” (Sutra 2.5, Stoler Miller, 1995, p. 45). It is interesting to note that some of the sources of human afflictions identified in the Yoga Sutra are described by Rousseau as sentiments that gear us toward survival and possibly wisdom. But if in Yoga they cause misery, for Rousseau they are part of the language of nature. “The love of self, the fear of pain, the horror of death, [and] the desire of well-being” are simply passions that need to be harnessed from the start, raw energy to ensure our survival. This energy for Rousseau invokes nature in a state of balance, an encoded system geared at protecting the organism or matter at large. This vision that Rousseau proposes is not naïve, since earlier on he distinguishes between amour de soi and amour-propre. His preventive method aims to protect his pupil from unnecessary longing for pleasures that would lead to suffering, and from investing too much in the ego or the parts of the individual that might tend to develop pride or amour-propre. By assigning the child to a humble position in the order of things, as dictated by nature, and by giving him constant awareness of his limitations in relation to the demands of nature, Rousseau attempts to keep the lens of the self pristine.

Going back to yoga, Iyengar, when discussing the qualities of intelligence, warns us about motivations that may influence our intelligence: “What intelligence does not do well is pick up on its own motivations that are quietly infiltrating from ego” (Iyengar, 2005, p. 177). Intelligence shows such vulnerability because it can be taken over by its conative side, or in other words the side that wills and intends, as opposed to the cognitive side, which reflects. Rousseau’s method similarly works to avoid this trap, but it does so from the start by trying to make sure that the child wills only what is good for him in relation to the dictates of nature as assisted by his common sense. Thus in no circumstance will the child act whimsically, for his behavior will always be both active and reflective as well as tuned to the environment. Rousseau feels that the key to avoiding suffering lies “in diminishing the excess of the desires over the faculties and putting power and will in perfect equality,” for it is “[o]nly in this original state [that]
power and desire [are] in equilibrium and man is not unhappy” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 80; see also Johnston, 2012).

One of the earlier papers in this series drew a parallel between what Jung considers to be the psychic structure of the individual, i.e. what he calls the subjective factor, and Rousseau’s *amour de soi* (Johnston, 2009c). According to Jung, this subjective factor has to be considered a universal law in the acquisition of knowledge. Its base is the elementary perceptions and cognitions at the core of the interaction of the subject with its environment, which has become or always has been an inborn way of acting. We could say that this form of pre-embedded knowledge presupposes more than instinct, and points to a form of intelligence and intuition. In this respect, both Jung’s and Rousseau’s theories account for an already existing intelligent force playing a crucial part in the development of the individual, whereas yoga sees this force as manifesting itself also as an end result in the accomplished individual, though it reflects back to an ideational context presupposing material reality. Such assumptions about yoga of course can only be made if one looks at yoga as a teaching tool and a discipline, and not as the illustration of a complete system which expresses integration, unity, and wisdom lived in a timeless manner in which the awakened Self manifests Godhead. Either way, both the system espoused in yoga and the system generated by Rousseau aim at integrating the individual with the environment by pointing the way to a harmonious relationship between body, intuition, and intelligence that links one into a higher plane of consciousness.
References


Notes

1 “Self” here should be distinguished from yogic “transcendental Self” with a capital S, the realized state of identity of the individual with “the essential core ... of being,” although as Feuerstein (1997) notes, this latter Self “in the Christian tradition is known as the eternal soul” (p. 265). Note however that Rousseau ultimately moves toward a sense of unity associable with the transcendent, though in Emile this transcendent is found in nature as opposed to being found in revelation via the Bible. This intention comes out most clearly in the famous Confessions of the Savoyard Priest section of Emile (Rousseau, 1979, pp. 266-313).

2 Pratyahara is defined in sutra 2.54 as follows: “When the senses withdraw themselves from the objects and imitate, as it were, the nature of the mind-stuff, this is pratyahara.” Satchidananda (1984), p. 165.

3 The forces of corruption are identified in Miller’s (1995) translation of and commentary on the Yoga Sutra as ignorance, egoism, passion, hatred and the will to live. Ignorance, which is the root of the other corruptions, is a misunderstanding of the interaction between the observing spirit (purusa) and the phenomenal world (prakriti). One of Patanjali’s major aims in the Yoga Sutra is to analyze the causes of the error and suffering that are obstacles to spiritual liberation.

4 The discussion in Johnston 2012 following this quotation offers a commentary on Rousseau’s perspective on confusing patterns of thinking.

5 Mind, ego, and intelligence, in Sanskrit, respectively, translate as manas (associated with the manomaya kosa), ahamkar, and buddhi (associated with the vijnamaya kosa). Yoga describes human faculties in terms of sheaths, bodies, or (in Sanskrit) kosas (pronounced “co-shah”). Iyengar (1993) describes these sheaths as follows:

the layers, or sheaths, are the anatomical, skeletal, or structural sheath (anamaya kosa); the physiological or organic sheath (pranamaya kosa); the mental or emotional sheath (manomaya kosa); the intellectual or discriminative sheath (vijnamaya kosa); and the pure blissful sheath (anandamaya kosa). These kosas represent the five elements of nature, or prakriti: earth, water, fire, air and ether. Mahat, cosmic consciousness, in its individual form as citta, is the sixth kosa, while the inner soul is the seventh kosa. In all, man has seven sheaths, or kosas, for the development of awareness. (p. 10)

One can compare this emphasis on physical discipline with hatha yoga, a term used for “the vast body of doctrines and practices geared toward Self-realization by means of perfecting the body” (Feuerstein, 1997, p. 118).

For fuller clarification of this distinction of mind from intelligence, see the discussions of manas and buddhi in this paper.

For further clarification of Rousseau’s condemnation of reading in *Emile*, see p. 7 of Bloom’s (1979) “Introduction” to Rousseau. Rousseau’s views on reading are of course highly controversial, but it should be remembered that *Emile* is in many ways a novel and that Rousseau himself condemned efforts to slavishly imitate his educational system. Rousseau of course does not take into account the situation of a child who is “naturally” inclined toward reading. For a precocious child, reading will not affect intellect in a negative way provided that it be geared toward stimulating feeling rather than intellect. Rousseau’s *Confessions* (1995) recounts his own experiences with reading at a very early age (p. 7-8), and this early reading is obviously seen as an instinctive and intuitive experience rather than an intellectual exercise.

For Rousseau, amour-propre stems from amour de soi: “The primitive passions, which all tend directly toward our happiness ... are all loving and gentle in their essence. But when they are deflected from their object by obstacles, they are focused on removing the obstacle rather than reaching the object; then they change nature and become irascible and hateful. And that is how the love of self, which is a good and absolute feeling, becomes amour-propre.” Rousseau, *Rousseau Juge de Jean-Jacques: Dialogues*, qtd. in Johnston, 2009b.
Gary Snyder’s “Real Work”: Educational Implications

Allan Johnston

As a seminal figure in the movement toward Buddhism that “took off in the 1960s” (Seager, 1999, p. 9), Gary Snyder has offered one of the clearest expressions of Buddhist sensibility in American literature. He helped transfer Buddhist values to the West by linking Buddhism to what he calls “the most archaic values on earth” (Snyder, 1978, p. viii), which acknowledge the basis of spiritual being and political action in nature, in the pattern of deep-ecological “ethical holism” (James, 2004, p. 72-82). Snyder thus sees in Buddhism hints of ancient animistic beliefs, and explores these variations on Buddhist practice through what he calls “the real work,” a system of actions and attitudes that accords with natural occurrences and their spiritual significance.¹ Here is how Snyder describes the real work: “[t]he real work is what we really do.... [I]f we can live the work we have to do, knowing that we are real, and it’s real, and that the world is real, then it becomes right. And that’s the real work: to make the world as real as it is, and to find ourselves as real as we are within it.... The real work [is also to] take the struggle on without the least hope of doing any good. To check the destruction of the interesting and necessary diversity of life on the planet so that the dance can go on a little better for a little longer. The other part of it is that it is always here.... The real work is eating each other, I suppose” (Snyder & Geneson, 1980, p. 81-82).

This description of the real work emphasizes three levels: 1) practice, 2) resistance, and 3) resignation or acceptance. Recalling Snyder’s insistence that “work and play are one,” one might argue that these three components of the real work—practice, resistance, and acceptance—illuminate a spiritual discipline that could underlie or inform a basic philosophy of education. Snyder’s writing, as work, is designed to maximize awareness of nature on all planes—the mundane, the political, and the spiritual. As an ecological program, this work involves knowing cause and effect in human endeavor and understanding that human activity, or what the fourth-century B.C.E. Daoist Chuang-Tzu (2004) calls the “human,” must be identical to the “work” of nature, or the “heavenly”—a distinction Chuang-Tzu makes in his work “Autumn Floods”:

“What do you mean by the Heavenly and the human?”

Jo of the North Sea said, “Horses and oxen have four feet—this is what I mean by the Heavenly. Putting a halter on the horse’s head, piercing the ox’s nose—this is what I mean by the human.”

Political, spiritual, and presumably educational work fail if they separate humanity from the natural world. Thus, Snyder’s “Real Work” offers a Dharmic practice; it acknowledges the difference between the human and the heavenly and realigns the human with the heavenly, coordinating it with Buddhist practice. Importantly, as we will see, in some ways the Dharmic path reflects the basic course or experience of modern development and a modern education, and so offers both an approach to and a critical analysis of these processes. It also potentially offers philosophical perspectives that could have a significant effect on the direction of education.
Dharma and the Three Levels of “The Real Work”

The word Dharma means “[r]ule of duty or of social obligation (Hinduism). The truth; the saving doctrine or way (early Buddhism). Reality; essential quality; any reality (Mahayana Buddhism)” (Burtt, 1955, p. 245). It derives from Sanskrit roots meaning “that which has been established in the mind” or “the object of consciousness” (Alan Hunt Badiner, qtd. in Seager, 1999, p. 211) and signifies “carrying, holding” (Fischer-Schreiber, Ehrhard & Diener, 1991, p. 54). Dharma in Buddhism also refers to “[t]he cosmic law, the ‘great norm’” as well as “the general state of affairs,” and “thing, phenomenon”; “[m]ental content, object of thought, idea”; and in Hinayana “the so-called factors of existence” (Fischer-Schreiber, Ehrhard & Diener, 1991, p. 54). These varied meanings suggest the ways that the concept of Dharma acknowledges Chuang-Tzu’s distinction between the human and the heavenly while it simultaneously realigns these realms.

Snyder’s “real work” corresponds with several aspects of Dharma. For instance, practice—including the practice of meditation—is a way to enforce resistance and to accept the “essential reality” of the heavenly, or the ongoing, undisturbed processes of nature. If we here include Zen, especially the teachings of Rinzai who saw “the roots of the concept of dharma in the Way of Taoism” (Molesworth, 1983, p. 79), we have a compendium of the Eastern disciplines that inform Snyder’s vision. As an expression of Dao, practice connects directly to the heavenly, since for Snyder meditation is no different from the action of animals:

At some point ... it just hit me that I really was an animal and that all of the things that we call “human” are simply part of that, including our spiritual capacities. It’s just another thing that animals can do. (Ingram, Gates, Nisker & Snyder, 1988, p. 4)

The “heavenly” connects to the Dao, and to the old precept that the scholar learns every day, while the wise man unlearns every day. “Human” experience by contrast stems from the human “distinction between the see-er and the seen” that results from nature’s “being seen as an object” (Ingram, Gates, Nisker & Snyder, 1988, p. 4). From this objectification comes power, since perceiving nature as an object leads to an attempt to control nature or even to see nature as a “social construction” (Snyder, 1999, p. 387). By reducing nature to object, science encourages the discovery of reductive and materialistic laws. Transformed into the concept of individual rights, these insights permit what Snyder calls “the mercy of the West”: social revolution. The Westernized subject/object split rests on perceiving a difference between self and nature. If an order different from nature exists elsewhere (as in a Christian heaven), there is also an accompanying tendency to deny the self through a “willingness to accept the perceptions and decisions of others” (Snyder, 1969, p. 126)—that is, to accept authoritarianism. Authoritarianism may permit cultural or even countercultural cohesion, but at the cost of repudiating the self’s convictions and beliefs. Snyder’s resistance to “the perceptions and decisions of others” leads him in his poetry to reject an authoritative, central persona, though there is a centralized perspective.

1. Practice

Snyder stratifies his definition of “the real work” in ways that tie it to the concept of Dharma. By doing so he suggests layers of meaning to “the real work” that show the complexities of
human interactions with nature. The first concerns practice in the sense of a constant striving to make active connection so as to engage the world at all levels of life. Practice refers as much to attention to what we do in daily life as it does to any special endeavor to “connect,” the result of meditation as presented for example in Snyder’s poem “Piute Creek.” Snyder says, “The real work is what we really do ... [to] make the world as real as it is, and ... find ourselves as real as we are within it” (Snyder & Geneson, 1980, p. 81). He strives for direct involvement in nature, so that work as labor becomes another means of experiencing the earth, as does his increasing insistence on involvement with local nature, the place that one inhabits as a grounding counterbalance to abstract concepts, including the abstraction of “nature” itself. As a result, the realizations and levels of focus achieved in such work in many ways resemble the “practice” of sitting meditation. Acting in nature pits humanity against nature, but meditation limits “either/or” perceptions by blending mind and environment, body and breath. The result reflects the realizations, if not the erasures, reached in meditation.

For Snyder work becomes an expression of the self in nature. Work and meditation differ in that meditation allows expansion of perception while work focuses on a task, but the efficacy of each depends upon the worker or the meditator. Snyder emphasizes this devotion in his comments on the experience that led to his early poetry collection Riprap, in which Snyder discovered his voice as a poet. He describes how, while working in Yosemite Park, he at first tried to “exercise [his] mind” by reading Milton, then “gave up trying to carry on an intellectual interior life separate from the work.... By just working, I found myself being completely there having the whole mountain inside of me, and finally having a whole language inside of me that became one with the rocks and with the trees” (Snyder & Lampe, 1980, p. 8). “Having the whole mountain inside of me” becomes the criterion for a self in which nature and the self combine. When Snyder creates a “language ... that [is] one with the rocks and with the trees,” he assumes a fusion of humanity and nature—an identity realized in work.

Like meditation, work can hone the mind. Snyder depicts the relationship between nature and mind in his poem “No Matter, Never Mind,” in which an incestuous mix of Void, Wave, Matter and Life “Gives birth to the Mind” (Snyder, 1974, p. 11). This straightforward presentation acknowledges the Mind as a product of nature. Life recalls “The Great Mother” that Snyder later identifies as Gaia, while Matter is both brother and father to Life, its co-creator and constant companion, perhaps even a rival. As the title suggests, Mind cannot exist without Matter. The interconnection of mind and matter relieves the reader’s concerns about the origin of mind.

2. Resistance

This distancing from concerns about mind’s origin presents itself as a form of resistance, in that, if directed correctly, resistance itself becomes a type of practice. In considering mind, for instance, the practice of resistance to speculation serves as a function of Dharmic “real work” as regards that which involves the mind. Since mind develops from the material world rather than through ideas, speculation as to its origin seems fruitless. But people always immerse themselves in the abstractions that Snyder’s poetry usually counters. Humans are the creators of such abstractions as the ones in “No Matter, Never Mind,” which is why Snyder downplays the relevance of his “genealogy” even as he presents it.
Snyder’s reaction against abstractions thus implies the second level of meaning in “the real work”—resistance. The human tendency to abstract experience is the basis of the “human predicament” or the “problem of nature,” i.e., nature as a “social construction” (Snyder, 1999, p. 387) that is configured solely as use value rather than as that self-sustaining “wildness” that Snyder at one point refers to as “self-thus” (“The Etiquette of Freedom,” Snyder, 1990, p. 5), giving a literal translation of zi-ran, the Chinese word for nature. Snyder suggests that when humans wrongly experience nature as an abstraction, nature is abstracted from itself and becomes a creation of the human mind—a product of the human rather than of the heavenly.

Yet this tendency to abstraction is the “distinction” of humanity. Such perceptions, since they represent a point of intersection in Indra’s Net, retain a degree of truth. Nevertheless, any such generalization substitutes an imagined nature for phenomenal nature.

One result is expressed in Snyder’s poem “Milton by Firelight.” This poem from Riprap describes Snyder reading Milton’s Paradise Lost at a campfire in the Sierra Nevada after a day of work on a trail crew. Snyder contrasts the Christian myth presented by Milton to the immensity and reality of the natural world surrounding him, and characterizes Milton’s vision as a reflection of the “chaos of the mind”:

No paradise, no fall,  
Only the weathering land  
The wheeling sky,  
Man, with his Satan  
Scouring the chaos of the mind. (Snyder, 1965, p. 8)

The distinction between what is and what is perceived depends on direct experience of nature rather than on interpretations of nature. In fact Satan may be that “chaos of the mind” that is in some ways definitive of the human. Accompanying the lie of paradise is the lie of the fall, Satan, and “chaos of the mind.” Nature is going about its “weathering” and “wheeling,” but human beings perceive these events as consequences of natural laws. Nature’s continuity and its independence from false human ordering are suggested by the poem’s punctuation, the lack of syntactical separation between “the weathering land” and “the wheeling sky.” If the book—Milton’s Paradise Lost—lies, nature does not lie, for it is outside grammar and language, ordering itself beyond human conceptualization. The “clear, attentive mind” described in “Piute Creek” (Snyder, 1965, p. 6), a poem depicting a moment of meditation, foregoes the internalized chaos of meaning in nature and sees both itself and a nature that, being in its own ways sentient, sees mind (and) (as) itself. The contrast between natural process and the “chaos of the mind” in “Milton by Firelight” suggests that the “chaos” Western society finds in nature is an illusion, a “chaos of the mind.” Snyder implies that this perception may be based on the belief that divine order must somehow transcend nature. “Truly seen,” nature represents not a chaotic face, but a face, seen or unseen, that looks back at us: the face of nature is ultimately the face of the examined self. “Mind” and nature are the same because the “clear mind” sees nature as itself (Snyder, 1965, p. 6).

Practice and resistance are therefore intimately connected and potentially interact continuously. Work and meditation as practices deliberately resist the abstracted face of nature. Contact with mind and matter forces us to establish a sense of relation to earth by making “the world as real as
it is.” Snyder does not see the mind as an evolutionary mistake, as this would be a projection of human valuation onto heavenly creation. Mind can surpass abstraction, and humanity can “break through things as they are” (Snyder, 1968, p. 87), just as it can break things in nature. “The real work” allows contact with nature through attention to task, but this devotedness becomes problematic when work itself is abstracted rather than attended to directly. Devotion to task is not what a lot of people consider important in work; in a capitalist society, work usually involves maximizing profit. Against the work of “wrecking the world” (“Dillingham, Alaska, the Willow Tree Bar,” Snyder, 1983, p. 92), Snyder advocates the “real work” of saving the world. Snyder thus extends the idea of “the real work” as resistance; humanity’s destruction of nature results from the human ability to self-abstract from nature, to distinguish humanity from what it destroys. Thus, Snyder calls civilization “a lack of faith, a human laziness, a willingness to accept the perceptions and decisions of others in place of your own” (Snyder, 1969, p. 126), and rejects the substitution of culture for nature, the privileging of abstractions over the concrete—a process that creates “self-imposed limitations” to alternative ways of experiencing nature. Against these limitations, Snyder offers “natural” values: “As poet I hold the most archaic values on earth. They go back to the upper Palaeolithic: the fertility of the soil, the magic of animals, the power-vision in solitude...” (Snyder, 1978, p. viii).

The alignment of the heavenly and the human—the natural and the human worlds—bears within itself a route of Dharmic action that that Snyder aligns with the ecological. Put another way, the joining of the heavenly with the human in resistance emphasizes being as an ecological concern. Snyder’s ecological focus reconfigures our relationship with nature. He advances the identity of nature and mind by uniting the “myths” of empowerment that constitute “the most archaic values on earth” with the “texts” of nature. The essay “Four Changes” (Snyder, 1995, p. 32-46), for example, presents the “conditions” of population, pollution, and consumption, and recommends “actions” to solve these problems; yet it also demands a radical “transformation” to generate an ecological life that acknowledges “[w]ildness [as] the state of complete awareness” (p. 41). In this seminal essay Snyder calls for a “reinvention of consciousness” (p. 44) achieved by “seizing the key images, myths, [and] archetypes” (p. 43) and recognizing the possibilities opened by the present:

[W]e are the first human beings in history to have so much of our past culture and previous experience available to our study, and [are] free enough of the weight of traditional cultures to seek out a larger identity; the first members of a civilized society since the Neolithic to wish to look clearly into the eyes of the wild and see our selfhood, our family, there. (p. 45)

This transformation requires development of “psychological techniques for creating an awareness of ‘self’ which includes the social and natural environment” (p. 44). Revolution without “revolution of consciousness” is pointless, while “revolution of consciousness” accepts that “man’s survival’ or ‘survival of the biosphere”’ are part of “some kind of serene and ecstatic process which is beyond qualities and beyond birth-and-death. ‘No need to survive!’” (p. 45). Snyder, then, defines “the real work” as the radical transformation of civilization—an end to the globalizing, consumerist, fossil-fuel-based social systems—to an ecologically viable way of life that recognizes the rights of all beings. Snyder’s countercultural stance throughout his writings, not to mention in his lifestyle, thus stands as a radical critique of civilization.
He is, of course, aware of the difficulty of this work. “The real work” in fact in many ways becomes the work of a Bodhisattva who “has passed beyond all thought of individuation, or discrimination, or integration [but] retains in mind a memory of the world’s ignorance and suffering, [and] untainted and undisturbed by it, his mind overflowing with compassion ... goes forth in wisdom and love for its emancipation and enlightenment” (Goddard, 1994, p. 655). It involves a continual practice that vows resistance to the world’s suffering undertaken out of compassion for all beings, human and non-human alike. Further, its accomplishment potentially surpasses lifetimes. The difficulty of the goal is acknowledged as early as the “Amitabha’s vow” section of his long poem Myths and Texts, where the narrator asks that he “not attain highest perfect enlightenment” if “anyone in my land gets tossed in jail on a vagrancy rap,” “loses a finger coupling boxcars,” or “can’t get a ride hitch-hiking all directions” (Snyder, 1978, p. 45). The “real work” is ultimately emulating Buddha, who “fed himself to tigers”: “a mountain-lion / Once trailed me four miles / At night and no gun / It was awful, I didn’t want to be ate / maybe we’ll change” (Snyder, 1978, p. 14).

3. Resignation or Acceptance

Radical effort, because it is so idealistic, is for Snyder a vehicle for spiritual as well as political liberation. “The real work” becomes a movement toward the heavenly, an alignment of human “norms of behavior and ethical rules” with the heavenly “manifestation of reality, of the general state of affairs,” the Dharmic “cosmic law, the ‘great norm.’” In this way work—that which must be done for nature’s salvation—becomes a vehicle for spiritual liberation that involves continuous practice and resistance.

This brings us to the third aspect of “the real work”—Snyder’s view of resignation or acceptance. In the poem “The Real Work,” Snyder describes what he sees while boating in the San Francisco Bay around Alcatraz and Angel Island: “sea-lions and birds, / sun through fog / flaps up and lolling, / looks you dead in the eye” (Snyder, 1974, p. 32). Snyder’s linking the sea lions and the sun foreshadows the linkage of human and animal activities at the end of the poem, where Snyder offers us another definition of “the real work”—one that seems as applicable to animals as it is to humans: “the real work. / washing and sighing, / sliding by” (Snyder, 1974, p. 32). The “real work” is simply “sliding by,” doing what we do whether we be gull, seal, or human; and accepting the moment for what it is. “The path is whatever passes” (Snyder, 1974, p. 6); the vehicle of liberation, the “what is to be done,” is acceptance of whatever happens. The non-directiveness of the Zen approach to enlightenment often eliminates intention from action; enlightenment is not achieved through intentionality because intention itself is human projection. Even if a person engages in radical political action, he or she must recognize the need for resignation and acceptance, and “take the struggle on without the least hope of doing any good.”

The real work involves taking the world for what it is. As such, it also involves knowing that all human tasks are doomed to failure—failure in the human sphere since people are mortal, and possibly failure in the heavenly sphere, since radical work on earth’s behalf has no guarantee of success. Yet the tasks that shape human life are the only ones that have any significance. To the extent that modern life is based on rapidly disappearing resources, these tasks will survive if
humanity survives: “all of us will come back again to hoe in the ground, or gather wild potato bulbs with digging sticks, or hand-adze a beam .... [W]e’re never going to get away from that work, on one level or another” (Snyder & Geneson, 1980, p. 81-82). Gathering food and providing sustenance are all we must do to survive. They are real because “the real work is what we really do” (Snyder & Geneson, 1980, p. 82), and they offer the fullest alignment of human behavior with “the cosmic law, the ‘great norm,’” the “manifestation of reality, of the general state of affairs” that constitutes the Dharma. This is the realm of resignation or acceptance that is implied in the real work of Chuang-Tzu’s “heavenly”: “The real work is eating each other, I suppose.”

**Educational Implications**

Although Snyder presents his “real work” in a context that focuses on personal liberation, his ideas hold value for general understandings of developmental and educational processes and practices, and so can shed light on issues related to philosophy of education and educational application. The patterns of practice, resistance, and resignation that make up Snyder’s “real work,” for example, bear remarkable surface resemblance to the basic experience of human development and to features of education in post-industrial society, if not in all societies. From this angle, the (projected) innocence of childhood practice expresses itself in the world of play and repetition, leading to an internalization of patterns, behaviors, pronunciations, formulae, and so on, as has (for example) been famously exemplified in Freud’s description of the Fort-Da game, by means of which the child learns about and hopefully comes to accept separation and repatriation, absence and presence. Recall that developmentally, childhood involves the “heavenly” abstraction of the “self” into a separable entity via ego formation, and thus points always back toward the realm of natural expression, a process that the school tries to channel in its effort to inculcate skills, attitudes, and behaviors in the individual. Quite often this initial phase of “self” development evolves into adolescent resistance (rebellion against the status quo, recognized correctly albeit immaturity as an attempt to “tame” the individual, wild, free being of the self; alternatively, the period of ego development leading into the Hegelian/Jungian phase described by Erich Neumann as “unhappy consciousness” in which the emerging, self-conscious ego resists its emergence into consciousness and identity, often through group identification and dangerous behaviors). Frequently the result of unsuccessful resistance—unsuccessful, first, because the self develops anyway, and second, because the world does not seem to change along with the self—is a “resignation” that one can associate with the notorious “deadness” of the student depicted for example by Paolo Freire in his description of the banking concept of education. The chief difference between the above scenario and the Dharmic practice of the real work is the deliberate insertion of consciousness into the processes of practice, resistance, and acceptance, and the end result of fuller, heightened awareness, or acceptance, rather than a deadening resignation or “dropping out” in the stage of recognition of the world’s force on the individual. Key also is the recognition that resistance is a standard part of this developmental process, and offers the opportunity for channeling or directing such as is described by Paolo Freire (2006).

The Dharmic path thus in many ways reflects—in form—the basic course or experience of modern development and modern education. Recall that Dharma is after all “the general state of affairs” as well as “the saving doctrine or way.” The path of resistance and too often of
surrender results from conflicting messages that encourage retreat or rebellion, efforts to protect the fragile self. This is usually a result of exposure to a world in which conflicting forces tear apart the developing ego even as it tries to find a center to cling to. As Snyder puts it, “Children grow up hearing contradictory teachings: one for getting what’s yours, another for being decent” (“Tawny Grammar,” Snyder, 1990, p. 57). Snyder does not deny the need to teach the form of the current social order, nor does he deny that the traditional devices of education should continue. Narration and repetition, for instance, constitute two of the main educational strategies of traditional societies, and they continue their role in contemporary education. Similarly, as Snyder suggests with regard to the language arts, knowledge of contemporary practices is needed for survival both in the system and beyond it:

We can and must teach ... young people to master ... expected standard writing procedures, in preparation for the demands of multinational economies and of information overload. They will need these skills not only to advance in our postindustrial precollapse world, but also to critique and transform it. (“Language Goes Two Ways,” Snyder, 1995, p. 177)

This emphasis on critiquing the world brings again to mind Paolo Freire’s (2006) call in Pedagogy of the Oppressed for “problem-posing education” as a counterweight to the “banking system of education” that Freire criticizes for its assumption that children are to be the “depositories” of pre-conceived educational values. For Freire, “Problem-posing education is revolutionary futurity” that offers “a means of understanding more clearly what and who [students] are so that they can more wisely build the future” (2006, p. 84). What matters for Snyder, though, is the extent to which the educational practices used will express the “archaic values” that base spiritual being and political action in nature, or whether they will serve the dominant, environmentally destructive paradigm extant in modern society. It is in intentionality that the distinction comes. Education to transform consciousness already exists; education is the transformation of consciousness, though consciousness also exists “off the path,” outside of the educative processes per se. In fact, it is frequently in this “wild” realm of consciousness that meaningful learning occurs. The question is not whether consciousness will be transformed by education, but rather how it is to be transformed, and to what such transformation leads. As Snyder puts it, “If we actually [try] to teach the values of western civilization, [we’ll] just be peddling the ideology of individualism, of human uniqueness, special human dignity, the boundless potential of man, and the glory of success” (“Tawny Grammar,” 1990, p. 62).

Ego formation along the lines of the self-centered and human-centered use paradigms that play into the destructive pattern of “nature as resource” that is leading the world to the brink of environmental collapse is encouraged in contemporary educational strategies via an emphasis on “enlightened self interest” which simultaneously promotes self-centeredness and conformity. This tendency needs to have a counterpart and be penetrated by recognition of the intrinsic value of the (non) self. Adolescent resistance is largely a process of formation via establishment of identity as separate from others, even though so often it is expressed as a type of group identification. The reflection of ego development meets, in the “real work,” its counterweight, where faculties and experience balance against devolution or loss of the self in task or meditation. From this loss of centering in the self comes recognition of the need to transform the self-centered world while simultaneously acknowledging that the world is larger than the ego-
centered self of experience, though not perhaps the Self (with a capital S) that is so central to Hinduism and other religious perspectives, and that in Buddhism gets expressed as the void. Speaking of teaching in the arts, for instance, Snyder points out that “[t]he occidental approach to the arts—since the rise of the bourgeoisie, if we like—is to downplay the aspect of accomplishment and push everyone to be continually doing something new,” thus emphasizing individual creativity or “uniqueness” rather than, for example, development of a skill:

          [In modern society the] emphasis on mastering the tools, on repetitive practice and training, has become very slight. In a society that follows tradition, creativity is understood as something that comes almost by accident, is unpredictable, and is a gift to certain individuals only. It cannot be programmed into the curriculum. It is better in small quantities.... It takes a powerful impulse for a student-apprentice who has been told for eight or ten years to “always do what was done before,” as in the production tradition of folk pottery, to turn it a new way.... (“On the Past, Off the Trail,” Snyder, 1995, p. 147)

Creativity in this model becomes the moment of insight, the wandering “off the path” that affords the true experience of the new. Meanwhile the student in traditional societies had to put up with a teacher who “would test ... patience and fortitude endlessly,” and had no choice but to repeat, repeat, repeat until he “began to experience ... what it was to be ‘one with [his] work’” (Snyder, 1995, p. 146). This is a point of entry into “the real work,” in which the self is lost in the void of the act of creation via repetition. In modern societies, the emphasis on self and creativity as opposed to mastery underlies much education. By removing the accomplishment of the self from the center of education, one may start to move back to a vision of deep-ecological “ethical holism.” As Snyder puts it, “I try to hold both history and the wilderness in mind, that my poems may approach the true measure of things and stand against the unbalance and ignorance of our times” (qtd. in Felstiner, 2009, p. 352).

A further step in this movement away from ego-centered education toward “the common work of the tribe” can be seen in Snyder’s critique of the human-centered perspective that sees nature as a “social construction”—a shared cultural projection seen and shaped in the light of social values and priorities” (Snyder, 1999, p. 387). Just as ego-centered education might focus on self and creativity in a way that potentially blocks connection with the other, a human-centered perspective on nature can block recognition of the non-human other as a viable entity with its own self worth. Nature as a “social construction” in this sense too often leads to, while simultaneously feeding, “attacks on nature and wilderness from the ivory towers” that “bolster global developers” (Snyder, 1999, p. 388). This perspective thus connects directly to the now widely acknowledged impending environmental catastrophes of overpopulation, global warming, species loss, and so on. As an initial step in developing a countermeasure to these crises, Snyder calls for developing a fuller awareness of our intimate relation with the environment that should be sustained throughout school systems. For Snyder, this involves education in both the personal place one occupies and in the global environmental problem. He specifies that “Keeping ourselves grounded in our place is very important to us..... [Y]ou can’t work for nature, if you don’t know nature. If it’s just an abstraction then you can’t do it, anymore than you can work on behalf of this or that minority without ever having hung out with them” (Snyder, McCormick & Nancho, 1995). The solution Snyder proposes in this context is a fuller education in the scope of
the natural world, particularly this world as expressed in the immediate natural environment:

it’s only one of a number of educational strategies, but it’s an educational strategy that should be built into education. It should be built into elementary level education. Just as there should be a more much developed natural history and ecological teaching in elementary school. Just as there should also be, in elementary school up to high school, much better teaching about the monetary system and banking. All of those things are lacking in our basic education.... I’m calling for everybody to learn more, to actually learn more about the planet. And while you’re at it learn more about corporate economies.... [B]oth sides are really important.... (Snyder, McCormick & Nancho, 1995)

With regard to educational strategy, then, Snyder calls for further education concerning the natural world—not the natural world as “a realm of resources that has been handed over to humanity for its own use,” but rather the natural world as “a living place for beings who can survive in no other sort of habitat” (Snyder, 1999, p. 387-388). This “living place” is found everywhere, as nature surrounds us in all forms no matter what we do. We are “in nature” as soon as and even before we step outside. Such an education would aim to reduce ego-centered, humanly focussed pragmatics and encourage the recognition of non-human others as entities of equivalent though different validity.

In a time of increasing commodification of education, both as a private corporate structure and in its role as “outcomes centered” resource for the manufacture of workers and consumers, Snyder encourages the development of new perspectives that actually reflect the primal values of emergent humanity that have often been lost in civilization’s ongoing drive. Only when education takes fully into account our identity with, dependence upon, and full interaction with nature will it serve to point us back to the path of Dharma, the “general state of affairs” in nature as well as the “duty” or “social obligation” we hold in light of our relation to and existence within nature. These values return us to an ancient, systemic relation with the planet and with ourselves that essentially constitutes the “archaic values” that underlie human nature: “the fertility of the soil, the magic of animals, the power-vision in solitude, the terrifying initiation and rebirth, the love and ecstasy of the dance, the common work of the tribe.” The steps of practice, resistance, and acceptance in Snyder’s “real work” outline his own credo and lend veracity to educational strategies that might lead us back to a healing path we long since left.
References


Notes

1 Charles Molesworth, in his book *The Real Work* (1983), uses this phrase to describe Snyder’s “establishment of an alternative vision, especially a vision of the role of the poet” which ultimately aims to “[correct] the values of multinational capitalism” by pointing humanity back toward “a total process of nature to which the human species must submit” (p. 3, 9, 6). However, Snyder’s articulation of “the real work” also surpasses these political or artistic meanings. The “real work” for Snyder includes a comprehensive practice designed to maximize awareness at all levels—the mundane, the political, and the spiritual. It conveys patterns of intention or attention that link it with spiritual practice, with a resistance to preconditioned perceptions or understandings, and with ultimate *acceptance* of the First Noble Truth—that existence is suffering.

2 “The mercy of the West has been social revolution; the mercy of the East has been individual insight into the basic self/void. They are both contained in the traditional three aspects of the Dharma path: wisdom (*prajna*), meditation (*dhyana*), and morality (*sila*). Wisdom is intuitive knowledge of the mind of love and clarity that lies beneath one’s ego-driven anxieties and aggressions. Meditation is going into the mind to see this for yourself—over and over again, until it becomes the mind you live in. Morality is bringing it back out in the way you live, through personal example and responsible action, ultimately toward the true community (*sangha*) of ‘all beings’” (Snyder, 1969, p. 92).

3 For an in-depth discussion of practice as spiritual discipline in Snyder’s life and work, see Murphy, 1995, p. 97-110. Murphy links practice to process and describes Snyder’s evolving practice in relation to Dogen’s “Mountains and Waters Sutra.”

4 Cf. Snyder’s description of practice as “Meditation, devotion, dharma-studies, cause-and-effect studies, chopping wood and carrying water, and more meditation yet” (Ingram, Gates, Nisker & Snyder, 1988, p. 25).

5 From this perspective, one must recall the Zen Buddhist perception that “[e]arth, water, fire, wind, space and consciousness are the elements out of which everything is traditionally said to be composed” (my emphasis) (Hoshin, 1990, p. 67).

6 In this light it is interesting to view Snyder’s poem “T-2 Tanker Blues” (Snyder, 1965, p. 27-28) as an argument with Robinson Jeffers, a poet who provided an early significant impetus to Snyder’s own writing. In fact, Robert M. Torrance (1990) includes Jeffers as one of the “Western” poets that “[e]choes” in Snyder’s writings (p. 268). In “T-2 Tanker Blues” Snyder presents the typically Jeffersian perspective of “inhuman” nature and “man, inhuman man” and decides “I will not cry Inhuman & think that makes us small and nature great, we are, enough, and as we are.” Along with the philosophical argument, we see Snyder experimenting with Jeffers’s prosody, while also parodying it through interjections of personal catastrophe more appropriate to Allen Ginsberg’s style than to Jeffers’s.
Nanao Sakaki once said, “No need to survive”—just as we were bundling our leaflets and lacing our boots to do some ecological political excercises [sic]. Why this apparent paradox? Quite simple—it’s the same as Dogen’s instructions ‘Cast body away, cast mind away.’ The human world is brought to this pass by an all-too-effective survival consciousness, which breeds anthropocentrism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, parochial localism, and other assorted self-centered uselessly narrow notions of identity. Throwing away these narrow notions of membership helps us to join the mammal world, the vertebrate world, the world of all animals, the world of plants and lichens as well, the world of rocks, sand, clouds, and glaciers, the world of space, the world of emptiness” (Snyder & Woods, 1984, p. 201).
Are Unmotivated Students Cultural Critics?

Thomas Falk

Introduction

Every child born into the world should be looked upon by society as so much raw material to be manufactured. Its quality is to be tested. It is the business of society, as an intelligent economist, to make the best of it.

Lester Frank Ward, Education, circa 1872 (qtd. in Bowles & Gintis, 1977, p. 125)

One is far more likely to hear one’s child spoken of as ‘human capital’ than as a citizen in waiting. American public schools have become, above all, a vast, variegated system funneling this human capital into its final destination in the hierarchies of the undemocratic world of modern work.

Robert Westbrook (2005, p. 229)

Today, student motivation, or lack thereof, stands among the preeminent topics of educational research. Students could do well in school, but they are just not that into it. We have all known unmotivated and underachieving students, from the elementary school to the university, who are lazy and lacking in healthy work ethics. Perhaps these folks could benefit from a militaristic style education that compels them to develop better attitudes and habits. Others, however, may have good reason not to be motivated to achieve, and educators may do well to consider them as inarticulate cultural critics who reject the horizons of academic achievement handed to them by school and society (See McDermott, 1988).

As we so often hear from politicians, friends, and family members, the point of going to school is to get a good job. Higher degrees afford us greater opportunity and make our country more competitive in the global economy. In one sense, this folk wisdom is sapient. Since its earliest days in America, the schoolhouse has followed the factory. The link between school and work is historically tight and unseverable. Yet this relationship has not primarily served a public interest. By and large, schools have been funded, managed, and imposed by a financial elite upon a begrudging and frequently resistant working class.

Conceptually, I want to consider the unmotivated student in the mold of the modern cultural critic that arose in Europe during the early 19th century. Karl Marx (1818-1883) remains the most highly influential of those critics who gave articulation to the source and nature of the modern malaise. Marx can help us understand the role of the school in reproducing our larger political economy and within this context we can begin to see why it might make sense to call some students cultural critics.
Metaphysically, Marx understood the world to be composed not of “things,” but rather of processes and relationships, particularly in relation to the economic organization of society. Capitalism existed not just as an economy, but as an entire mode of associated living. Marx saw modern commercial society consisting in two primary and antagonistic roles: capital and labor. The capitalist invests money, land, or machinery into the production process while the laborer exercises her labor power to create something of value, namely commodities. But the motivations and rationales behind the two roles differ in one all-important way.

Capital’s chief motivation for entering into its relationship with labor is to turn a profit, to get more capital out of the labor process than was invested. And so, as a rule of logic, the capitalist must pay the laborer an amount lesser than the value of her work. This excess value produced by the laborer and accumulated by the capitalist is known as surplus value and is the fundamental source of capital growth (Harvey, 1982). By contrast, the laborer enters the production relation out of necessity. Having been dispossessed of her means of subsistence over the course of modern history, the laborer must sell the hours of her life and her capacity to work, the only commodities in her possession, to a boss in exchange for a wage. The will to live drives the laborer to work.

Industry, wrote Marx, functions first and foremost to generate profit for a capitalist. The satisfaction of human needs, therefore, can only ever be an incidental result of the capitalist production process. This is why our culture of material abundance operates according to a logic of scarcity and why farmers are paid to leave their fields fallow while neighbors starve. It is why the devastation of warfare is a “good” thing for those who produce weaponry and why big-box retailers cheer at the news of natural disaster (Cheng, 26 August 2011). Because labor toils to generate profit for a boss rather than to satisfy human need, it has surrendered its intrinsic interest in the work. Labor has become alienated.

However, as Marx wrote, the capitalist process does not depend on greedy and avaricious individuals. Market economies and the fierce intra-class competition between capitalists select for calculative attitudes that express themselves as greed and avarice (Muller, 2002, p. 240-241, 257, 263-271). The impersonal role of capitalist compels bosses to subjugate and exploit labor so as to generate as much profit as possible (Harvey, 1982).

Translated into a more contemporary metaphor, capitalism and its attendant social-economic roles are like software programs that run on the hardware of human beings and institutions. These programs assume material form through the course of our daily lives. The major challenge facing capital is how to get human beings—possessed of real emotions, hopes, and aspirations—to accept the role of labor and believe that their enslavement is freedom. In this task, our history shows, schools have served capital well.

**Schools for Slaves**

*The potential economic value of the Negro population properly educated is infinite and incalculable.... The Negro and the mule is the only combination so far to grow cotton; the South needs him; but the South needs him educated to be a suitable citizen. Properly directed he is the best possible laborer.... He will willingly fill the more menial positions,*
and do the heavy work, at less wages, than the American white man or any foreign race which has yet come to our shores.

William Baldwin, Rockefeller General Education Board President, 1899 (qtd. in Spivey, 1978, p. 93-94)

[F]or the American Negro, the last decade of the 19th and the first decade of the 20th centuries were more critical than the Reconstruction years of 1868 to 1876.... This was the age of triumph for big business, for industry, consolidated and organized on a world-wide scale, and run by white capital with colored labor. The Southern United States was one of the most promising fields for this development, with ... a mass of cheap and potentially efficient labor.

W.E.B. Du Bois (1968, p. 229)

American schools have developed in the image of our capitalist economy. Because a plutocracy has sufficiently dominated their resources and leadership, our schools have never truly been public institutions. Throughout the course of American history, significant developments in the schools have followed major changes in the structure and functioning of the capitalist economy. As unrest has grown among increasing numbers of workers forced into the wage market, schools have taken up the task of quelling that unrest and adjusting the working class to its fate.

For instance, wealthy industrialists imposed schooling upon former slaves in the postbellum South for the explicit purpose of reproducing, as closely as possible, the economic conditions of slavery. Subsequently, this same ethos underlay the design, imposition, and management of schools throughout North America. Summarily, the school’s historical role has been the reproduction of our socioeconomic class structure within the lives of students. Analysis of this role should force us to radically reconsider the way we understand “public” and “democratic” education.

The way in which William Baldwin referred to the Negro as a “citizen” in the above quotation resonates eerily with the words of Presidents and political leaders of the past several decades. None mentions civics, politics, or even wisdom as criteria. Instead citizenship appears equated to laboring for a low wage and serving the interests of an employer.

To the Southern plantation owner, the slave was a beast of burden, a not-fully-human thing. This did not change suddenly following Emancipation and the Civil War. White industrialists continued to see the African American—and all other Americans—as resources to be exploited in the pursuit of capital growth and accumulation. However, the former-slaves’ labor power now had to be harnessed without the aid of the leg iron and the lash. Instead mental shackles would have to be formed. This was the principal end to which schools in the South were designed and to which many schools all over the country were eventually put.

As in the North, schools for former slaves were endowed with three principal ambitions: inculcation of the proletarian work ethic, stabilization of the social order, and material uplift of black folk. Samuel Chapman Armstrong, an officer in the Union Army and son of missionaries to Hawaii, founded the Hampton Institute, the principal educational institution for former slaves, in Virginia in 1868. It is important to note that Armstrong, also the Institute’s first principal,
understood blacks to be an inferior race, unsuited for robust citizenship. Their potential contribution to society remained limited, as he saw it, to the performance of menial labor.

Thus the Hampton Institute sought to train African-Americans in subservience, political quietude, and industry (Spivey, 1978, p. 3-9). (Mis)educated in this way, the former slaves’ labor power could be harnessed and their threat to social stability mitigated. Hampton sold and leased black men to Northern businesses as day laborers and strikebreakers. The school’s newspaper, Southern Workman, featured propaganda extolling the virtues of hard work while demonizing organized labor and black intellectualism (Spivey, 1978, p. 20, 26). Students learned “respect for law” and “proper regard for authority” (p. 27). They were dissuaded from voting and told that Jesus and God are white (p. 30-31). “If Negroes don’t get any better education than Armstrong is giving them,” remarked William Davis, an emancipated Virginian, “they may as well have stayed in slavery” (qtd. in Spivey, 1978, p. 36).

Nevertheless, Armstrong’s star pupil, Booker T. Washington, shined in this environment and brought the Hampton ethos with him to the Tuskegee Institute. At the turn of the 20th century, Washington became the first African-American to visit the White House with an invitation from President Teddy Roosevelt. Rockefeller and J. P. Morgan kept him in regular social company. By awarding Washington a guaranteed lifetime income, Andrew Carnegie laid claim to the icon that legitimized capital’s exploitation of black labor in America (Spivey, 1978, p. 94).

Like his mentor, Armstrong, Washington decried the academic mission of Northern black colleges such as Howard, Fisk, and Wilberforce. He hoped that whites would simply leave blacks alone in their humble quietude. Washington implored African Americans to mind the color line by refraining from politics and intellectualism. Thus we find him expounding the same peculiar notion of Negro citizenship as William Baldwin. The greatest contribution the African American could make to society, according to Washington, was economic production. As McWilliams (21 February 21 2005) put it, Washington believed that the profit motive moved America. Within such a society, black people’s exploitability could serve as their greatest source of strength. African-Americans and Caucasians, he thought, would do best to maintain separate, peaceful lives and cultures, only meeting and interacting impersonally within the commercial sphere.

Surveys of Tuskegee described a militaristic and harshly disciplinarian institution. Unwarranted searches and seizures of students and their belongings constituted regular parts of daily life and official policy. Many students rebelled, going so far as to call Washington a “slave-master.” W. T. B. Williams, with the General Board of Education, found that many students could hardly read or write (Spivey, 1978, p. 53-60). Perhaps exactly for this reason, both Northern and Southern industrialists deeply appreciated the Tuskegee students. After all, as white Southern spokesman William Trent said in regard to black students, “a little learning is a dangerous thing” (qtd. in Spivey, 1978, p. 86).

By the late 19th century, American industry, North and South, was swimming in excess capital and on the lookout for new sources of labor to exploit. A host of wealthy tycoons and magnates, including George Peabody, John Rockefeller, and Andrew Carnegie, found Tuskegee to be an indispensable source of docile, compliant, and zealous workers unlikely to strike or unionize.
Together with organizations such as the Southern Improvement Company, these men poured vast sums of money into building up an educational Southern infrastructure according to the Hampton and Tuskegee models (p. 99-101).

These same logics and rationales drove the creation and reform of schools in the North. In most cases, wealthy industrialists supported, funded, and directed the institutionalization of compulsory education. Naturally, members of the working class saw merit in schools. However, they resented the fact that they could exercise little if any control or oversight. The schools’ organization and leadership remained far from democratic as neither teachers, nor students, nor community members exercised substantial say regarding their daily operations or ultimate purposes.

W. E. B. Du Bois understood how Hampton, Tuskegee, and Booker T. Washington fit into the larger capitalist economy, treating both students and teachers as objects to be exploited. No people, Du Bois argued, could ever achieve their full potential by accepting the social role of economic resource. Democratic citizenship could not be reconciled with bald commercialism. Not just blacks, but all colors and nationalities of people, needed “the broader, deeper, higher culture of gifted minds and pure hearts,” he wrote in The Souls of Black Folk, first published in 1903. “[E]lse what shall save us from a second slavery?” (Du Bois, 2005, p. 19, 14).

“The Education Frontier”

The people have the power, and if they are not instructed to sympathize with the intelligent, reading, trading, and governing class, inspired with a taste for the same competitions and prizes, they will upset the fair pageant of Judicature, and perhaps lay a hand on the sacred muniments of wealth itself, and new distribute the land.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (9 December 1841)

I do not know any school system in the United States which is run for the benefit of the children. They are all run for the benefit of the gang.

John Tildsey, New York City Schools Superintendent (qtd. in Sinclair, 1922, p. ix)

19th-century capitalists in Europe, Canada, and America found schooling to be an effective and efficient means for equipping young persons with the habits and mentalities appropriate to the work of industrial labor, meanwhile disrupting the transmission and maintenance of the laboring class’ traditional artisanal and craft skills. In school, students learned the compliance and obedience required within modern hierarchical structures of authority; literacy fitted them with the technological capacity to adapt to the changing demands of industrial machinery (Graff, 1991). Often members of the laboring class recognized this and therefore resisted schooling fiercely (Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 171).

In order to understand contemporary American education through the Marxian lens, we must look to economic relationships at all levels. How are individual teachers, students, and university faculty connected to and through capital? The Common School of the 19th century is best understood as a political and intellectual cousin to the Hampton and Tuskegee schools. Both terms “public” and “democratic,” when used to describe American schools, are misnomers.
Rather than public and/or democratic control we frequently find domination by a ruling capitalist class combined with begrudging working-class acceptance of schooling as a least-worst alternative. Progressive Era reforms re-shaped schools to fit the needs of capital, namely by adjusting a disgruntled and growing class of wageworkers to the miserable realities of the new economy.

Early America entertained competing visions of the Common School, namely two different conceptions of what folks wanted education to be and do for them. After examining the political-economic effects of the Common School during the First American Republic, I argue that the Progressive Era reforms of American schools represented a capitalist strategy for quelling the rising militancy of a growing wage labor class. Hence the early-20th century became the era of the educational frontier, where capitalist mythology cast the school as proving grounds of the meritocracy and avenue to the American Dream.

During the First Republic we find two alternative visions of the Common School. First and foremost, wealthy industrialists appreciated the schools’ inculcation of bourgeois-liberal ideology, by which I mean a constellation of attitudes, understandings, and habits of mind conducive to the smooth functioning of the capitalist political economy. In The Literacy Myth (1991), Ohio State University professor Harvey Graff explains that the extension of literacy to the public, through schools, as a means of personal uplift and empowerment, is an apocryphal, although common, conception. Despite their support and endowment of schools, members of the ruling class feared literacy as a potentially subversive tool. Yet it was necessary for the large-scale extension of a moral economy of discipline, docility, and individualistic ambition (Graff, 1991, p. 26-28). Graff (p. 232-233) writes:

In North America, education could replace the coercion of English labor to strict factory rules and internalized self-discipline. In the long run, education was more effective and efficient than overt coercion; certainly, it was less disruptive. The provision of mass schooling; the working class’ acceptance of it, though a questioning one; and universal, public education all served this direction: promoting discipline, morality, and the ‘training in being trained’ that mattered most in the creation and preparation of a modern industrial and urban work force. These were the purposes of the school—and one use of literacy.

Essentially, schooling made for the efficient adjustment of traditional and peasant peoples to proletarian wagedom.

During the Middle Ages, poor peasants could understand severe inequality as part of God’s divine plan. But in a modern world lacking such a cosmology, what would defend the aristocrat’s hoarded riches from the masses? During the mid-19th century, the American ruling class discovered that mass schooling could invest students with the appropriate ideology, including a sense of naturalness and properness regarding the uneven distribution of wealth and lifestyle. In other words, schooling habituated the children of the working class to the rules, roles, and structures of capitalism. Thomas Cooper stated the same in his Lectures on Elements of Political Economy (1826):
Education universally extended throughout the community will tend to disabuse the working class of people in respect of a notion that has crept into the minds of our mechanics and is gradually prevailing, that manual labor is at present very inadequately rewarded, owing to combinations of the rich against the poor; that mere mental labor is comparatively worthless; that property or wealth ought not be accumulated or transmitted; that to take interest on money lent or profit on capital employed is unjust.... The mistaken and ignorant people who entertain these fallacies as truths will learn, when they have the opportunity of learning, that the institution of political society originated in the protection of property. (Qtd. in Bowles & Gintis, 1977, p. 178)

An adherent to Hobbesian political economy, Cooper had no use for notions of class warfare and sought explicitly to stamp such notions out from the minds of working-class children.

Addressing the Massachusetts Board of Education in 1842, Horace Mann quoted local industrialist H. Bartlett: “The great majority always have been and probably always will be comparatively poor, while a few will possess the greatest share of this world’s goods” (qtd. in Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 100-101). Speaking to a capitalist audience in 1844, Mann spoke plainly of schools as purveyors of ruling-class hegemony:

Finally, in regard to those who possess the largest shares in the stock of worldly goods, could there, in your opinion, be any police so vigilant and effective, for the protection of all the rights of person, property and character, as such a sound and comprehensive education and training as our system of common schools could be made to impart.... Would not the payment of a sufficient tax to make such training universal, be the cheapest means of self-protection and insurance? (Qtd. in Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 100-101)

Such overtures contrasted sharply with the logic and appeal Mann presented to Massachusetts’s working class.

In the second vision of the Common School, members of the working class remained divided in their support. Many resisted schooling as an imposition upon their way of life and regarded the schools’ capitalist purveyors more as invading conquerors than as members of their communities. Others appreciated the schools’ effect of thinning out the labor pool by removing children from the workforce and driving up wages. Many placed their hopes in Mann’s rhetoric of social advancement through education.

The first half of the 19th century saw a widespread and unprecedented shift from small proprietorship to wage work, particularly in Northeastern industrial towns. The Common School shift in social relations of reproduction, from mixed-age to age-graded groupings, mirrored the concomitant shift in relations of material production from the home and independent shop to the factory. That is, the social relations of schooling came to mirror less the home and more the corporation. As large-scale factories pushed independent proprietors out of the marketplace, folks were left with few choices but to willingly enlist as wageworkers. Within this new economic structure, schooling came to appear to the working class as the last viable means of social advance.
According to the socio-economic cosmology of antebellum America, wagedom constituted a temporary stage to be endured and surpassed on the road to economic independence. Perhaps this is what Horace Mann believed. On his tours throughout New England, he preached a rhetoric of upward mobility to his working-class audiences. The school, he told them, would prevent the hardening of class lines as well as “the domination of capital and the servility of labor” (qtd. in Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 103). Most famously, in his Twelfth Annual Report to the Massachusetts School Board, he stated that “Education … beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men—the balance wheel of the social machinery” (qtd. in Urban & Wagoner, 2004, p. 103). By working hard and proving their merit in school, individuals could escape wagedom and join the owning class. This hope proved a savory tonic for the dispossessed people of New England who lacked alternative paths to redemption.

The mercurial Horace Mann sold the Common School to both the wealthy and working classes: for the latter as an institution of social uplift and for the former to secure private property and promote social stability by quelling inter-class hostility. Most historians agree that Mann was a conservative in the traditional sense, wanting to preserve the social structure in which he had grown up and believing in the Common School as a force for stability (Urban & Wagoner, 2004; Bowles & Gintis, 1977; Westbrook, 2005). Yet there are two ways in which we are forced to conclude that Mann’s overtures to the working class were disingenuous.

First, belief in social mobility as a legitimate possibility for most Americans was already becoming untenable in his time; it simply did not match up with the empirical facts. Second, and most glaringly, he had to know that the capitalist class would ultimately control and shape the schools. The working class was neither wealthy nor politically powerful enough to exert much influence over the aims, purposes, and conduct of schooling. For example, during its first three decades, 85 percent of Lowell, Massachusetts school board members hailed from the business and professional class; less than five percent came from the working class (Bowles & Gintis, 1977, p. 163). It requires a tremendous acrobatics of mind to believe that Mann truly expected the Common School to promote social and economic democracy.

Although farmers and immigrants did not oppose schooling in principle, they wanted the self-determination to control their own schools. In Beverly, Massachusetts, in the year 1860, more than three-quarters of the town’s working population voted against establishing a school. These were once-independent shoemakers who had been forced out of the marketplace by and into large textile factories (Bowles & Gintis, 1977, p. 155-156). The transition from independent proprietorship to proletarian wage work wrought devastating effects upon the quality of their lives, robbing them of control over production schedules and the daily rhythms of work. By resisting school, they sought to protect their children from an institution understood to be aligned with the designs of their employing masters.

When Irish immigrants of Lowell boycotted the schools, the State hired truant officers to forcibly bring children in and arrest recalcitrant parents. Similar developments repeated across the state (Bowles & Gintis, 1977, p. 164). Populist revolts slowed down the establishment of schools in Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas, Alabama, North Carolina, and the Dakotas; but resistance
inevitably gave way. In areas of the country where wage labor had not yet taken hold, few saw reasons for building schools. Yet wherever factories grew up and men and women entered the ranks of wagedom, schools soon followed (p. 176-177).

Writing from the Regina Coeli prison in Rome during the 1920’s, Antonio Gramsci argued that no regime, no matter how authoritarian, could long sustain itself through overt coercion and violence. It is necessary, he believed, that popular support and legitimacy be contained in a system of values, attitudes, beliefs, and morals that pervades society as a natural order (Burke, 2005). Nothing about schools implicates them as necessarily coercive. Yet, as a State institution, the school may become just as coercive as judicial, police, or military forces.

During the Progressive Era, as corporate capitalism eclipsed the older, small-scale competitive economy, professional administrators and businessmen liquidated nearly all that remained of working-class representation on urban school boards (Carnoy, 1972, p. 3). In reaction to growing populist revolt against the swelling prevalence of wage work and the increasingly clear rigidity of class divisions, Progressive school reforms sought again to reduce social tension by adjusting the proletariat to its fate. Here the mission of the school grew in scope and magnitude to become an indispensable and permanent division of labor in the reproduction of the larger political economy. Responding to massive labor strikes across the country, capitalists restored order by calling in strikebreakers, Pinkerton thugs, and the National Guard to beat, shoot, and murder workers. But industrialists such as Carnegie believed that the true solution to the unrest lay in “education, education, education” (Bowles & Gintis, 1977, p. 18).

At the time of the American Revolution, 80 percent of non-slave adult males remained independent property owners and proprietors. That number fell to 33 percent by 1880 (Bowles & Gintis, 1977, p. 59). During the decade just prior to the turn of the 20th century it had become apparent that wagedom was a lasting and even permanent condition for most Americans. From that point on, very few ever graduated to the ranks of independent proprietorship. Men and women had to accept competing against each other within corporations rather than competing against the corporations themselves. Once again, school appeared to the working class as the last viable means for improving one’s competitive chances.

Revolving Doors and Dirty Pipelines

*[S]chools have evolved in the United States not as a pursuit of equality, but rather to meet the needs of capitalist employers for a disciplined and skilled labor force, and to provide a mechanism for social control in the interests of political stability.... Although the unequal distribution of political power serves to maintain inequalities in education, the origins of these inequalities are to be found outside the political sphere, in the class structure itself and in the class subcultures typical of capitalist societies. Thus, unequal education has its roots in the very class structure which it serves to legitimize and reproduce. Inequalities in education are part of the web of capitalist society, and are likely to persist as long as capitalism survives.*

*Samuel Bowles (1972, p. 36-37)*
In our country’s educational system the capitalist class now walks through a revolving door between high positions in the private and governmental sectors. Meanwhile a vastly increasing number of our poorest students, from the ages of five and six, are sent down the school-to-prison pipeline. Just as they did a century ago, today’s plutocrats dominate American schools, making decisions as to how they will function, what will be taught, and which aims will be pursued. Educators must struggle against the institutionalized logic of capital that sees students as beasts of burden, resources to be exploited for the purpose of capital growth and accumulation. To the great extent that schooling succeeds in reproducing a stratified economic class structure and the constitution of human persons suited to its roles, democratic citizenship will be precluded as an aim of American education.

Writing in *Dissent* magazine, Joanne Barkan (Winter 2011) describes a contemporary plutocratic dominance of schools, a multi-billionaire triumvirate of capitalists—including Bill Gates, the Walton family, and Eli Broad—as the tail that wags the dog of American education. Through their foundations this tiny cabal of plunderers has strategically pushed privatization, choice, accountability, competition, deregulation, merit pay, and high-stakes testing down the throats of our nation’s teachers and students. Through their ownership of national media, they have shaped public dialogue and sold their designs to the American people. Rather than improving education, their programs have tyrannized our most promising teachers and terrorized a generation of the doomed.

Public schooling is a half-trillion dollar annual venture in America. As of 2010, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, backed by a matching donation from Warren Buffett, boasted a $63 billion endowment. Together with the multi-billion dollar endowments of the Eli & Edy Broad Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation, Gates directs public policy and shapes the composition of the educational workforce. For instance, at the Broad Superintendents Academy, pliable business and legal executives are recruited and trained to implement the Foundation’s agenda into urban school districts. In 2009, with the help of Broad’s supple political and financial connections, the academy’s graduates filled a stunning 43 percent of all open superintendencies across the nation’s large urban school districts (Barkan, Winter 2011). As an example of what the plutocracy has in store, we can look to the Chicago Public Schools’ Renaissance2010 project, also known as Ren2010.

In 1995 the Gates Foundation gave Chicago Public Schools Chief Executive Officer Arne Duncan $90 million to turn the failing institution around. Duncan had been installed with the help of the Commercial Club of Chicago (CCC), an organization of the city’s top financial, corporate, and political elites. Along with the money, Gates gave Duncan a how-to manual titled *The Turnaround Challenge*, which laid out a path toward raising educational achievement through choice, accountability, high-stakes testing, and privatization. According to Chicago residents, Ren2010 put tremendous pressure on schools to achieve academic goals for which they lacked the necessary resources (Lipman & Haines, July 2007, p. 490). School failure, with the legal consequence of privatization, was assured from the start. Under the benevolent guise of “saving the children,” education, the process of constituting young human beings, was wrested from public oversight and handed to the forces of the market.
Respectively professors at the University of Illinois at Chicago and DePaul University, Pauline Lipman and Nathan Haines (Lipman & Haines, July 2007, p. 490) write that Ren2010 constituted only one division of a larger plan to convert the city into a more efficient engine of capital growth. For 25 years, Chicago’s working-class residents had been foreclosed upon and forced out of the city in order to make room for upscale residential and commercial space (p. 485-493). This gentrification process began, reports Chicago resident and investment banking heir Karl Muth, by building police stations in the neighborhoods, tearing out basketball courts, and closing down the public schools (Johnson, 2006). The now-privatized schools existing on the margins of this gentrified space are currently training the children of the poor and working class in the basic, low-grade skills appropriate to the space’s low-paying service sector jobs. Effectively, the Gates Foundation, the CCC, and Arne Duncan have created a network of collection bins for Chicago’s economic refuse to be recycled into useful, low-wage servants of capital.

Promptly after President Barack Obama nominated him as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, Duncan created the position of Director of Philanthropic Engagement, making private foundation partnerships the hallmark of his DOE stewardship. “[T]he Department is ‘open for business,’” he announced in an October, 2009 issue of the DOE newsletter, The Education Innovator. But Duncan is by no means the lone Black Hand affiliate occupying top positions in the DOE. Margot Rogers, Duncan’s first chief of staff, worked for Gates, as did her replacement, Joanne Weiss. Russlynn Ali, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, is a former employee of both Broad and Gates. General Counsel Charles Rose and Assistant Deputy Secretary for Innovation and Improvement James Shelton both worked for Gates. Even Larry Summers, former Treasury Secretary and President of Harvard University, sat on the Broad Foundation’s board of directors. Collectively, this team designed the Obama administration’s Race to the Top program according to the philosophy of Gates’s Turnaround Challenge, which Duncan hails as “the bible” of school restructuring.

It is impossible to separate government from corporate entities in the realm of American schooling. On the cover of its December 2008 issue, Time magazine featured Michelle Rhee, then Chancellor of Washington, D.C. Schools, standing in a classroom holding a broom. Next to her was written in big bold letters: “How To Fix America’s Schools.” Rhee attempted to implement in the nation’s capital a $63-million Gates-funded strategy of high-stakes testing, accountability, and school closing, earning her the ire of teachers’ unions across the country. Although there is little evidence for educational improvement, investigations have discovered massive patterns of teachers cheating on standardized tests: erasing wrong answers and filling in the correct ones, ostensibly in desperate efforts to keep their jobs so that they might continue to bring in paychecks and feed their families (Gillam & Bello, 30 March 2011). Poverty rates are staggering in Washington, D.C. and paying jobs are tough to come by. Yet public support for these misbegotten school reform initiatives remains strong.

Examples of media propaganda such as the Time magazine cover work astonishingly well at convincing audiences of their message. Rhee, in an uncomplicated and empowering image, is fixing the crisis in education by sweeping away the garbage, the stupid and lazy teachers. Our plutocracy also contributes millions to most major national education organizations as well as news and media outlets. In 2010 it sponsored NBC’s “Education Nation” as well as the renowned propaganda film Waiting for Superman (Chilcott, 2010). Both of these programs

In addition to the major educational foundations, Coca-Cola, McDonald’s, Exxon, and Hershey dump enormous funding into cash-strapped schools. But the money does not come unattached. In exchange, schools must conduct lessons provided by the Hershey Corporation about the importance of chocolate in a balanced diet. Teachers in business classes must instruct students in how to apply for and manage a McDonald’s franchise. McDonald’s-sponsored physical education programs conducted in 31 thousand schools nationwide instantiate brand loyalty into developing citizen-consumers. Elsewhere, teachers must conduct an environmental curriculum from Shell Oil extolling the virtues of the external combustion engine (Farahmandpur, 2010, p. 63-64).

Students of America’s underfunded schools make easy prey for the corporatocracy in the same way that impoverished children of the world make easy prey for sex traffickers. The moneyed interests in this relationship know that their beneficiaries are desperate and effectively hostage. Reflecting on these types of “educational” programs, Charles Sullivan writes:

> Of course it is not in the self-interest of capitalism to educate people who can see capitalism for what it is, to think critically about it, and perhaps even do something to change it. Corporate education exists to promote programming consumers and providing an obedient workforce to an unfair slave wage system, not to provide society with a well-informed and politically active citizenry. In fact these are the things that pose the greatest threat to America’s corporate oligarchy. (Qtd. in Farahmandpur, 2010, p. 65).

The problem with private organizations taking charge of our schools, whether for-profit or philanthropic, is that they allow for little democratic oversight or control. People far removed from students and classrooms impose their decisions upon educators with impunity. In districts where constituents are not vigilantly engaged in their children’s education, the logic of capital wreaks soul-crushing havoc.

It is ironic, writes Jonathan Kozol, that wherever you find a school named after a Civil Rights leader—Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, or Thurgood Marshall, for example—it will almost uniformly be as segregated as schools of the 1950’s. Newer and equally segregated schools carry names such as Academy of Enterprise and Corporate Academy. These “industry-imbedded” schools funnel poor students into low-paying jobs. In Columbus, Ohio, for example, young students are asked to choose their careers while sitting inside classroom walls lined with posters from JC Penny, Wal-Mart, Kmart, and Sears. Company-scripted lesson plans compel students to act out the roles of cashier and manager. “I’m in the business of developing minds to meet a market demand,” states one Chicago school principal whose school’s contract with its curriculum design company stipulates that agents will visit and police classrooms to ensure teachers stick to their scripts, a practice eerily reminiscent of the Soviet schools under Stalin (Kozol, 2005, p. 89-103).
Kozol describes Taylorism and Skinnerian behavioral modification pedagogies dominating impoverished and heavily segregated classrooms. “Do exactly what I say, when I say it, and you’ll get it right. Otherwise, you’ll get it wrong,” one teacher told her fourth-grade students at one of these privately-run schools in New York City (Kozol, 2005, p. 64). There and elsewhere Kozol observed direct-command, rote-and-drill pedagogies featuring the terminology of business and commerce. Students spent hours forming and standing in lines before enduring silent lunches and recesses. One principal, Mr. Endicott, referred to his school’s curriculum as “horrific for the teachers and boring for the children … an intellectual straight jacket” (Kozol, 2005, p. 89). Here, where parents are not highly involved and education is turned over to the profit motive, teachers become stifled by rigidly prescribed standards and curricula; their students receive an education suitable for a life of poverty in the dregs of the economy.

Rania Khalek reports that at the same time more students than ever are being suspended, expelled, and even sent from school to prison as a result of zero-tolerance policies adopted by 80 percent of the nation’s schools during the 1990’s. High school freshmen have been convicted of felonious assault for stealing lunch money from classmates. Police are arresting and interrogating students for writing on their desks and handcuffing kindergartners who throw tantrums (Khalek, 8 August 2011). According to Chris McGreal of the Guardian, during the 2010 school year police in the state of Texas handed out close to 300 thousand “Class C misdemeanor” tickets to children as young as six, which involved fines, community service, and even prison sentences for “crimes” as innocuous as “disrupting class” or throwing paper airplanes (McGreal, 9 January 2012).

Increasingly, police officers conduct regular patrols of schools armed with pepper spray, handcuffs, and handguns (Khalek, 21 December 2011). Although it is not the only state to do so, the number of school districts in Texas with their own police departments has risen more than 20-fold since 2001 (McGreal, 9 January 2012). There, police are disproportionately confronting, detaining, tasering, and arresting poor, disabled, and minority students of color. Statistics show that school punishment correlates to later involvement with the criminal justice system (Khalek, 8 August 2011). As young children are branded “troublemakers,” they find themselves increasingly targeted for “correction” by State institutions. Texas supreme court chief justice Wallace Jefferson warns that “[c]harging kids with criminal offenses for low-level behavioral issues” is likely driving many of them into a life of imprisonment (McGreal, 9 January 2012). Across the country, students are growing accustomed to penal-colony-style regimes of surveillance, discipline, and punishment. Many of those who do not grow up to serve their purposes as JC Penny cashiers or Wal-Mart shelf-stockers will end up in the nation’s sprawling prison labor camps.

In fact, the prostitution of prisoner-laborers is now a multi-billion dollar industry in most U.S. states. According to the Wall Street Journal, 37 states currently allow corporations to pay prison laborers between one and five dollars per day, while federal prisons pay 25 cents to $1.25 per hour (Silver-Greenberg, 2011). These prisoners are not just making license plates anymore. They operate call-centers for cable companies and take reservations for American Airlines. The list of major corporations employing prisoners includes IBM, Boeing, Motorola, Microsoft, AT&T Wireless, Texas Instruments, Dell, Compaq, Honeywell, Hewlett-Packard, Nortel, Lucent
Technologies, 3Com, Intel, Northern Telecom, Nordstrom’s, Revlon, Macy’s, Target, and others. Altogether, the prison-industrial complex now employs close to one million full-time workers and generates $2.4 billion in annual revenue (Khalek, 21 July 2011).

**Unmotivated to Achieve**

Faced with the unsatisfactory and indeed politically motivated paradigms of explanation that have been insinuated into the mental fiber of modern capitalist society ... what counterstrategy is available for the illumination of reality that does not in some subtle way replicate its ruling ideas, its dominant passions, and its enchantment of itself? As I see it, this question is both necessary and utopian. It is essential to pose the challenge, but it is utopian to believe that we can imagine our way out of our culture without acting on it in practical ways that alter its social infrastructure. For this reason, what I call negative criticism is all that is possible, apt, and demanded at the intellectual level.

*Michael Taussig (1980, p. 7)*

According to the anthropologist David Harvey, capital exercises its power over labor at the level of ideas. Particularly, the Enlightenment conception of the human being as an individual, self-sufficient, pre-social entity prevents members of the laboring class from recognizing their mutual interests in relation to capital (Harvey, 5 July 2009). For example, many of the families and individuals detrimentally impacted by the recent financial crisis, who have lost homes and jobs, blame only themselves and their own private lack of ability, intelligence, or hard work. This incapacity to recognize larger patterns and structures represents a major conceptual and educational crisis. As long as workers continue to fight for their own private piece of the pie, we will forever remain impotent before capital’s immense power.

A Marxist interpretation of these ideas might argue that current educational policy constructs academic achievement as a private and individual attainment, all to the detriment of the laboring class. Standardized tests, now almost universally accepted as the ultimate measure of academic achievement, trace their intellectual history to early-20th century educational psychologists such as David Snedden and Edward Thorndike. Under the authority of science, Thorndike promised educators the capacity to accurately measure and scale the quality and contents of individual minds. Intelligence tests, crafted to produce a distribution of outcomes, provided a model for conceiving learning as a private, cognitive act. Because of its reincarnation as “achievement” and “proficiency tests” in our schools today, academic failure remains for many a pre-determined institutional outcome yet continues to be misunderstood as a result of private ineptitudes and pathologies on the part of individual students and teachers. More complex and systemic factors remain largely insensible.

Research suggests that this current model for learning disproportionately impinges upon the students and teachers of poor and minority schools. Michelle Fine, of the City University of New York, has written that the institutional rhetoric of academic achievement within many poor and urban schools serves to unduly privatize and psychologize what in reality are complex and systematic social problems (Fine, February 1987). Analogous to Fine’s description, the failure of Chicago Public Schools under the auspices of *Ren2010* has officially been blamed not on resource deficiencies, but on the ineptitudes of individual students, teachers, parents, and
communities. Furthermore, she reports, the tremendous legal and political pressure placed on poor urban schools to score well on standardized tests forces them to exclude from the curriculum the problems and concerns of students’ daily lives, whether these be gangs, poverty, sports or poetry. Fine’s research uncovers on a local scale what has been a widespread effect of national policy on urban education: a wholesale exclusion of the vital, social worlds of students from the territory of knowledge and learning. Rather than assisting students in developing a more sophisticated understanding of the world and their relation to it, the rhetoric of “academic achievement” confines knowledge and learning to a commodified set of skills and information understood to be located within the private, individual mind.

Our contemporary insistence upon academic achievement ignores the school’s historical and ongoing involvement in the class war between capital and labor. Thus, we might do well to take some unmotivated and underachieving students as serious individuals who reject the horizons of achievement handed to them by their school and society, and as cultural critics who only lack the more sophisticated powers of articulation wielded by great writers (McDermott, 1988). Some students “act out” in school because they lack the language with which to give expression to their malaise. Others speak with profound articulateness.

It is almost a normative practice in American culture for a child to answer “nothing” to the parent’s question, “What did you learn in school today?” Consider that this is a learned behavior, something that a child must learn as an appropriate answer to the question. How would a child learn this? Undoubtedly it is learned from the parents who return home from work every day tired, defeated, and with nothing interesting to report. Children pick up on the fact that most of the jobs in our economy are depressingly dull and monotonous. They understand that the hours between 9am and 5pm are the hours when the spirit dies. Moreover, they sense that their schooling is preparing them to enter this soul-crushing workaday world.

Standing on the steps of U.C. Berkeley’s Sproul Hall in December of 1964, Mario Savio pronounced to the gathered crowd:

We have an autocracy which runs this university. It's managed. We asked the following: if President Kerr actually tried to get something more liberal out of the Regents in his telephone conversation, why didn't he make some public statement to that effect? And the answer we received—from a well-meaning liberal—was the following: He said, ‘Would you ever imagine the manager of a firm making a statement publicly in opposition to his board of directors?’ That's the answer! Now, I ask you to consider: if this is a firm, and if the Board of Regents are the board of directors, and if President Kerr in fact is the manager, then I'll tell you something: the faculty are a bunch of employees, and we're the raw material! But we're a bunch of raw material that don't mean to have any process upon us, don't mean to be made into any product, don't mean to end up being bought by some clients of the University, be they the government, be they industry, be they organized labor, be they anyone! We're human beings!

[Wild applause from the crowd.]
There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part; you can't even passively take part, and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop. And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all! (Savio, 4 December 1964)

Savio saw himself and his classmates as cogs in an academic-industrial machine. He attended a prestigious university where the next generation of America’s corporate bosses would earn their credentials. But Mario and others wanted no part in this. Instead they sought the sort of education that could help them understand and challenge the cruel stupidity of their world.

**Conclusion**

*The clash of cultures in the classroom is essentially a class war, a socio-economic and racial warfare being waged on the battleground of the schools.... [T]his is an uneven balance, particularly since, like most battles, it comes under the guise of righteousness.*

Kenneth Clark (1965, p. 129)

Particularly in the decades since the Reagan Revolution, education has been understood in our culture as an individualistic means of getting ahead in life. Gone are the sober hopes that schools, colleges, and universities might play anything but a redundant role in the struggle for social and economic justice. Saddled with unprecedented levels of student debt, today’s graduates will be among the last to challenge the power of their capitalist overlords by striking in demand for better wages and working conditions. As for schoolteachers, success has become more than ever defined by the ability to meet goals set by corporate and government entities such as the Gates triumvirate with its strong ties to the Department of Education. Also, for university faculty, a successful career is increasingly defined by one’s ability to draw government, corporate, and hybrid corporate-government funding. Marxists might remind us that along with that money and therefore along with our success, we as professional educators become invested with the aims and purposes of our donors. Faculty in colleges and departments of education would do well to ask themselves whether their research contributes in any way to the maligned rhetoric of academic achievement and to the treatment of students as means to the end of capital accumulation.

Regarding students, let me restate that many unmotivated and underachieving students might simply be lazy and lacking in healthy work ethics. These students could perhaps stand to benefit—they themselves as well as others—from a militaristic, behavioral-modification style intervention that compels them to develop better habits and mentalities. However, others may have good reason not to be motivated to achieve in school. They may sense that their education has suspiciously little to do with their vital concerns and interests or that as students they are treated as a means to some grim and uncertain end. Nonetheless we cannot call these students cultural critics when their criticisms remain inarticulate.

There are limits to Marxism; synoptic theories-of-everything necessarily distort the world and delude their adherents. Yet Marx, alongside many other critics, gives us a language with which
to communicate and make sense of the otherwise insensible. I submit that a most worthy aim of education, one with pragmatic and even cash value, is to assist students in the work of understanding the world and their place within it. This work is essentially the work of articulation, of putting the world to language. Indispensably, this requires educators to take into account the native sensibilities and intimations of the young, to consider that some unmotivated students may prove to be our best resources for recognizing the greater maladies of school, culture, and society to which we adults have become inured and therefore accept as natural.\(^1\)
References


Notes

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Society for the Philosophical Study of Education annual conference in Chicago, Illinois, November 5, 2010.
The Quest for Uncertainty:  
Recovering An Appreciation For Truth Through Autobiography

Zachary Rohrbach and Samuel Rocha

Preface

Some of our best-kept secrets are the ways that we teach: what we do and how we do it, and the rationales for doing it. There is also often a distance kept between our classrooms and our publications and research. In philosophy of education, this distance might be worth reconsidering. If teaching has something to do with education—and I think it does—then philosophers of education have fewer reasons to separate their teaching from their research. This is one of the great joys of this particular field of study: we are always already embedded in the object of study, education. Insofar as we educate, we are performing the very thing we seek to understand.

Education, however, is not a simple thing to pin down. It often goes unnoticed in the field of education that there is no single, unifying description of education available. Just as there is no consensus on what philosophy is, exactly, there is also no prevailing common sense that fully understands what sort of thing education is. When there seems to be a general idea about what education might be, we find it exclusively related to schooling. To equivocate between schooling and education, however, is a well-known mistake.

In my philosophy of education courses we read a variety of primary texts with the goal of trying to acquire a rigorous sense of what education is and might be. We distinguish it from schooling but we also consider its relationship to the school. Along the way, we confront the negative term ‘miseducation’ in John Dewey’s *Experience and Education* (1938) and again in Carter G. Woodson’s *The Mis-education of the Negro* (1990). Miseducation is a powerful and vexing concept. On the one hand, it shows the normativity of education and the quixotic ability for this generic notion of education to become either “educative” or “miseducative.” On the other hand, this raises a difficult metaphysical question: “Is miseducation Education?” In the end it presents us with a negative notion of education.

One of the uses of this negative notion of miseducation is its relative clarity when compared to the elusive, positive notion of education. We seem to feel surer of ourselves when we describe what is not there than when we must say what is there. From the apophatic method of negative theology to the Law of Errors, we can see that it is possible to acquire a descriptive sense of an object by focusing on its absence instead of on its presence. This is the method I use in most of my courses for the final assignment. I ask each student to write a paper entitled “The Miseducation of ____________.” They insert their name in the blank and write what follows from the title. They give an account of their own miseducation. (You may notice that this borrows from Lauren Hill’s 1998 breakout album, *The Miseducation of Lauren Hill.*)
In many cases, I must admit, this exercise turns out to be more therapeutic than theoretical. But I do think there is a place for catharsis and confession in philosophy and education. What most students seem to understand and gain from the assignment is that education is something they cannot take lightly or treat cheaply. They see its powerful effects in absentia. Sometimes clever and bitter students will recount their experience of miseducation in their philosophy of education course, climaxing in an absurd assignment about miseducation. Other times, students admit to having false motivations behind their interest in teaching and declare their exit from the field. A few students have even dropped out of college. Very few students turn in a boring or formulaic paper—they seem to take it very personally, for better and for worse.

In only a few, rare instances, however, does a student break through the sentimental and begin to do philosophy. This article’s genesis was one of those exceptions. In what follows, you will read far more than a personal anecdote. Here I think we find a serious philosophical intervention that benefits from coming out of self-disclosure, but also offers more than just a confession for us to weigh and consider. As far as I am concerned, this kind of work, the fruit of my classroom teaching, is as reputable an example of what philosophy of education is and can be as anything I have written on my own. All the credit belongs to the student—an undergraduate at the time he wrote it, and now a high school physics teacher—who took the craft of philosophy seriously and produced the following truly original and interesting piece of educational scholarship.

The Miseducation of Zach Rohrbach

This article is, first and foremost, an intellectual autobiography—a personal account of my evolution of thought as a result of taking a philosophy of education course. However, I believe that it has something relevant to say to the modern environment of higher education, which—in the name of career training and practicality—often blinds students to the beauty of knowledge understood as something other than instrumental.

To begin, the very words that are on this page are a product of miseducation, or at least of the miseducative limits of language. The paragraphs that follow will confirm my thesis: that my miseducation has been in the fact that I view the purpose of education as the acquiring of certainty. I contend that this is wrong, because Truth is uncertain. This paper, then, is miseducative because I will be speaking in precise, certain terms about ideas that I maintain are by nature uncertain.

Throughout much of my life, I have been miseducated to believe that education is a “quest for certainty” and that the goal of knowledge is to achieve certain understanding of the world. I contend that such a view of education and knowledge is impoverished because Truth—although not relative—is uncertain; it is not some nice and neat set of axioms and logic that can be fit into one’s mind. Truth, I will eventually argue, is something beyond comprehension, and education fails when it pretends—as it often does—that Truth is anything less. To pretend that we can fully comprehend it with mathematical precision is both gravely arrogant and wholly undesirable. But this will not be an indictment of knowledge and education; it will be a subtle defense of it.

I will begin by showing how I believe I acquired this flawed conception of education, knowledge, and Truth, and then I will discuss why I have come to view this conception as incorrect.
I am a scientist at heart. I am the child of a chemistry major-turned-IT manager and an actuary, so I suppose that this makes sense. Growing up, I was fascinated with the way the world works. My favorite storybook was David Macaulay’s (1998) The Way Things Work. Given this inclination, it is not surprising that I began to gravitate toward science classes during high school. I ended up loving physics the most of all the sciences after I began to realize how it made practical use of one of my other favorite subjects: mathematics.

Math at its core is quite different from science, although in my miseducation I never realized it. Where science observes and draws conclusions about something outside of itself—namely, the natural order—mathematics observes itself and draws its own conclusions. A mathematical theorem can be proven by mathematics, whereas a scientific law can only be “proven” by observation of Nature. Even then, a scientific law is never truly proven. It is only “proven” insofar as it has not been disproven by contradictory observations.

So, in one sense, science is a higher art than mathematics, because science requires the scientist to submit his work to be judged by a higher authority. As Richard Feynman said, “It doesn’t matter how beautiful your theory is; it doesn’t matter how smart you are. If it doesn’t agree with experiment, it’s wrong” (qtd. in Sykes, 1993). On the other hand, mathematical ideas can always be right, at least insofar as they are not self-contradictory. For example, the mathematics of string theory is right because it is self-consistent. But string theory is not necessarily scientifically true because it has not been “proven” by experiment.

Let’s take this idea a step further. I propose that science is an uncertain discipline whereas mathematics is a certain discipline. Science looks at Nature and prescribes laws that seem to explain Nature most of the time. But every scientist knows that if you take Newton’s laws of motion and gravity, you will still have an incomplete understanding of the trajectory of a ball that is thrown into the air. This is because—even at the most basic level—you are probably assuming air drag is negligible, the ball is perfectly spherical, the earth is not rotating, and countless other things that aren’t quite true but do affect the ball’s motion in ways that you are ignoring. And, if you throw the ball again, these effects will not be exactly the same, so the ball will behave a bit differently. So the scientist’s knowledge is incomplete and uncertain. Math, on the other hand, is certain. A mathematician knows that, in no uncertain terms, 2+2 always equals 4, the derivative of a sine is always a cosine, and a theorem once proven is always correct.

I believe, then, that my miseducation comes first from the fact that I began, at some point, to conflate mathematics with science. This is understandable, considering that the majority of coursework and research in my subject area, physics, tends to apply math to scientific problems. The answer is the answer (at least in classical physics). There is no uncertainty.

But that there is no uncertainty in classical physics is not entirely true. In the lab, uncertainties abound. Uncertainties are the bane of an experimental physicist’s existence. They are a pain to analyze and deal with, and they are always too large. Experimental physicists strive to minimize their experimental uncertainty so that (surprise!) they can be more certain about their result. The underlying assumption here is that the theory provides the exact, certain answer to the problem, and that an experiment can “prove” (remember, proof only comes in the form of lack of disproof) this theory if the uncertainty of the experiment agrees with the certainty of the theory. In other words, even the uncertainty in classical experimental physics is not really uncertainty; it
is simply a measure of how far away we are from certainty. So, the way I viewed science, then, was as a “quest” to minimize these uncertainties in order to approach a certainty.

I’m not here to give an overview of the philosophy of science. But that overview was important to my story. Science had become such a big focus of my life during my undergraduate schooling that my thinking toward science has had an influence on my thinking everywhere else as well. It therefore seemed obvious to me that religion, philosophy, morality, metaphysics, pedagogy, educational theory—or any other area, for that matter—was simply an extension of science. These areas were merely different domains of the same scientific Truth.

And perhaps it is true that religion, philosophy, morality, metaphysics, pedagogy, educational theory, and science are merely different domains of the same thing. But for the moment, I am not particularly interested in whether or not this is the case. I am more interested in the fact that I viewed each of these disciplines as an area that, given enough thinking and deliberating, could be explained with certainty. In other words, I was conflating absolute truth with absolute certainty. I believed (and continue to believe) that all of these things are elements in a Truth that is independent of what any observer has thought of them, but I also believed that because this Truth was there, it was necessarily certain. The purpose of education for me, then, was to get as close as I possibly could to this certainty.

Now, I am not convinced that anything that I have said up to this point is necessarily incorrect, but what I am convinced about is that my focus was in the wrong place. Burbules (1990), by looking to Dewey, articulates my mistake:

The culprit here is what John Dewey called ‘the quest for certainty,’ the hope for a knowledge that is clear, uncontroversial, and unchanging. From this vantage point uncertainty is seen as bad, as something to get rid of; most people grasp at the nearest plausible rationale rather than struggle with their doubt. Such attitude is, I believe, hostile to the process of education, in which uncertainty and doubt are inevitable.

My miseducation was in that I viewed education and knowledge itself as this “quest for certainty.”

Why is this bad? Dewey (1938) reminds us in *Experience and Education* that freedom is not valuable for its own sake but only if it is oriented to some sort of Good. If we apply this same test to education and knowledge, the question becomes, what Good are education and knowledge oriented towards? Is that Good merely certainty? Well, if we were to gain certainty on the best way to solve world hunger, then that certainty might be Good because it accomplishes Good. But if we were to gain certainty on the best way to ethnically cleanse the Third Reich, that certainty would be bad—or, at the very least, I don’t see how it could be good. Thus, certainty itself is not the Good that education and knowledge are striving for. Good education, then, is not merely, or even necessarily, a quest for certainty. Instead, it is a quest for the Good.

But what is Good? Is Good merely doing what we think is best? Probably not. Hitler had many of his soldiers thinking that by ethnically cleansing the Reich, they were performing an act of charity for future so-called Aryans. Why were these actions not Good? We could debate the precise technical reasons, but the answer—I believe—can be boiled down to the fact that they
were not Good simply because it is objectively true that these were atrocious acts. Good intentions must be informed by Truth in order for the action itself to be Good.\textsuperscript{4}

So then we see that a quest for Truth is a necessary part of a Good education because a Good education accomplishes Good, and Good is something that has been informed by Truth.

At this point, it may seem like I have contradicted myself because I earlier said that a Good education is not necessarily a quest for certainty, but now have said that a Good education includes a quest for Truth. But Truth is not equivalent to certainty. As a matter of fact, I want to go a step further and say that Truth itself is uncertain—not in a cheap, epistemological way in which we are not sure what the truth is, but in a rigorous, ontological way. To begin this point, let me go back to my discussion about how my perception of science was miseducative.

I made the claim before that I perceived physics as an attempt to minimize uncertainties so that we could arrive with certainty at a physical law. This cannot be true when you start talking about quantum mechanics. One of the foundational principles of quantum mechanics is the Uncertainty Principle—the fact that we cannot simultaneously know for certain a particle’s position and momentum. Actually, the Uncertainty Principle says something stronger than that: it not only states that we cannot know for certain a particle’s position and momentum; it also states that the absolute reality of the situation is that the particle does not even have a certain position and momentum. So, at its very foundation, the physics that I took to be a quest for certainty is in reality uncertain! Uncertainty is built into Nature; it is not merely a byproduct of human imperfection.\textsuperscript{5}

But just because the true position and momentum are uncertain, that does not mean that they are relative. Quantum theory does give an objective and absolute account of where you would be likely to find the particle and a range of possible momentum values that it can have. Quantum theory also does tell us where the particle cannot be located and what momenta it cannot have. There is still an objective reality, even if the objective reality is uncertain.

I posit that Truth in general behaves in this way. For example, it is absolutely wrong to neglect a child. But there are many ways to do Good to that child: you can feed him well, play games with him, read to him—and therefore Good is uncertain. You can do Good with two parents, with a parent and a grandparent, with a single mother or father, or through adoption or foster care. You can discipline the child by spanking, or you can opt for less corporally severe methods. These are superficial examples of what William James (1962, p. 13) points out (the scare quotes [“”] [“”] are mine):

The [“”]science[“”] of logic never made a man reason rightly, and the [“”]science[“”] of ethics (if there be such a thing) never made a man behave rightly. The most such [“”]sciences[“”] can do is to help us to catch ourselves up and check ourselves, if we start to reason or to behave wrongly; and to criticize ourselves more articulately after we have made mistakes. A [“”]science[“”] only lays down lines within which the rules of the art must fall, laws which the follower of the art must not transgress; but what particular thing he shall do positively within those lines is left exclusively to his own genius. One genius will do his work well and succeed in one way, while another succeeds as well quite differently; yet neither will transgress the lines.
There is not, James is telling us, one certain pedagogical method, one certain moral action, or one certain answer to a given situation. However, that is not to say there are no such things as absolute education, absolute morality, and absolute Truth. We can use the Truth that we discover through pedagogical research to tell us what we should not do in a classroom and to give us ideas of what we might do to teach our students. But we will never be able to boil this down into one right answer. Likewise, we can use Truth as reasoned through natural law to help us learn the difference between right and wrong, but there will not be an easy, certain decision to make when we come into a complex moral dilemma. Truth does not bow to the mortal man’s intellect by merely giving way to simple certainty. Truth is much more subtle and beautiful than that.

You will notice that in the quote from James above, I added scare quotes around the term “science.” I did this because the way in which James is using the term is quite different from how I have been using it in this paper. Remember that I said science gets confirmation from nature, whereas math gets confirmation from itself. In this definitional framework, then, James’s “sciences” of logic and ethics are really more mathematical than scientific in nature, just as Newton’s “scientific” laws of motion are mathematical. They only become science insofar as they conform with something outside of themselves: Truth. So if James were to use this same terminology that I am using, he would say that the genius is the one who recognizes the inherent mathematical nature of these “sciences” of logic and ethics, and is able, without transgressing their theorems and parameters, to reach out beyond them into the Truth that is utterly more complicated and uncertain than what can be entirely expressed by any mathematical description. The genius to whom James refers is a true scientist. He uses mathematics, but he doesn’t take mathematics to be the sum total of the Truth, which is infinitely more beautiful, subtle, and uncertain than what the mathematics can approach. Good education, then, is in part the formation of a scientist. Education as the formation of a mathematician is incomplete.

So, then we get back to the question of my own miseducation. As a child, I said before, I had a fascination with how the world works. In other words I had a fascination with Truth. I was a scientist. But at some point along the line, my fascination with and awe for reality were packaged and sterilized into a desire to discover the certainty that supposedly governs Nature. I became a mathematician. My awe of nature was transformed into a vain faith in some sort of order that saw Truth as merely something that could be contained within my own intellect—or at least collectively within the intellect of the human family. And, as such, I viewed education to be this acquiring of the total understanding of Truth.

And, even now, I have presented this (hopefully!) rousing defense of the uncertainty of Truth, but to what end? This defense has done nothing but advance a mathematical theorem. Is it right? I believe it to be right, but the only way to be sure is to do my own “experiments” by living to see if this is anything more than a cutesy intellectual exercise. Then, perhaps, I can call myself a scientist in this regard. But even if it is right and I do become a scientist, I am still not a Good person. If I am Good only insofar as I accomplish Good, then a scientific understanding of Truth is entirely meaningless—or perhaps even of negative value—if it does not do anything Good. This last step of doing Good is something that cannot be accomplished merely by writing a paper; it is something that must be lived.
References


Notes


2 For example, if someone were to say that the earth is flat, and he were to perform a thousand experiments that gave solutions that made sense for a flat earth, he would have “proven” that the earth is flat. Then, when he got on a boat and sailed around the world he would have disproven that the world was flat. But he could still reasonably say that the world is shaped like a sphere or a donut or a Möbius strip. He has not proven any of these theories in the strongest sense of the term. He has not settled the question beyond any further dispute in the same way that Pythagoras has for all time settled the relationship between the sides of a right triangle in Euclidean space.

3 Ivan Illich (1968) addresses this question in his essay “To Hell with Good Intentions.” In it, he criticizes U.S. missionaries who want to help out the poor in Mexico. While he does not doubt their sincerity in wanting to help out, he notes that their presence is harmful: it attempts to impose Western Capitalism and Individualism on a culture that does not need or want it. Despite their good intentions, the missionaries are not doing Good.

4 Benedict XVI (2009) calls this “caritas in veritate” or “charity in truth.”

5 Of course, I am speaking in terms that are a tad too strong. The fact that uncertainty is built into nature is not, strictly speaking, a proven fact any more than any other scientific “fact” may be. It is simply—as discussed earlier—a scientific understanding that has not yet been disproven by contradictory observations.

6 Richard Feynman (1974) suggests this when he derides what he calls “cargo cult science.” He complains about certain things that “are said to be scientific. We study them. And I think ordinary people with commonsense ideas are intimidated by this pseudoscience. A teacher who has some good idea of how to teach her children to read is forced by the school system to do it some other way—or is even fooled by the school system into thinking that her method is not necessarily a good one. Or a parent of bad boys, after disciplining them in one way or another, feels guilty for the rest of her life because she didn't do ‘the right thing,’ according to the experts.”

7 Even in *The Quest for Certainty* Dewey (1929) himself, although he started along this train of thought, does not entirely progress from the realm of math to the realm of science. Dewey quite rightly notices that the objects of mathematics do not entirely correspond to the objects of reality. (That’s why, for example, Dewey notes in his chapter on “Ideas at Work” that a red ball and a blue ball—two very different and distinct real objects—are treated exactly the same in projectile dynamics.) Thus, he touches on the idea that Truth is bigger than man’s mathematical description of it. However, his response to this realization is to advocate a position toward reality that he calls “pragmatic instrumentalism.” The purpose of studying reality is “to conceive
of both knowledge and practice as a means of making goods—excellences of all kinds—secure in experienced existence” (p. 49). Thus, although Dewey has given up on the idea that we reach certainty about the metaphysical structure of reality, he nevertheless is still on his own quest: a quest for the reasonable certainty of security, a certainty that—although admittedly temporary and pragmatic instead of permanent and metaphysical—is nevertheless certainty. He rightly gives up on metaphysical mathematics, but he is still a phenomenological mathematician; he has not made that extra step to science.
BOOK REVIEW


Reviewed by Robert Mitchell

Jung biographer Laurens van der Post, in his introduction to Sally Nichols’ Jung and Tarot (1980), expresses the theme of Dr. Inna Semetsky’s book: “[Awareness includes] all sorts of non-rational forms of perception and knowing [that bridge the gap] between the inexhaustible wealth of, as yet, unrealized meaning in the collective unconscious, [and the conscious mind]” (p. xiv). The purpose of Dr. Semetsky’s book is to build on this underlying assertion of C.G. Jung’s individuation process—seeking wholeness by re-centering the personality in the Self, rather than the ego. Semetsky shows Tarot as a symbolic system to aid the individual on his/her individuation journey.

In her own words Semetsky says, “This book will demonstrate that Tarot ... plays a significant role in the process of self-formation or construction of human subjectivity, thus becoming a means for the re-symbolization of the Self” (p. 5). Semetsky goes beyond Nichols’ illumination of the symbolism in the 22 cards of the Major Arcana to examine Tarot hermeneutic as a way of elevating into consciousness the affective awareness of our intuitive, instinctive and feeling-toned perceptions as they relate to real life experiences.

The goal of including Tarot readings in both therapy and psychological counseling is an important adjunct to Nichol’s classic work. Yet Semetsky tells us, “There was no aim to prove or disprove anything, to qualify or disqualify, to compare or contrast. This study grew out of a desire to bring light to the often misunderstood realm of Tarot which is so much richer and valuable than its reductive popular role as a fortune-telling device” (p. 7).

As she says in her introduction to Jung and Educational Theory (2013), Semetsky has laid out her argument as a “theory-practice nexus that overcomes the Cartesian mind-body dualism” (“Introduction: Jung and holistic education,” p. xii). She goes on to explain that Tarot hermeneutic serves post-formal, adult education, where the individuation process comes directly from life experiences. Thus, Tarot hermeneutic provides a different perspective from the Jungian concept of a clinically guided internal active imagination dialogue, and does not belong exclusively to the second half of life. Tarot hermeneutic embraces all adults in post-formal, self-education counseling.

Semetsky constructs her theoretical argument in four chapters.

She begins with the concept that mythic “reality” and objective “reality” are interwoven, and the integration of “esoteric” and “objective” worldviews creates wholeness in the individual personality and in the culture. Tarot is a symbolic system that helps bring to consciousness an inherent memory of mythic reality that speaks to our affective faculties.
She says, “true intelligence cannot be reduced to a rational understanding alone; it is our human experience that can bring a soul to life and enrich education with its spiritual dimension” (p. 29). This interdependence results in a “relational” worldview, and “a relational approach most strongly manifests in the ethics of care” (p. 30), a term Semetsky borrows from education philosopher Nel Noddings to describe an erotic, or relational, engagement with the world.

This erotic engagement takes place at the archetypal level. In a Tarot reading, the seeker, whose role in the reading is that of the “hero” represented by the card labeled the Fool, “becomes capable of overcoming obstacles, defeating adversaries or ... winning over his own complexes, anxieties and fears” (p. 33) along the symbolic journey laid-out in the 22 cards of the Major Arcana. The images, Semetsky tells us, quoting Jung, “‘were distantly descended from the archetypes of transformation’” (p. 34). Therefore, “[t]he journey through Tarot images is practically a dynamic search for identity and the discovery of meaning and value in our lives via creative encounters with the unconscious in the process of individuation.” (p. 34).

Having initially based her premise on Jungian psychological concepts, Semetsky expands this base, drawing on theories of personality development and consciousness from other philosophers and psychologists, quoting liberally from Nel Noddings, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Martin Buber and others. Here, she diverges from the Jungian concept of an inwardly focused ego-archetype axis accessed through active imagination to address the individual “as enmeshed in the network of relationships” (p. 52). A psychotherapeutic understanding of this network of relationships can employ many non-verbal modalities, which include pictorial communication. She says, “Tarot hermeneutic ... can create a symbolic bridge to the archetypal depth of the internal world of ‘the other’” (p. 52). In this way, we can engage the other not only on an interpersonal but on an intra-psychical level to address our own psychological conflicts arising from insecurity, anger, depression, frustration, anxiety, confusion, exhaustion, feeling overwhelmed and/or indecisive, etc. She continues, “The list is endless, and our real-life experience always presents new contexts and encounters that call for new evaluations, new meanings, and more education in practice” (p. 59).

To illuminate this relationship between therapy and education of the Self, Semetsky draws on the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. She says, “Jung’s dynamic process of the individuation of the Self as the goal of analysis is akin to Deleuze’s concept of becoming, and specifically becoming-other as a process of learning from the unconscious embedded in experience ... the world consists not of substantial ‘things’ but of relational entities, or multiplicities” (p. 61). Subjectivity, then, is embedded in the relational dynamics of experiment and experience.

This concept at the heart of Semetsky’s argument takes the individual’s relationship to the spirit realm of the collective unconscious outside of the inwardly focused ego-archetype axis and places it in the context of an erotic, or relational, engagement with the world. “It is not the possibilities of our conscious mind but the multiple ‘things in the psyche’ as parameters of the unconscious that continuously create novel relations in our
real experience ... capable of affecting and effecting changes, thus contesting the very identity of subjects on the road to individuation” (p. 64). Semetsky tells us that the ego-archetype relationship is enfolded in a free-flowing cloud, like an invisible fog that penetrates and enfolds the psyche: quoting Deleuze, Semetsky says “We ‘are never separate from the World; the interior is a selected exterior, and the exterior is a projected interior’” (p. 75). In this way, we are all enfolded in an integrated mythic/objective reality accessible as both affective and rational awareness. Tarot hermeneutic can help us interpret our affective awareness and re-center the personality in the Self so that our lives express this more complete, integrated “reality.”

The Nexus that connects theory and practice is the Tarot reading itself, of which Semetsky discusses two important factors. First is the relationship between the reader and the client in therapeutic, counseling and educational practice. This relationship, she says, depends on the reader becoming a “master of metaphors,” which Semetsky describes, using a term coined by anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, as becoming a bricoleur. Bricolage, she tells us, refers to the construction of an objective study that draws on phenomenology, hermeneutics and narratology, while retaining the rigor of critical thought and “paying particular attention to the webs of relationships, processes and interconnections among phenomena within which [the individual] is situated” (p. 11). Since the Tarot layout amplifies the unconscious content of archetypal images, “An expert reader as a genuine bricoleur can translate the pictorial language of symbols and signs into spoken word, thus creating a wealth of sympathetic, emotional data embodied in the unfolding narrative” (p. 16).

Interpretation by the reader is via the a-causal principle of synchronicity. “Implementing a phenomenological approach means to accurately describe a ‘given phenomenon as it presents itself in one’s own experience—not [to explain] its genesis through reference to antecedent causal factors.’” (p. 18). At the core of this relationship is the archetypal Eros, or relational, spirit-of-attraction that holds two opposites together, eventually reconciling “what analytical thinking habitually perceives dualistically” (p. 19). Thus, the Tarot reading functions educationally by focusing on the ethical and spiritual dimension of learning by experience and existentially on the construction of identity—the re-symbolization of the Self (p. 18).

Second, this Nexus takes place not in the objective world, but in the liminal space of the Imaginal world (p. 21). Access to this world is perceived through images, rather than thoughts, and explained in terms of the Projective Hypothesis that also lies at the foundation of the Rorschach test, sand play therapy, the I Ching and, perhaps, dream analysis. Semetsky explains that, by definition, “the projective hypothesis holds that an individual supplies structure to unstructured stimuli in a manner consistent with the individual’s own unique pattern of conscious and unconscious needs, fears, desires, impulses, conflicts, and ways of perceiving and responding” (p. 73). Thus, it organizes a person’s unique experience as “inseparable from her life-world” (p. 73). The archetypal forces affecting the personality and its relationships to the world are projected into the images that manifest in the spread. In the client’s shuffling of the cards, and the reader’s layout, Tarot hermeneutic is inseparable from the projective hypothesis.
To illustrate the practice of Tarot Reading, Dr. Semetsky uses a ten-card, Celtic Cross spread, laid out on the table before the client. Her fifteen sample readings are composed of four men and eleven women, primarily professional, white, black and Latino, ranging in age from their twenties to the plus forties. The spread tells a life-story with a focus on a specific question to be explored. Following the concepts of the Projective Hypothesis, Synchronicity and Bricolage, the spread is a product of “imagination.” Semetsky tells us that “Imagination pushes the Ego from its position in the center of the personality where it can comfortably focus on ‘self-regard [and] into a space where it can come face to face with others’” (p. 85).

The questions asked by her clients fall into three categories: professional/career issues; personal relationships; and individual insight. The first of these is most provocative, as it follows James Hillman’s argument that one’s “true” vocation stems from one’s archetypal essence. Yet a “true” vocation can be easily misdirected by social, peer, familial, religious and other pressures. What Dr. Semetsky presents, here, are not case studies, but individual readings. Generally, her clients report a positive experience. There is no follow up on how, or if, the problem presented was eventually resolved. I thought Semetsky’s narrative of the reading and interpretation of the spread could have benefitted from a more poetic touch, but not every reader will see it that way.

While she has been careful to document the restrictive clinical conditions under which the study was conducted, it could also have benefitted from a wider range of subjects—young people who have “dropped out,” entered a liminal space and want to become more conscious of the archetypal forces they have attracted to themselves; college students seeking to become aware of their true “vocations”; veterans whose combat trauma has made them ready for a life-transformation. What these practical examples do reveal is the sensitivity, intuition and connectedness of the reader to the client and how the imaginal modality and Tarot hermeneutic are beneficial in pushing the Ego aside so that the client, through a relationship with the reader, can “see” the archetypal forces at work in his/her life, and work at the project of re-symbolization of the Self—what Jungian psychologist Murray Stein calls the “individuation imperative.”

In her final chapters, Dr Semetsky returns to the original purpose of individuation, arguing that individuation takes place on the subjective level of both the individual and the cultural as a whole. Her final chapter takes aim at her critics and mounts an erudite defense of the role of Tarot hermeneutic in human development.

Dr Semetsky’s book opens our eyes to both a time-honored, traditional way of looking at an integrated “reality” and an important way of interpreting that reality as it presents itself in the daily lives of ordinary human beings.

References