

Who We Are: An Open Letter to the Reader

Dearest reader,

Is the spirit of philosophy dead and its flame extinguished?

That seems to be the general attitude not only in Silicon Valley but in the whole of America. Whatever little philosophy exists in current times takes place behind the closed doors of institutions of higher learning and atop the ivory towers of academia.

The academics sit together, far away from the rest of the populace, and discuss the things they know. They name their concepts. They formulate and expand on the categories they use to further justify their claims to knowledge. They write about them in their journals. They publish work after work just to keep their positions in academia. These are not the philosophers of our time. These academics are the career epistemologists, the scientists of ideas. They are the ones who led us to believe that philosophy deals only in abstract concepts, and that its nature is to be removed far away from the real world. They were the first to forget what philosophy was in its incipient moment. In this way, the spirit of philosophy is dead. Philosophy is now just another discipline in the collegiate way of life. But that is not where philosophy belongs. Philosophy belongs in the agora. It belongs in the public spaces. Philosophy happens where the people dwell: in offices, in homes, out in the streets, in the day-to-day basis of everyone's lives; it belongs in classrooms, in moments of leisure and contemplation, and in the interpersonal interactions a person has with one another; it is present in works of art, but most of all, it belongs to everyone. Philosophy makes up the core of our belief structures.

The word Academy (Akademeia) itself implies a distant removal from the common and public domain of the city, but the academics are not entirely to be blamed for all of this. After all, it is possible that philosophy moved behind closed doors because it no longer had a place in the public's eye. Instead, the blame is to be placed on the conscience of every living man and woman for forgetting what they are capable of. Perhaps we have all forgotten how to take care of ourselves and each other. We have taken for granted the world we live in and the history behind it. We have accepted what has been presented to us. We have grown resentful of who we have become. It seems we have all turned a blind eye not only on philosophy, but altogether on the process of thought.

The word philosophy no longer has any meaning. Philosophy has been co-opted. The term 'philosophy' has been equivocated. When they think of philosophy, they instead think of opinion. "What is philosophy?" has become "What is your philosophy?" Usually, people mistake philosophy for a fixed belief. Just because a person holds certain beliefs does not mean that he or she holds certain philosophies. A philosophy cannot be held. Philosophy is an action, a process. It is something that requires doing; it requires work. In order to do philosophy, one has to think beyond just academic subjects too. Philosophy is inherently present in every single aspect of all subjects of study. To inquire into the being of any discipline, to question its credibility, and to wonder how far its domain reaches, requires a philosophical attitude. Assumptions close one's ability to understand the world in a critical manner because it is through these assumptions that we come to understand how things appear to us. The assumptions are the prejudices that every single person carries with them. They constitute the ideology of the individual, and as an ideology, it must be overcome. To do philosophy simply is "to do". That is where philosophy begins—in doing. That is the incipient moment of philosophy in one's life—that first moment of self-reflection on who, when, and where one is; and this moment has been ignored for far too long. We must once again educate ourselves. The notion of doing philosophy is inherently part of the educational process. Challenging one's prejudices may just be the root of all education!

The goal of this publication is to try to take back what is at the core of our human condition. The Gadfly is not only a reminder that philosophy exists, but that it also has serious effects on how we live. It is here to remind one what philosophy is and that it can be accessible to everyone. It is not difficult to find something wrong everywhere one looks. Take some time and look around. Take a moment of silence and really take a good look. This is a personal challenge to you, our reader! Look beyond the obvious. Look at the education system. Look at modern American values. Look at the way we comport ourselves towards the world and one another. Look at the role technology plays in our lives. Take a good, hard look at the present political situation. Take the time to look at anything; and if you do, can you admit that everything is fine?

The renewal of the spirit of philosophy belongs to more than just a few. This task belongs to all. This small journal is here to arouse your interest and to persuade you to question beliefs that are taken for granted. It is our way to weave ourselves into your life, into your city. This moment has been chosen to speak with you, and even though we may be strangers, we write this for you, not to you. Bear with us for just a few pages and allow us to tell you something. Allow yourself to be upset by us. Let us be bothersome, like a gadfly is, and let us critique each other. What can be more human than to suspect appearances? In the spirit and in the words of Socrates,

...you will not easily discover another of my sort, who—even if it is rather ridiculous to say—has simply been set upon the city by the god, as though upon a great and well-born horse who is rather sluggish because of his great size and needs to be awakened by some gadfly.

And just how a gadfly is bothersome to a horse, and it stirs it into action, let us be bothersome to you as well. In addition, and for those of you who are here for the first time, the Gadfly was a successful West Valley College Philosophy Club project which began several years ago. It was first intended to be an undergraduate philosophy journal covering the usual academic topics. But in an attempt to show the relevance of philosophy to everyday issues, it has shifted its direction more toward education, technology, and culture criticism. Now, with students from all over the Bay Area, San José State University, UC Berkeley, San Francisco State University, and more, the Gadfly has extended into an undergraduate philosophy/critique magazine with the goals of bringing the spirit of philosophy and the gadfly to more willing victims.

Until next time,
Emi Ibarra

Postscript: For those that are interested in learning more about the Gadfly and later issues, or that have an essay that might fit with later issues, email us at the_gadfly@yahoo.com. Topics are not only limited to education, and we welcome any new ideas.



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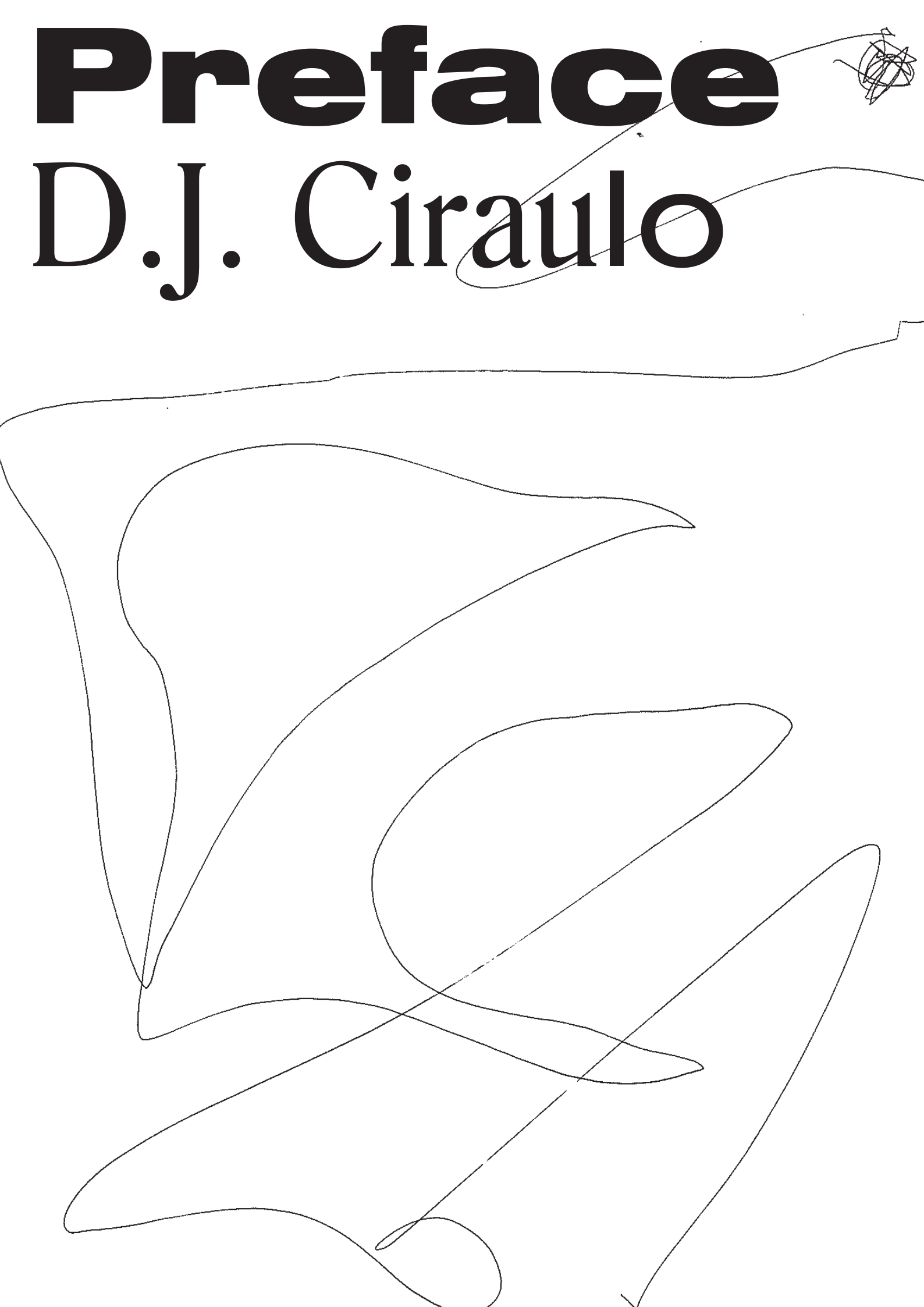
An abstract black line drawing on a red background. The drawing consists of several overlapping, irregular shapes that resemble stylized leaves or petals. One shape is a large, rounded form on the left, another is a more elongated, pointed shape on the right, and a third is a smaller, curved shape at the bottom. The lines are thin and elegant, creating a sense of movement and organic form.

Preface

D.J. Ciraulo

Preface

D.J. Ciraulo



I It is certainly a strange situation that at a time when we are undergoing the third great revolution in mnemotechnology, that is, in how we store, communicate and dispense information (from papyrus to print to the chip via the electromagnetic field)—a time when our technology is so ‘innovative’ and forms of knowledge so accessible—that education in America is falling to desperate levels. How is it that what the digital, post-Fordist industrial world calls ‘computer literacy’ is turning out to be an oxymoronic syntagme—that in real space we are becoming illiterate in direct, but inverse proportion, to being online?

And do we really need statistical studies and more evidence as was the case with cigarette smoke and is now the case with climate change? The issue is best expressed by Heidegger:

The most thought provoking in a thought provoking time is that we are still not thinking.¹

But how can this be? How can this great thinker say we are not thinking when we are inundated with bits of information, blocks of statistical studies, and have solved so many interesting problems? Is it simply because we have not, and possibly cannot “process” all this data? And is it indeed a fact that human understanding can be, or even should be, modeled on an input-output problem solving process? Perhaps we should be more concerned with the differences between information retrieval and wisdom, or with the important distinction between being “smart” and becoming “intelligent.” Why, for instance, do we prefer to organize our thoughts in terms of mechanics, quantification and verifiability, instead of being a bit more concerned with what is vitalistic, qualitative and authentic? And when we do attempt to create something of qualitative value—something which may affect our internal lives,—why do we do so by way of “how to” handbooks? Why, since Galileo, do we continue to equate thinking “only” with the ability to control and manipulate things? Have we exhausted our thought about an object when its movement has been calculated and its essence categorized and brought under our domination? Or, is there something here, which remains unthought? But ironically this line of questioning is precisely the kind of fundamental thinking to which we have turned a deaf ear and blind eye. Why is this so? Are these kinds of questions—philosophical questions—too impractical to be of concern, or do they touch in an uncomfortable way that which lies closest to heart? And why do we continue to try and cure the issue in question by prescribing more of the same medicine—more information, more data, more studies? Do we really think that statistics and logistics can bring about the change of heart and mind necessary for an enlightened and just civilization, or, are we now in danger of using these tools to mask a profound thoughtlessness?

We are certainly born with the capacity to walk, talk, and think, but not with a guarantee for their completion and perfection. Although it has traditionally been the task of education to help refine, bring forth, and actualize these potentialities, this ideal has recently been abandoned in favor of the far easier task of teaching specific techniques and newly found “methods” and “means” which help us to attain “ends” which remain unjustified. But as we obtain our just rewards and accumulate more “know how,” we are falling into deeper despair—a kind of despair which remains suspiciously unaware of itself, but is, nevertheless, expressed in the numbness, passivity, and the outbreaks of violence symptomatic of a whole generation. And how is it that at a time when access to information and “computer literacy” is at an all time high, and climbing, the international educational rankings of our country are precipitously falling? Is it possible that we have learned certain modes of thinking without proper concern for what desperately needs to be thought? What needs to be thought, according to Heidegger, is the nature of thinking and its relation to what is thought-provoking. How, then, are we to learn this way of thinking?—and to whom should we turn?

As with all true learning, we will naturally turn to those who have mastered their particular art; and only one branch of knowledge has taken on the task of thinking about the nature of thought itself—this is philosophy! When Plato was asked about philosophical thinking, he replied:

[Philosophy] does not admit of exposition like other branches of knowledge; but after much converse about the matter itself and a life lived together suddenly a light, as it were, is kindled in one soul by a flame that leaps to it from another, and thereafter sustains itself.²

So before we proceed to the study of philosophy, which is the art of thinking about that which always remains to be thought, we should understand that it cannot be reduced to a mere technique intended to accomplish a set task, but must, like all art forms, first be inspired and desired for its own sake.

II

Today we all too often think of philosophy as an opinion, or larger point of view as in—“What’s your philosophy?”—or as one amongst many disciplines to be bartered and sold (equivalent courses, etc) in the academic agora. If there is a great demand and many customers, the management team designates a particular course to be ‘successful,’ that is, if the customer has a minimal blood pressure reading and at least a passing grade. This evaluation is, of course, in keeping with the highest standards of objectivity and quantitative (operational) data retrieval (spread sheets, pie charts, numerical formulas...and so forth, and so on). But the beginning of education, in the secular sense and as we understand it (now in the position of a global hegemony), is synonymous with the birth of philosophy in the Mediterranean world (600 BC). There is as Deleuze would say, a plane of consistency and immanence which goes from the Presocratics, through Plato and Aristotle, to Hume and Kant, Hegel and Marx, WWII, and to Einstein’s cosmological revolution concerning in space/time—a direct line of reference from Democritus (atomic theory) to quantum mechanics. Einstein comments:

Hume saw clearly that certain concepts, as for example that of causality, cannot be deduced from the material of experience by logical methods. Kant thoroughly convinced of the indispensability of certain concepts [...] and differentiated them from concepts of empirical origin.³

Needless to say that this is the thinking process of a well educated man! But what makes it so? We have pickled his brain, but avoid hearing what he has to say. First, he is able to recognize and take part in the history of ideas to which he belongs; he doesn’t take earlier and authoritative (not authoritarian) work to be final, but engages in respectful conversation and critical analysis. One could say that Einstein’s education and discoveries were made in the context of a wider and older conceptual field of ideas (Kant). (Could it be that screenomatic and ‘focal’ awareness is a being-present without full ‘presence’ to the world?...a constricted way of being which understands the past to be dead and gone but able to be stored as information that can be accessed at will?) But, phenomenologically, that is, as we experience the past, it is always in a state of ingression, as Whitehead would say, into the present; it is already there as ‘fringe data’ or a kind of haunting which remains virtual until actualized; but, unfortunately, it is often through a rupture in our everyday situations that the fundamental questions, and wider context of reality, come into view—usually from something incoherent, paradoxical, or problematic in the situation something becomes questionable! The kinds of questions

Socrates asked concerned the proper education (paideia) of the psyche for a virtuous life and justice in the larger whole (polis).

But the question I would like to ask concerns the nature of a question itself. What is a question? And have you ever really experienced one? I say experienced, because all true learning and thinking is predicated upon a vital question—not one you merely ask, but one you live through. Such questions are not abstract, that is, they are not asked in order to predict something, elicit a right or wrong answer, nor calculated to gain information, nor prove what one has already decided upon; they are put forth in order to open up a new region in which “to be” and “think.” With vital questions, “thinking” and “being” are the same! And these kinds of questions can only be asked if we ourselves are first put in question, that is, if we ourselves have become questionable in our very being. To become questionable in one’s being means to lose the rut and track that guides our everyday actions and grounds our existence. Only when we become ungrounded and unsure of our own position, can we become ready for the possibility of learning something else, that is, of not only seeing another point of view, but also becoming something else. This being-ready-for and turning-towards that which is to be learned makes possible the space of dialogue in which thinking and learning take place.


A vital question requires a vital answer, and so must always be asked in the context of dialogue. And this is so even if the interlocutor—as in the famous case of Socrates—is one’s own inner voice (daimonion). It is in dialogue that we risk our position by confronting an alternate way to think and be. It is always through the silent gaze of the other that our own thinking and being is brought into question. In monologue we risk nothing; the questions we ask are abstract and calculated to conform to our own assumptions. When we confront an object as to its weight, color or composition, the answers we receive have nothing to do with who or what we are. Things do not answer back! They do not cause us to reflect upon ourselves. All too often we face each other in monologue, where from behind our well-armed bulwark of prejudice, presupposition, and hearsay, we shoot our arrows of factual information at the defended fortress of the other. A monologue assumes that all has been learned—that there is nothing left to say! But a vital question—a question on which our lives depend—must by its nature remain problematic. In this way the question stays in keeping with the growth and becoming of life itself by staying responsive and on the move. The concept of “justice,” for instance, must continually be brought into question and kept alive by each of us in each successive and changing generation. Vital questions—those concerning what Whitehead called “matters of importance” (not merely “matters of fact,” but what tells us what to do with the facts or how to evaluate them)—find their proper place in the open-ended space of dialogue, which of its nature always presents another point of view. This will insure that the notion of “justice” does not calcify into a dead concept. A living answer is gained in struggle and must forever remain questionable and open to the changes and unforeseen dangers which life presents.

III

We hope that this short introduction concerning the role of philosophy and education will raise some further questions about how we theorize education. Technology (techne)—its mode of thinking (operational) and its extensions and products—is simply the objectification and materialization of a certain comportment and way of being-toward-the-world (Heidegger). One could say that educational issues—as misguided as they are without philosophy, that is, without understanding their source, destiny and unfolding in terms of the Greek Logos—are caught up in a putatively non-problematic digital data-driven delirium. To think of ourselves as more progressive fails to understand the fundamental questions which belong to the human qua human—qualitative questions concerning the essence of the ‘good life,’ or the proper ‘care of the psyche,’ or the ‘just order’ of the political domain,...and so on. Thus requires that education drop its business model with its objectification of students as consumers and teachers as facilitators and salespersons—drop its search for the right (PC) methods and return to the incipient moment of its birth, not for answers, but rejuvenation in the quest for wisdom.

Endnotes

- 1
Martin Heidegger: *What Is Called Thinking*
(Harper Torchbooks. NY, SF London: 1968) pg. 6
- 2
Cf. Plato, *The Seventh Letter*
- 3
Albert Einstein, *Philosopher-Scientist*, Ed Paul Arthur
Schilpp (The Library of Living Philosophy Volume VII, p. 13)



**An Open
Letter to
Professor
Michael
Sandel**
SJSU
Philosophy
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Dear Professor Sandel,
San José State University recently announced a contract with edX (a company associated with MIT and Harvard) to expand the use of online blended courses. The SJSU Philosophy Department was asked to pilot your JusticeX course, and we refused. We decided to express to you our reasons for refusing to be involved with this course, and, because we believe that other departments and universities will sooner or later face the same predicament, we have decided to share our reasons with you publicly.

There is no pedagogical problem in our department that JusticeX solves, nor do we have a shortage of faculty capable of teaching our equivalent course. We believe that long-term financial considerations motivate the call for massively open online courses (MOOCs) at public universities such as ours. Unfortunately, the move to MOOCs comes at great peril to our university. We regard such courses as a serious compromise of quality of education and, ironically for a social justice course, a case of social injustice.

What are the essential components of a good quality education in a university?

First, one of the most important aspects of being a university professor is scholarship in one's specialization. Students benefit enormously from interaction with professors engaged in such research. The students not only have a teacher who is passionate, engaged and current on the topic, but, in classes, independent studies, and informal interaction, they are provided the opportunity to engage a topic deeply, thoroughly, and analytically in a dynamic and up-to-date fashion.

A social justice course needs to be current since part of its mission is the application of conceptions of justice to existing social issues. In addition to providing students with an opportunity to engage with active scholars, expertise in the physical classroom, sensitivity to its diversity, and familiarity with one's own students are simply not available in a one-size-fits-all blended course produced by an outside vendor.

Second, of late we have been hearing quite a bit of criticism of the traditional lecture model as a mismatch for today's digital generation. Anat Agarwal, edX President, has described the standard professor as basically just "pontificating" and "spouting content," a description he used ten times in a recent press conference here at SJSU. Of course, since philosophy has traditionally been taught using the Socratic method, we are largely in agreement as to the inadequacy of lecture alone. But, after all the rhetoric questioning the effectiveness of the antiquated method of lecturing and note taking, it is telling to discover that the core of edX's JusticeX is a series of video-taped lectures that include excerpts of Harvard students making comments and taking notes. In spite of our admiration for your ability to lecture in such an engaging way to such a large audience, we believe that having a scholar teach and engage his or her own students in person is far superior to having those students watch a video of another scholar engaging his or her students. Indeed, the videos of you lecturing to and interacting with your students is itself a compelling testament to the value of the in-person lecture/discussion.

In addition, purchasing a series of lectures does not provide anything over and above assigning a book to read. We do, of course, respect your work in political philosophy; nevertheless, having our students read a variety of texts, perhaps including your own, is far superior to having them listen to your lectures. This is especially important for a digital generation that reads far too little. If we can do something as educators we would like to increase literacy, not decrease it.

Third, the thought of the exact same social justice course being taught in various philosophy departments across the country is downright scary—something out of a dystopian novel. Departments across the country possess unique specializations and character, and should stay that way. Universities tend not to hire their own graduates for a reason. They seek different influences. Diversity in schools of thought and plurality of points of view are at the heart of liberal education.

First, what kind of message are we sending our students if we tell them that they should best learn what justice is by listening to the reflections of the largely white student population from a privileged institution like Harvard? Our very diverse students gain far more when their own experience is central to the course and when they are learning from our own very diverse faculty, who bring their varied perspectives to the content of courses that bear on social justice.

Second, should one-size-fits-all vendor-designed blended courses become the norm, we fear that two classes of universities will be created: one, well-funded colleges and universities in which privileged students get their own real professor; the other, financially stressed private and public universities in which students watch a bunch of video-taped lectures and interact, if indeed any interaction is available on their home campuses, with a professor that this model of education has turned into a glorified teaching assistant. Public universities will no longer provide the same quality of education and will not remain on par with well-funded private ones. Teaching justice through an educational model that is spearheading the creation of two social classes in academia thus amounts to a cruel joke.

What would our students learn about justice through a purchased blended course from a private vendor?

Can technology be used to improve education?

Absolutely. Blended courses provide the opportunity to listen to lectures for a second or third time and enable class discussion sessions outside the usual constraints of time and space. For these very reasons many of the faculty in our department offer very high quality online and blended versions of a number of our offerings, including video-taped material we ourselves have developed. All of these offerings are continuously updated and their use includes extensive interaction among students. In addition, they also involve extensive interaction with the professor teaching the course, something that is not available in MOOCs, which rely on videotaped lectures, canned exercises, and automated and peer grading.

When a university such as ours purchases a course from an outside vendor, the faculty cannot control the design or content of the course; therefore we cannot develop and teach content that fits with our overall curriculum and is based on both our own highly developed and continuously renewed competence and our direct experience of our students' needs and abilities. In the short term, we might be able to preserve our close contact with our students, but, given the financial motivations driving the move to MOOCs, the prognosis for the long term is grim.

The use of technology, as history shows, can improve or worsen the quality of education—but in a high quality course, the professor teaching it must be able both to design the course and to choose its materials, and to interact closely with the students. The first option is not available in a pre-packaged course, and the second option is at grave risk if we move toward MOOCs.

We believe the purchasing of online and blended courses is not driven by concerns about pedagogy, but by an effort to restructure the U.S. university system in general, and our own California State University system in particular. If the concern were pedagogically motivated, we would expect faculty to be consulted and to monitor quality control. On the other hand, when change is financially driven and involves a compromise of quality it is done quickly, without consulting faculty or curriculum committees, and behind closed doors. This is essentially what happened with SJSU's contract with edX. At a press conference (April 10, 2013 at SJSU) announcing the signing of the contract with edX, California Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom acknowledged as much: "The old education financing model, frankly, is no longer sustainable." This is the crux of the problem. It is time to stop masking the real issue of MOOCs and blended courses behind empty rhetoric about a new generation and a new world. The purchasing of MOOCs and blended courses from outside vendors is the first step toward restructuring the CSU.

Good quality online courses and blended courses (to which we have no objections) do not save money, but purchased-pre-packaged ones do, and a lot. With pre-packaged MOOCs and blended courses, faculty are ultimately not needed. A teaching assistant would suffice to facilitate a blended course,



It is time to call it like it is.

and one might argue, paying a university professor just to monitor someone else's material would be a waste of resources. Public universities that have so long and successfully served the students and citizens of California will be dismantled, and what remains of them will become a hodgepodge branch of private companies.

Administrators of the CSU say they do not see a choice; they are trying to admit and graduate as many students as they can with insufficient funds. Whether they are right in complying with rather than resisting this, the discussion has to be honest and to the point. Let's not kid ourselves; administrators at the CSU are beginning a process of replacing faculty with cheap online education. In our case, we had better be sure that this is what we want to do because once the CSU or any university system is restructured in this way it will never recover.

Industry is demanding that public universities devote their resources to providing ready-made employees, while at the same time they are resisting paying the taxes that support public education. (California is the ninth largest economy in the world, yet has one of the most poorly supported public education systems in the nation.) Given these twin threats, the liberal arts are under renewed attack in public universities. We believe that education in a democracy must be focused on responsible citizenship, and general education courses in the liberal arts are crucial to such education. The move to outside vendor MOOCs is especially troubling in light of this—it is hard to see how they can nourish the complex mix of information, attitudes, solidarity and moral commitment that are crucial to flourishing democracies.

We respect your desire to expand opportunities for higher education to audiences that do not now have the chance to interact with new ideas. We are very cognizant of your long and distinguished record of scholarship and teaching in the areas of political philosophy and ethics. It is in a spirit of respect and collegiality that we are urging you, and all professors involved with the sale and promotion of edX-style courses, not to take away from students in public universities the opportunity for an education beyond mere jobs training. Professors who care about public education should not produce products that will replace professors, dismantle departments, and provide a diminished education for students in public universities.


Sincerely and in solidarity,
The Department of Philosophy
San José State University
April 29, 2013

Professor Sandel's Response
From Michael Sandel, Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Professor of Government,
Harvard University

I strongly believe that online courses are no substitute for the personal engagement of teachers with students, especially in the humanities. A few years ago, with Harvard's support, I made my course "Justice" freely available online, as an experiment in open global access to the classroom. The goal was to enable anyone, anywhere, to have free access to the lecture videos, a discussion blog, and other educational materials.

This year, we made a version of the course available on the edX platform. I know very little about the arrangements edX made with San Jose State University, and nothing about the internal discussions at SJSU. My goal is simply to make an educational resource freely available—a resource that faculty colleagues should be free to use in whole or in part, or not at all, as they see fit.

The worry that the widespread use of online courses will damage departments in public universities facing budgetary pressures is a legitimate concern that deserves serious debate, at edX and throughout higher education. The last thing I want is for my online lectures to be used to undermine faculty colleagues at other institutions.



Corporatizing the Student Psyche

Mannie
Menéndez-
Pidal

Corporatizing the Student Psyche

Mannie
Menéndez-
Pidal



In our educational system, we are schooled to become uncritical calculating machines. Now more than ever, thirst for profit, competition for the highest grades and numbers, and information acquisition have invaded and implanted themselves in the “knowledge industry.”¹ Variables like teacher and student “success,” retention rates, and the school budget have reduced the educational activity to number crunching and fancy spreadsheets...all this to appease administrative and state mandates. Let’s just go back to Pink Floyd’s “Another Brick in the Wall”² to rethink how our educational system is pumping us out to survive hopelessly through life as computing units —now at hyper speed with computers and data systems!

1
Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University*, 5th ed. Cambridge, Harvard University, 2001. pp. 66.

2
Pink Floyd. "Another Brick in the Wall Part Two." *The Wall*, 1979. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrxX9TBJ2zY> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YR5ApYxkU-U>.

3
To really illustrate the factual basis of my claims, there are copious examples from which to choose. However, here are a few: Race to the Top, a federal education program, defines "student growth" as "the change in student achievement between two or more points"—numerical measurements of progress! Moreover, teachers, and entire schools, receive more money or are punished based on these numerical variables of "student growth" and test scores. In general, for a more detailed, factual examination of the data-driven model, and how it is imposed on education institutions (focusing on universities), see: Ginsberg, Benjamin. *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters*. Oxford University, 2001.

4
Marx, Karl. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Translated by Martin Milligan, 1st manuscript, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1959. pp. 30. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Economic-Philosophic-Manuscripts-1844.pdf. Accessed 18 Jan. 2019.

5
This term 'efficiency' is crucial because it's what pushes the administrative-educational system. By no means is it a neutral term meaning the quickest method to producing commodities for sale and consumption; rather, when we think of efficiency, it would be more appropriate to think of the constriction of human life and time to bare immediacy: worry about the tasks at hand, like any animal, constantly endeavoring to fulfill the necessities of food, water, sex, etc. In doing so, turn away from the vain extravagancies of artistic-philosophic pursuits, which require both a "stepping out" of the day-to-day banality of life and some reflection.

6
Chomsky, Noam. "Education: For Whom and For What?" YouTube, uploaded by The University of Arizona, 8 Feb 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_EgdShO1K8&t=618s. Accessed 18 Jan. 2019.

7
Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization*. Boston, Beacon, 1966. pp. 89.

Because of this "data-driven business model," school has become a place where ideological assumptions are imposed on bewildered minds,³ not a place where the young can become free, responsible citizens. Yes, information and bureaucracy are great, even necessary, but the larger concern is that our "information education" is systematically preventing us from developing the human capacity to think. Two consequences occur: treated as commodities we students become alienated from our human condition, and the nature of humanity is contorted into the Siliconic dream of living as robots.

To provide some context, the existential state of alienation, or estrangement from oneself and social environment, can be found in the economic theory of Karl Marx: "[The] external character of labor for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, [...] that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another".⁴ Marx thought that life activity under capitalist labor would degrade human existence to a kind of thing, or commodity to be bought, sold, and quantified. Both the maker and product become objects that function in a system evaluated in terms of 'efficiency.'⁵ Add onto that a lack of job security, and we'll find the worker eking out an existence in survival mode, one step closer to the animal.

Although students are not strictly "workers," we're more like them than not: we produce works, essays, homework, tests, etc., under strict deadlines and receive grades in place of wages. Constant information and assignments pile up for years and years; the older you get, the more information to absorb. With so much work and so little time to live, each assignment with its added pressure becomes more and more meaningless. The leaky vessel theory of education, mentioned by Noam Chomsky (see picture), explains how the data-driven business model crafts us into machines: a cracked vessel collects water, i.e. a student memorizes information for an assignment, and in time the forcibly retained water spills out.⁵ We suffer, like many digital workers today, from the model of labor as information exchange and our being a replaceable part in an impersonal network. (As an aside, knowing this would parents and politicians still wonder why so many kids find recourse to drugs, and perhaps even guns?)

Unlike Pink Floyd, however, alienation works, not at the hand of the teacher or boss, but, as Marcuse observes, because of a mechanized, "impersonal, [...] rational, [and] effective" system of domination.⁶ That is, the bureaucracy of education has become a towering power on its own, but with no one single objective reference, neither in the teacher, nor even administrators. In the background, the education system today compiles assignments and dishes out grades and diplomas with unprecedented speed and volume; and it applies a quantitative assessment to students themselves. While skills may improve, this apparatus transforms the student psyche into a mechanized instrument destined to fulfill computational functions.⁸ Receive a command, process it, and provide the corresponding information. Like the workers at McDonalds or Google, we commodified students face the reality all too soon; even in the institutions that are supposed to question, we learn to accept and admire the "real" of global techno-capitalism.

Allow me to give an example of the BS which fuels the school system. Philosopher Harry Frankfurt explains the phenomenon of Bullshit, and it shouldn't press our senses too much to smell this foul stench in our schools. So he says, "Just as hot air is speech that has been emptied of all informative content, so excrement is matter from which everything nutritive has been removed."⁹ This lack of nutritive content is exactly what has soiled the machinery of schools.¹⁰ To improve composition skills, the teacher hands out a prompt, and students must reach a page/word limit, fulfilling certain guidelines.



Start your day right with an inundation of sugary information!
Image credits to Amanda Burke

8

Obviously, at the college level this phenomenon becomes less frequent, as students can choose to study their passions, but we should be wary that the same pessimism toward education is still ingrained in us from more than a decade of this treatment.

9

Frankfurt, Harry. *On Bullshit*. Princeton University, 2005. pp. 43.

10

More than the essay, this phenomenon of a purposeful lack in education manifests itself through the essential nature and purpose of curriculum and syllabi, so pervasive in modern schools: take some abstract information mandated by some far-off power, and apply it onto the students' minds. It's the perfect recipe for unthinking, and for a content, otherwise occupied, parent.

11

Ortega y Gasset, José. *The Revolt of the Masses*. Anonymous Translation, New York, Norton and Company, 1964. pp. 41.

12

For an essay on this topic specifically, see another article in this magazine: Robert Lee, "Schools for Simians." *The Gadfly: Education in the 21st Century*. San José, 2019.

13

Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization*. Boston, Beacon, 1966. pp. 96.

14

Nietzsche quite shrewdly noted a commonality between our use of the word "current" in the sense of staying up to date on research and findings, and the word "currency" as it applies to the market economy. Both assume an ethic of emphasizing the utility of things or concepts, and not their true or normative import. See: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Anti-Education*. Translated by Damion Searls, New York, New York Review of Books, 2016. pp. 27.

The pervasive fill-in-the-blank method requires little to no thinking; students of the Digital Age can easily cut and paste, incorporate quotes without reading the text, and use a Thesaurus for the appearance of subtlety. In constantly repeating what is essentially the same task, the techno-literate student, like the worker, becomes a piece of information in a feedback loop from classroom to administration. Sure, the student might "learn" throughout the years, but at base this "learning" functions to throw us students into an undifferentiated world of postindustrial capitalism without any frame of reference.

Because education is reduced to information exchange in the 'now', it is antagonistic to the examination of history, the critique of the present, and the possibilities for change in the future. The mechanism of the school system impresses upon us the "real," that gathering and inputting information is an 'end in itself', to be desired on its own, ...not a 'means' to what José Ortega y Gasset called "finding oneself in 'circumstances' or in the world around us."¹¹ What else can we see but that our vital, lived time is then squandered by adapting to these tasks,¹² which in the end have no meaningful content outside of the grade and indoctrination which result?

Surely, education should, and needs to, have "practical" and economic effects; obviously, bureaucracy has to consider the finances and data of educational institutions, etc. However, the central point is, as Marcuse says, that all involved in the administrative bureaucracy are valued based on "standardized skills and qualities of adjustment" rather than "autonomous judgement and personal responsibility,"¹³ and in so doing the system becomes a near-totalitarian force over the student's mind (think 1984). An overpowering administrative apparatus doesn't function merely outside the classroom; it interposes itself into the real-space interactions between students and teachers, be it from the menial assignments we're given to the stale interactions that take place. We are effectively distracted from any freedom to thought, beyond mere calculating, and are taught to accept what is current.¹⁴ Alienation remains throughout this process in that the individual, who now understands his/her subjectivity as an information processor in an impersonal network, can no longer see that this subjectivity belongs to something else.

At this point, many readers might be thinking, "I don't agree with this at all. What really goes on in the classroom is more 'colorful' than the mindless, mechanical view he's proposing." And you'd be quite right in so thinking. A common experience actually proves otherwise: many teachers create a "safe space" and "facilitate" what may seem like differing points of view. Now, this concern cannot be fully examined within the parameters of this essay. But it is important to mention, that behind these innocent concerns is one of the leading factors to the nationwide decline in educational quality. In short, with the "facilitator-of-opinion" view of teaching, teachers promote an extreme subjectivity and thoughtless spirit by simply having students express themselves with polite disagreement. (Or, if any of you are like me, then you refuse to talk at all when forced.) Told to accept one's subjectivity as it is, the student does not learn to critique, neither her/himself nor society. One's subjective desires are then in danger of becoming a mechanical reaction, or simple likes and dislikes, and, as seen through numerous school shootings, an ideological cause of violence! But let's leave that for another time.

How has machinic calculating occluded a world of thought and freedom? This question, stuck with us since the rise of industrialization, seems to have gone unacknowledged in the past decades. Further, as our jobs become more and more specialized, we students will have even less of an opportunity to live our own lives, but will just blindly act in accordance with the demands of the current

reality. In no small terms, we have conformed to a constantly unstable, fluctuating apparatus that survives on menial robotic functions, and our education system has unjustly excluded how and why to think about history, autonomous responsibility, freedom, etc. Where is there questioning of this in the political sphere, or even widespread in the institutions which are supposed to educate? In face of such a societal and cultural lack, and in no small terms, all that we can do is to start thinking again, and to take it on ourselves to start doing it.

Endnotes

1

Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University*. 5th ed. Cambridge, Harvard University, 2001. pp. 66.

2

Pink Floyd. "Another Brick in the Wall Part Two." *The Wall*, 1979. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrxX9TBJ2zY> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YR5ApYxkU-U>.

3

To really illustrate the factual basis of my claims, there are copious examples from which to choose. However, here are a few: Race to the Top, a federal education program, defines "student growth" as "the change in student achievement between two or more points"—numerical measurements of progress! Moreover, teachers, and entire schools, receive more money or are punished based on these numerical variables of "student growth" and test scores. In general, for a more detailed, factual examination of the data-driven model, and how it is imposed on education institutions (focusing on universities), see: Ginsberg, Benjamin. *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters*. Oxford University, 2001.

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5

This term 'efficiency' is crucial because it's what pushes the administrative-educational system. By no means is it a neutral term meaning the quickest method to producing commodities for sale and consumption; rather, when we think of efficiency, it would be more appropriate to think of the constriction of human life and time to bare immediacy: worry about the tasks at hand, like any animal, constantly endeavoring to fulfill the necessities of food, water, sex, etc. In doing so, turn away from the vain extravagancies of artistic-philosophic pursuits, which require both a "stepping out" of the day-to-day banality of life and some reelection.

6

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An Apology for Apologies

Bhardvaj
Patel

An Apology for Apologies

**Bhardvaj
Patel**

Address

To the President Donald Trump, the elected officials of the House and Senate, and to the people of the United States, I, Bhardvaj Patel, son of Ravindrakumar and grandson of Manibhai, natives of Gujarat in India, present this address and petition on behalf of all those citizens of this and all democratic nations who are inadequately educated for the purpose of public participation in the governance of our great political bodies.

Justice Demanded

Democracy, as a political framework, requires of its citizenry their participation in directing the course of governance through the ore of wisdom forged in the flames of argumentation and tempered by the training of eloquent speech. Rhetoric and, more specifically, the apologetic genre, in the Greek sense of a defense, has been discarded in recent years as the primary vehicle by which we, the people, achieve the oratory and inter-subjective reasoning skills necessary to deliberate publicly and defend our varied positions. As such, we have been left defenseless against the mechanisms of the media and excluded from the political arena for a lack of ability to engage either on firm footing. Do you then, as our elected representatives and thus accountable to our will, hear this address and honor it? If you are rightly to be called our leaders and upholders of these democratic institutions, there should be no doubt of it. We have come, neither to depose nor threaten you, nor impress nor bribe you, but to urge your impartial investigation into, and reintegration of, the disavowed methods of our education for their link to our lack of adequate capability in the public forum. For as we run our current course, our freedoms and responsible involvement in our institutions rapidly decline and we are stripped of our defense against such encroachments that run counter to the foundational principles of our great nation.

The Historical Basis of Our Claim

To reason against any claim that our position is errant or invalid, we demand an examination of the history from which we derive our institutions and the behavior and education proper to the citizens that participate in them. Beginning with the Greeks, to whom we owe the debt of our democracy, it should be noted what role rhetoric and the apology played in thoughtful public involvement. The education of the Greek citizen in Athens was based in the application of practical wisdom to the sphere of the polis. In this sense, the content and delivery of public speech was directed at a particular audience in a particular context, and not abstracted from that which grounded the people in the process of self-governing. The purpose of rhetorical practice was tied to the execution of the duties of the citizenry in the decisions of the court and the formation of policy. To the extent that any political involvement was marked by the ability to mount a defense for a given position, and required that education be directed toward this end, the functioning of the citizen as a political agent came first and foremost, leaving other specialized concerns, such as mathematics and poetry, as secondary. This preparation of the average person as a political agent is that from which we derive the force of our current system. The direct democracy characteristic of the Greeks, where each citizen shares in a one to one relationship between their own concerns and that of the government, differs from the representative system we hold to through choosing officials to mediate between our concerns and that of the government, but the emphasis on the ability of citizens to engage thoughtfully in the ordering of our society remains central to our system. Yet, more and more, we find ourselves divorced from the efficacy of our speech in interacting with our democracy.

The Apologetic Genre in Defense of Christianity

Beyond the Greeks, we find the apologetic genre taken up by the Early Christians as a testament to the power of this form of education in mediating the conflict between various beliefs and their resolution. Christianity owes to rhetorical training in the apologetic genre a great debt for its existence. An education in apologies was key to the survival of a people and their navigation of the Roman Empire, where again we find institutions which we have borrowed for our own government. Without the capability of the defense aimed at the leaders of the empire, early Christians would have been swept under the tide of Roman rule with little means to negotiate their existence under the banner of their differences. The crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth would be little more than a historical footnote, if noted at all, without the relentless apologetic stands taken against the early persecutors of Christians by the most active of his followers. Negotiation of vastly different belief systems among people who share a political system is, in many ways, a cornerstone of the philosophical impetus that burgeoned into what we now call the United States. Without the means to conduct these confrontations, nurtured in the public through education, these conflicts are left to be resolved by the blunt force of a blind majority. A democracy abdicates its structure as a rule by the people in such a situation, and as time presses forward, such situations are bound to repeat on larger and bloodier platforms rather than recede into history. The nature of the conflict between early Christians and the Roman Empire is telling of the necessity of such an education in the apologetic genre, as without such an education being present in those that mounted the defense for Christians, there would be little case in the history and genesis of our political body for the plurality of positions honored in our United States.

Our Withered Rhetoric and the Death of Democracy

When wisdom is no longer directed toward the general good, but to increasingly specialized occupation, we become bound to lofty theoretical concerns and untethered from that which grounds us practically as a people.

When madness meets our leaders' lips, we remain listless for a lack of prose to speak truth to power.

When the media is left to speak for us, we become complicit in our inability to announce ourselves as members of our political body.

When rhetoric is disavowed as a tool of training in eloquent argument and sentiment, we are forced to listen, muted in our presence as citizens.

We are neither wholly apathetic nor unintelligent, but uninformed of our ability to put politicians and policies on trial as we are barred from the courtrooms of public discourse.

We are taught in a tradition held to be the backbone of the civilization we have been born into, yet we are barred from exercising a pivotal component of the education central to that tradition.

We learn of the great orators, to whom we owe the debt of the promise of our age, yet we are given no means by which to follow in their footsteps.

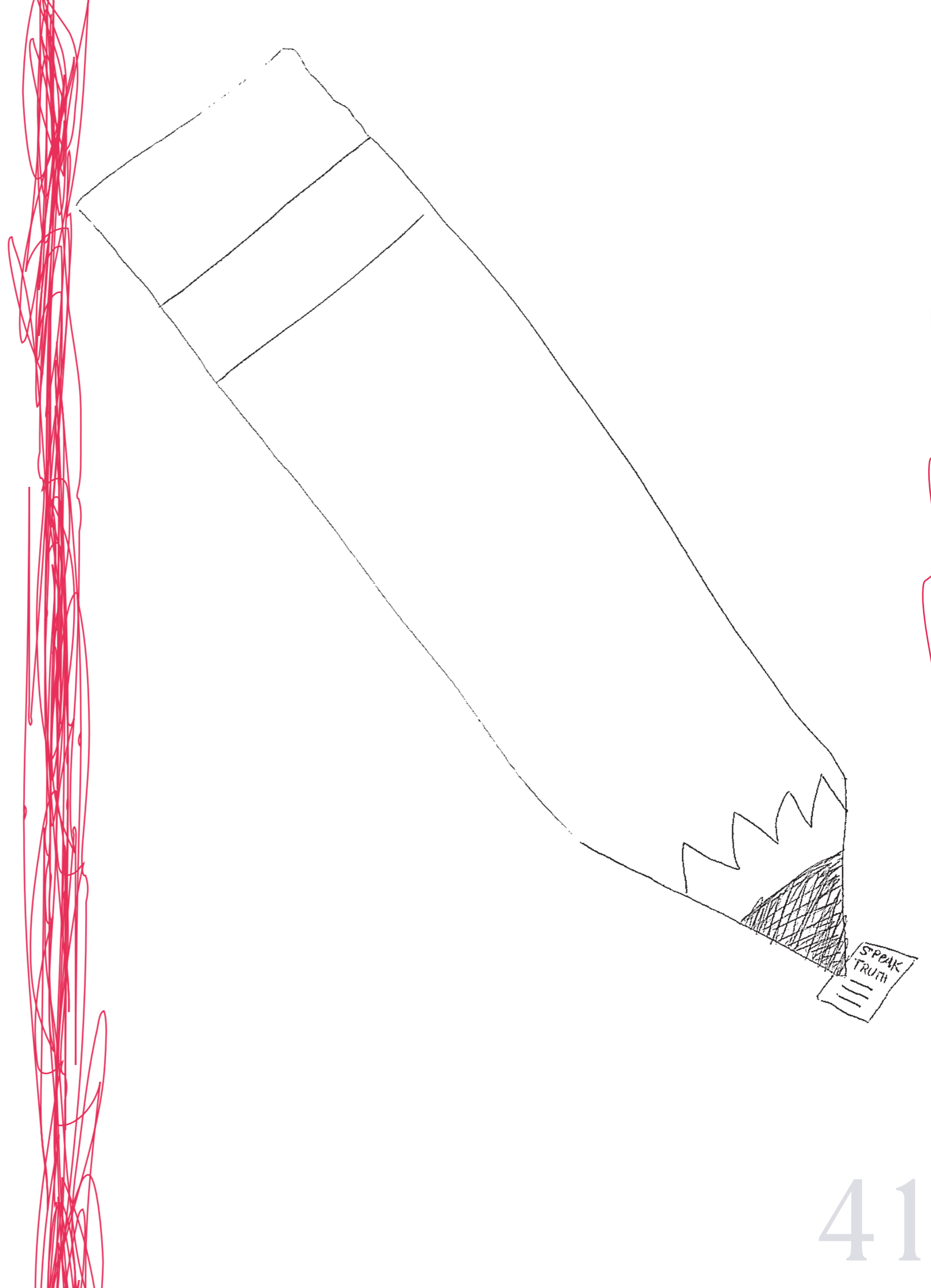
We are a budding generation charged with securing the future of our nation, left to rot on a withering platform of secondhand platitudes.

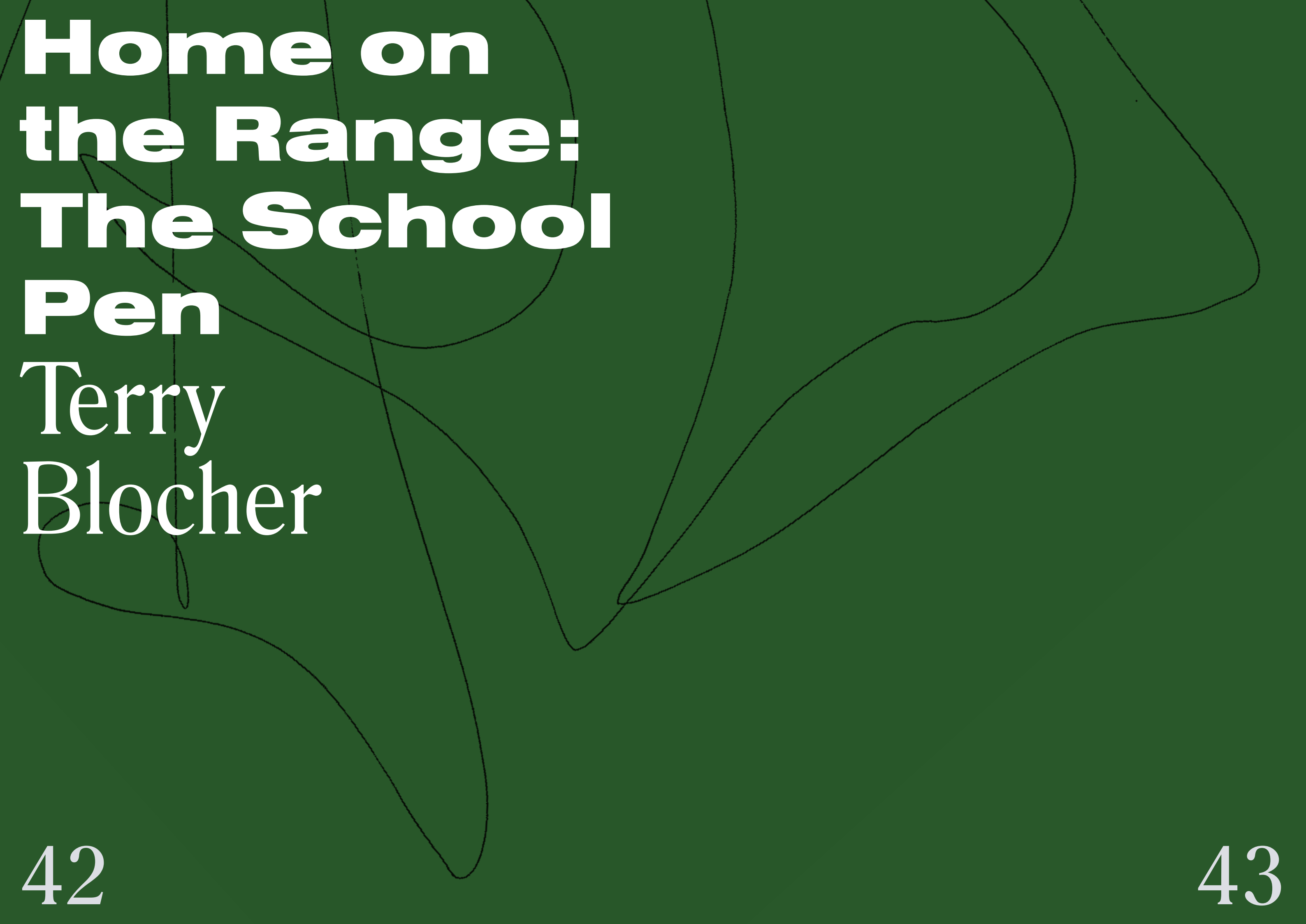
We yearn for our own words to capture our own elusive horizon, but settle for the verbal sediment at the bottom of the glass handed to us by our institutions.

We are told to participate, yet our only means of participation is a vote on matters that are framed for us rather than by us, or through speech that must be limited to 160 characters, flashing as quickly out of relevance as the words appear.

We are told to participate, but our discussions are neglected for our lack of prowess in the arena of informed public debate.

To this, our reply is a demand for the reformation of our education system towards these ends for which we've been left on the wayside of opportunity.





**Home on
the Range:
The School
Pen**
Terry
Blocher

Home on the Range: The School Pen Terry Blocher

The form of a home is defined by its walls. What is limited directly determines an object's material size and potential. The space something occupies denies the presence of another. When a wall is erected, it often creates a barrier by excluding the outside from the inside, effectively cutting off a space not only physically but mentally. This phenomenon could qualify as a cold hard fact, an extension of social atomism, science, architecture, and reason. One could see a human longing for these walls from the tallest skyscraper to the most humble teepee. Based on will, this collective desire, being limiting in its nature, has the capacity to limit us further. It is this capacity for containment which the nation states of the world saw fit to fulfill.

A school, through its physical structure, serves to assert the state's authority, legitimacy, and power. The boundaries of these places of learning are not accidental. These boundaries inwardly resonate the message of its creator in the minds of the students. In effect, the school has a disciplinary function and acts as a prison one might leave, yet can never escape. Rather than control for control's sake, these forces encapsulate the pessimistic spirit of American democracy itself.

One could say that the form of a school follows its function. After all, investments well beyond billions of dollars in taxpayer, or private, money in the form of a sprawl of schools would require some attention to detail. Now, this paper will not discuss efficiency, efficacy, and competence in a school's given goal; however, the function of a school, manifested in its form, remains clear. A school, in its physical and ideational structure, maintains the goal of limiting the freedom of those attending. There are many ways to reduce freedom. There are iron bars, rules, regulations, walls which cannot be climbed or broken to name a few. One could find these things almost anywhere in society, on a farm, in a city's downtown area, in a person's home, etcetera. The difference between the latter places and a school is its recognized right to compel students to attend. At this point, one might object that a school is a necessary and invaluable place to guide young people through their personal development—even to the point that they are compelled and organized in such a way as to reduce their freedom. On the other hand, there exists an excessiveness and poignancy in these regulations which does not lend itself to any kind of personal education of the student. More accurately, part of that education—if not the whole—aims to capture the student's mind. Just as a Roman wall might be called a defense against barbarian Visigoths, a school fence might be called a defense against school shooters and child predators.

Yet a fence is not a wall and the ones employed across America are not employed to deter those who might hurt students, but to target the students. To say a fence is not a wall may be an overstatement of its physicality. The fence and its boundaries can create walls within the minds of attending students. If actions follow from their surrounding life-world, then the fences mold behavior. No one growing to the age of eighteen and perhaps beyond is allowed to see beyond the bars of these fences, that is, we are trained to limit our own freedom by believing those bars cannot be breached conventionally. Another device which targets students uniquely is the metal detector. These evaluators of some of the most extreme threats in society are entirely linked with suspicion and control over behavior. Though they do have a role in discouraging violence at school, some studies show they also correlate with fear and feelings of lack of safety.¹ Only by following rules and attending school, the institution, can freedom be bought. Thus, freedom has become a commodity, an access point through which we are led to believe we possess only on the good graces of those who instruct us and those who create the rules.

Discipline forms a basis of the school's curriculum. It should come as no surprise that nations ready for war would translate the same attitude into the minds of the young: desks are set in rows—ranks—to follow the lead of one authority figure. A student's learning reality is set in such a way as that they acknowledge a hierarchy. This common factory seating arrangement exists as a training manual. With it, a student comes to believe in their own right of a reason to follow orders; the definition of a good student in this setting means one who does not disrupt or change the order. This sort of stability suits a war machine more than an education. Excessive force is applied in the uniformity of classrooms, and the result is an extension of the State's will into those classrooms. But in no way does the ideology of the circular

sitting arrangement—with its sacred aura—rid the classroom of its spatial indoctrination and regimentation. If the lineal chair arrangement signals a hierarchical or more Republican gesture, the soft discipline of the circle resonates with the Liberal and Politically Correct order of things! If students come to see figures in front of the classroom as central, it follows that behavior would emerge to support pre existing orders. Students are trained to see whoever exists in the highest positions as someone with inherent power and say-so in any discussion. This transformation of the mind acts more unconsciously than not. Just as those who must state they have power but have none, a classroom's projected authority acts wordlessly. When shown the face of what education calls reality, there is little alternative.

Enter Michel Foucault, who wrote extensively about justice and authority, and the forms of discipline that take shape. The reality of physical control manifests itself not only in the ordering of desks but also through the projected mindset of a student. The degree of healthy living is defined by a person's self-control over their body. Foucault wrote about the emergence of timetables and ordering in the enlightenment:

The time-table is an old inheritance. The strict model was no doubt suggested by the monastic communities. It soon spread. Its three great methods establish rhythms, impose particular occupations, regulate the cycles of repetition and were soon to be found in schools, workshops and hospitals.²

In this ongoing case, the compulsion of time brings people in line. Rather than a natural framework, classroom time acts as a wordless message of order which prepares the student to conform to the worktime clock. Part of a student's outward appearance involves this level of control when it comes to sitting up straight, by not raising their voice or otherwise making a nuisance, and through exercise.

Foucault comments about similar studies of soldier training. In this commentary, Foucault introduces a pattern of behavior involved when groups of people are forced to act the same way:

We have passed from a form of injunction that measured or punctuated gestures to a web that constrains them or sustains them throughout their entire succession. A sort of anato-chronological schema of behaviour is defined. The act is broken down into its elements; the position of the body, limbs, articulations is defined; to each movement are assigned a direction, an aptitude, a duration; their order of succession is prescribed. Time penetrates the body and with it all the meticulous controls of power.³

Where exercise might build a more healthy person, the orderly discipline of a student's rigidity stems from the institution's penchant for creating hegemony in groups. Whether a physical education class or the ordering of persons in a classroom, specific movements are expected and enforced in accordance with time. The traditional standard of discipline has a predominant side effect of creating a bubble of conformity which punishes not only different ways of sitting but different avenues of thought. When a person measures a standard of good to follow that of what their peers do, breaking the mindset proves difficult and anxiety creating.

More than physical constraints, the barrier that keeps students in order is human surveillance. In public schools, the watchful eyes of cameras, teachers and hall monitors create areas of denial (that is, zones of perceived danger students dare not cross). Classrooms being outfitted with the latest technology verge on more than privacy, they create passive surveillance of a student's life. Foucault also touches upon Bentham's prison design of the Panopticon. This type of surveillance observable in public institutions from prisons to schools is an effective means of utilizing a limited number of watchers to survey a 360-degree angle twenty-four hours a day. This system works because it implants a suspicion that people in these areas are always being watched.⁴ It is one matter to institute incentives to keep a person's unwanted impulses in check; cameras of this nature create areas of danger in the minds of students. Coupled with the ever present guards of teachers and hall monitors keeping watch, the school system creates an effective ring of jail wardens to keep students inside. Regardless of whether students learn from what is being taught or wish themselves to learn, these fundamental walls of observation seek to keep these students permanently under wraps. These measures weave a constant and reliable reality which demands a degree of obedience from those attending. As discussed before, these areas of control do not exist simply for control's sake, they act in a manner which bestows more power to the administrative grid.

We come full circle to the founding tenets of America and by effect, its powerful historical influence worldwide. The United States adopts an inherently pessimistic attitude with its system of checks and balances on the government and structure of the country. In its very balance of power in politics, it establishes a mistrust of human nature.⁵ In its conduct, the country declares an inherent lack of reason in the positions of power. One need only look to the influences of the constitution's writers to gain a more complete picture of their attitude. John Adams wrote to his son about his education saying, "There is no History, perhaps, better adapted to this usefull Purpose than that of Thucydides, an Author, of whom I hope you will make yourself perfect Master..."⁶ As was a proper education at Adam's time, the Greeks were a common and important influence. Thucydides acts as a significant milestone in scientific history for his attempt to relate both sides of the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides talks about the carnage in the city Corcyra on the island of Corfu. Thucydides details the class warfare among Corcyra's people:

During seven days that eurymedon stayed with his sixty ships, the corcyraeans were engaged in butchering those of their fellow citizens whom they regarded as their enemies: and although the crime imputed was that of attempting to put down the democracy, some were slain also for private hatred, others by their betters because of the moneys owed to them. Death thus raged in every shape; and, as usually happens at such times, there was no length to which violence did not go; sons were killed by their fathers, and suppliants dragged from the altar or slain upon it; while some were even walled up in the temple of Dionsys and died there.⁷

This event sticks out in history for the petty and thus preventable nature of its violence, to which Thucydides adds in detailing the extent of damage done and the specific reasons,

The cause of all these evils was the was the lust for power arising from greed and ambition; and from these passions proceeded the violence of parties once engaged in contention. The leaders in the cities, each provided with the fairest professions, on the one side with the cry of political equality of the people, on the other of a moderate aristocracy, sought prizes for themselves in those public interests which they pretended to cherish, and, recoiling from no means in their struggles for ascendancy engaged in the direst excesses; in their acts of vengeance they went to even greater lengths, not stopping at what justice or the good of the state demanded, but making the party caprice of the moment their only standard, and invoking with equal readiness the condemnation of an unjust verdict or the authority of the strong arm to glut the animosities of the hour. Thus religion was in honor with neither party; but the use of fair phrases to arrive at guilty ends was in high reputation. Meanwhile the moderate part of the citizens perished between the two, either for not joining in the quarrel, or because envy would not suffer them to escape.⁸

Parallels of later American fears find themselves here. Thucydides unveils a terrible and untamable human ambition which he claims forms a basis for the destruction in Corcyra, and by implication, in many conflicts. Destruction and needless conflict lie squarely on man's shoulders. Thucydides' message is to say that the mobs of killers in Corcyra had reasons for what they did and by implication, we do as well. This view of nature stands today set into the foundations of American democracy. As shown by the system of checks and balances with the explicit purpose of limiting the power of any one branch of government, the United States adopts an outlook of mistrust towards the people within. If form follows function, schools might just stand as a manifestation of this same inward criticism. With a standardization and submission to authority not unlike a society preparing for a riot, the form of schools does resemble this doctrine of checking power. Walls and structure act as a seemingly effective means of preventing unwanted movements and opinions.

A mainline of barriers are thrust on the young and those wanting to learn. The norm for a school is to block access for what is thought of as an impressionable and possibly rowdy demographic. Rather than for protection, a school's walls exist for control. A paper which says someone should sit in a certain room at a certain time is exerted control. But the modern school does more than provide that paper. The modern school has a slew of devices which act physically in space-time and mentally in terms of the politicization of curriculum and class content. By today's standards Bentham's Panopticon—which was built on industrial standards of technology—is outdated! The new forms of control and compliance are operationally dictated by the information machine itself. Now students, along with administrators and teachers, must comply in real time to the imperatives of digital telematics—all must be, at all times, accessible, locatable, and active as nodal units in the feedback loop of the information education machine. The reason for control is plain. Control is meant

to mitigate its opposite, chaos. The chaos and slaughter Thucydides accounts for is one such example to which America's founders sought to avoid. That spirit of control echoes today, though its extent reaches levels of harmful paranoia. One might remark that education in America resembles fear itself. Like an individual mind, it might be healthier if certain repression came to the surface and could be discussed. Much thought behind these instituted forms of control is likely lost in the collective eye of both policymakers and the public as a whole. The question of whether education has a more open alternative is still unvoiced and underutilized to the extent that people consciously acknowledge and put thought into it.



Endnotes

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What do you believe about education?

James David Zoland

What do you believe about education?

James David Zoland

Do you believe it's fun?
Do you believe it's boring?
Do you believe it's pointless?
Do you believe it can be more?

Do you believe
it's just a means
to a job there to
perpetuate the
status quo?

Do you believe it's
just an exchange of
information data
transfer amongst
silicon persons?

Do you believe it's just
indoctrination truth never
found in authority?

Do you believe it's something that can
define you an attitude with which you
approach life?

Do you believe your views change
how you live?

Do you believe views are challenges
when you learn?


Do you believe your views changing
lead to education?

Do you believe education
widens perspectives?

Do you believe that there is more to you
than expected?

Do you believe that there is more to truth
comprising the complexity of experience?

Do you believe that there can be value in knowing thyself?



**School
for
Simians**
Robert Lee

School for Simians Robert Lee

Quigley the gorilla, according to the satirical news site The Onion, has been able to be taught its own death.¹ This poor gorilla contemplates existence itself as a “cruel joke.” The reason why this fake newscast comes off as so absurd is the gorilla’s “complex emotions” as it realizes that its own muscles will eventually decompose. The news segment is clearly a parody of the humanizing ape-learning experiments such as those on Koko the gorilla and Kanzi the bonobo. If Quigley were a human being, the humor would certainly turn into a stark seriousness, for human beings seem existentially oriented toward their deaths in a way forever unfamiliar to the earlier pre-humans.

1
"Scientists Successfully Teach
Gorilla It Will Die Someday."
The Onion, [https:// www.theonion.com/
scientists-successfully-teach-gorilla-it-will-
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Human beings can and must learn things about life that apes cannot.

For many people education has become a preparation machine, i.e. a merely useful apparatus for getting young people into the swing of everyday work and environmental obstacles. In this essay, it will be proposed that this view of education as mere preparation is animalistic and more relevant to monkeys than it is to people. Human beings need much more to be introduced to the world in which they historically move. In order to get this point across, this work will examine and explore three issues: first, what education is for and how it separates itself from mere animalistic preparation; second, how conceptions of adaptability and practicality play out in a variety of scholastic attitudes; lastly, what such attitudes do to many aspects of one's educational life.

One should keep in mind that as these prevalent attitudes toward education are discussed, it is not being said that the concepts of adaptability and practicality are bad in and of themselves. These days, students should of course learn to adapt and be practical in their decisions. The point here is that holding these concepts as central to what a good education should be keeps important aspects of human life hidden and only allows mere preparation for one's environment as the aim of education.

The Environment and the World: Preparation and Education

Before the concepts of adaptability and practicality are explicated, and how they play out in educational practice is revealed, what must first be explained is why a human being should become educated at all. One might ask what education is if it is so important to do correctly and holds so much weight for the society at large.

20th century German thinker, Hannah Arendt, discussed the purpose of education in an essay entitled "The Crisis in Education." For Arendt, education acts as a transitory period between the private domain of the home and the world itself.² This means that for children the first socially decided and institutional introduction to the world is through schooling. What is important to note here for the purposes of this essay is that this is a specifically human practice. Human beings educate their young while animals merely prepare their young. This distinction here is heavily inspired by Arendt:

It seems that while animals prepare their young for an environment, human beings educate their young into a world. Now, the differences between environment and world must be briefly touched upon.³

First of all, the environment is something that must be adapted to. If an animal fails to adapt to an environment adequately, it will fail to survive. As most people know, this is the process that drives and steers evolution. Clever critters with specific traits or skills will surpass those without. If the environment changes, the creatures had better change with it or else be left behind. Eventually down the evolutionary line, however, animals begin to enter into a curious state of hominization. Before the human being emerges from the evolutionary scrimmage, animals begin to self-effect their own environments. For instance, they begin to organize themselves into helpful herd formations or use gizmos like rocks and sticks to throw, smash, and cut. The contemporary German philosopher, Peter Sloterdijk, calls this a "greenhouse effect," where the animal, or animal-herd, is "being-in-the-greenhouse-environment" insofar as it effects its own climate.⁴ At this point, once the animal is a climate-former, evolution begins to favor those that can not only adapt to but change their own environments. When looking at the human being, being-in-the-greenhouse has taken such a dramatic effect that one can hardly call it being-in-the-environment at all. Now, the human being is in a world and is a world-creator.



4 Sloterdijk, Peter. "The Domestication of Being." *Not Saved*, Polity Press, 2017, pp. 109. Print.

5 Ibid. 4. pp. 122.

6 Heidegger, Martin. "What is Metaphysics?" *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell, HarperCollins Publishers, 2008, pp. 103. Print.

7 Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man*. Boston, Beacon Press, 1974. pp. xlvi. Print.

Human groups take care of themselves in a "cultural incubator, their greenhouse of technology, art, and customs" as they live mostly in the past and future rather than "the continual present of the animal."⁵ The mere animal cannot see far beyond the obstacles immediately present as this is what characterizes such an environment. The world, however, manifests itself in a whole new range of experiences. Human beings are stuck out into the striking indeterminacy of the world. In Martin Heidegger's words, the human being is "held out into the nothing."⁶

Being held out into indeterminacy, people can see that the world is a certain way but does not have to be. The human world is always a possible world as opposed to the animal's environment which is always actual and immediate. The latter's youth only require a preparation to deal with a singular set environment, while the former's youth require more due to the complexity of the world's possibilities.

It is then education that introduces the student to a world which, as opposed to the primate's environment, has a history, a culture, civilizations, institutions, and various dominating worldviews. These aspects of human life have structurally emerged from a high level of complex greenhouse formations. Without equivocation, the dog has no worldview; the chimpanzee has no culture; the gorilla has no history. Thus, an education, as an introduction to the world, must do a lot more than simply prepare or encourage students to conform to an actual environment in its brute immediacy. The student must be shown a world that can either be changed or conserved. After all, possible human beings are world-creators whose choices stand before them. As Herbert Marcuse said in *One-Dimensional Man*, "The way in which a society organizes the life of its members involves an initial choice between historical alternatives which are determined by the inherited level of the material and intellectual culture."⁷ Marcuse has just given us the word "inheritance." Given a material and intellectual heritage, the human being must choose between a set number of historical possibilities for society. Whether the possibility eventually chosen contains the same state of affairs as the current actuality or not is irrelevant here. What matters is that, for an authentic choice to be made at all, the young person must be shown his or her world-creating potentialities through the inheritance of a material and intellectual culture.

In order for a good education to be given, the young must be introduced to a good deal of this heritage. This includes, not only an overview of significant historical events, but also a history of the various frames of thought including myth, religion, philosophy, and the sciences. The young must be informed about how western civilization got to the highly technologized and affluent state it is in today. They must also understand, as much as possible, how the present mindsets and sensibilities of the culture, that is, the constituents of the prevailing ideology, came to be. With this historical, technological, affluent, and intellectual heritage in mind, human beings can make an informed, authentic choice on whether the world's prevailing order should be changed or conserved; to do otherwise would entail an indoctrination to an ideology, or to what is thought of as the given reality.

It is true that both secondary and post-secondary educations teach courses such as history; but despite being introduced to such history, young people are not being taught to take hold of it. There is, in other words, no reason to learn it. There is not too much of a reason to cling to the past if what matters is the present. Why do students not care more about history like they do mathematics? With the high costs of post-secondary education and a highly competitive job market, the world has disguised itself as a new environment. Again, animals prepare for an environment while human beings are educated for the world. When the world is disguised as an unchangeable environment, one must adapt just like the animal and be 'practical' in one's investments.

If education is understood as mere preparation, then it would follow that the history of events and ideas would be useless for engineering. This imposed behavior by a new environment is akin to what Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization* calls the 'reality principle.' What is central to the human being (that is, of being a creator of this world) is taken away. According to the reality principle, human beings must submit to the environment in which they find themselves. Marcuse suggests that what we call the reality principle should rather be called the 'performance principle' which "operates as an independent power to which individuals must submit if they want to live... Men do not live their own lives but perform pre-established functions."⁸ This implies that what is thought of as a reality is in fact an imperative to comply with the current economic forces.

So far, what education is for and the differences between the human world and the animalistic environment have been discussed. Now, the concepts of adaptability and practicality as they manifest themselves in today's attitudes toward education will be explored.

Today, young people are faced with a world they must adapt to, the new environment. They must think from a young age about getting a high-paying job and investing large sums of money that are never a guarantee for financial success or stability. The young person is not treated as a potential world-creator that must be shown the world that emerges from history, their cultural incubator. The young person is treated, if it may be put crudely, as a bonobo. Schools are preparatory jungle gyms for bonobo-humanoids that will eventually have to enter into the dangerous jungle-workforce. Our view of education as mere preparation for a dangerous, harsh environment fits exceedingly well with the attitude that human beings are simply primates like any other, just slightly more intelligent. Such a view of the world as jungle-environment becomes completely justified when everyone is viewed as an animal like any other in nature. There will naturally be winners and losers as many self-sufficient individuals climb the hierarchy in this competitive animal kingdom. Human society is simply a global community of bonobos fighting for limited resources.

An example of this mindset is the adaptive hierarchy of the disciplines built purely on practicality. People are swift to point out the school subjects they deem useless or unnecessary. History, English literature, and the arts tend to go toward the top of that list. They are not conceived as practical and one should not have to learn too much from them in the same way that the bonobo should not have to learn to hula hoop or juggle. Bonobos must prepare for the jungle which will present its own fixed obstacles. The human being, seen as a primate, should get through its general education quickly so that it can focus on important things like STEM because that is what the mostly unchangeable environment calls for.

Animals, as we all know, adapt to their various habitats. Massive acclimatization is rare for the animal and very often, when environmental conditions change drastically, members of a species, who would otherwise be prospering, die. The same thing, in accordance with this new environment, is true for human-bonobos. It remains a mystery to most where automation will take the human species and which fields of study will be needed most in the coming decades. Job markets are very often oversaturated with too many incoming workers. For now, science and technology are simply a best bet and there remains no guarantee that changing conditions do not loom over the horizon due to a multitude of possible environmental modifications. All of the competing members must be ready for the worst.

8 Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization*. Boston, Beacon, 1966. pp. 45.

"Adaptability and Flexibility." University of Kent, <https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/adaptability.htm>. Accessed 1 Sept. 2018. Web.

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Hogenboom, Melissa. "Humans are Nowhere Near as Special as We Like to Think." BBC, 3 July 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20150706-humans-are-not-unique-or-special>. Accessed 1 Sept. 2018. Web.

For an amusing essay on 'primatology', see: "Simia Dei, Reflections on the Pseudo-Event, and the Sad Case of Koko the Ape," D.J. Ciraulo, *Deflationary Essays* (Amazon.com, 2019).

The animal-human false equivalency plays out when the young are prepared for an environment. Adaptability is the skill employers are looking for while being flexible will get one the work hours. What is the best, practical way students can prepare for such conditions? Everywhere, parents are making sure that their children are building specialized skills. Not just any skills should be learned, though, since the marketplace only has little room for historians, musicians, and latin-speakers. The skills that must be learned are reading, writing, and primarily mathematics. Thus comes the pressure on students to get into the most advanced math classes possible. It tends to be agreed that, generally speaking, mathematicians in engineering and the natural sciences are highly employable, while daydreamers in the fine arts are not. If one is being practical and adapting adequately to changing conditions, he or she will major in STEM and ignore "fluff" or "Twinkie" majors.

Adaptability itself becomes a skill to learn in the adaptive process. This adaptive skill of adaptability carries especially the human-bonobo overtone. The University of Kent online article, "Adaptability and Flexibility," has a list of supporting quotes on the right hand side of the screen. The quote third-closest to the top is from Charles Darwin himself explaining how the species that survives is the one most adaptable to change.⁹ Included in this article as well is the most depressing picture of a business man on a camel. Such a man is placed in a harsh desert environment. Luckily, he has his useful camel to help him adapt. The flexible person is able to work in any environment for it will be forever pre-given. In a University of Manchester article about adaptability, the reader is confronted immediately by the picture of a running leopard.¹⁰ This image is a manifestation of a "survival of the fittest" attitude. In both examples, the student is shown that he or she is simply an animal like any other that must change according to its environment. The changing environment is clearly out of control for the young and there is nothing to actively change or conserve. Reality is what it is and that is that. Arguments about the potential for societal change can be ended with short ideological phrases such as, "Get with the program," or, "What can you do? Life's unfair." The cynical outlooks carried by the young are therefore justified and repeatedly reaffirmed by the imposing structures of thought.

Human beings, again, are seen as mere primates. With this equation of the human to the animalistic primate, the Pan paniscus becomes a portrayer of morality and culture just like the Homo sapiens. Melissa Hogenboom's article states that, "Many scientists are now convinced that all these traits, once considered the hallmarks of humanity, are also found in animals." She goes on to claim that, "Chimpanzees even have culture. They aren't composing symphonies but culture can be defined as passing on knowledge, habits and transmission from one generation to the next."¹¹ If one trusts that bonobos have a culture, as Hogenboom and many others say, then humans are certainly not going to be seen as special in this aspect.

However, despite the fact that bonobos have learned behaviors and practices, subtle acts of mimesis, they do not have culture. Simians remain locked in an excremental cycle of food-waste-life-death.¹² Only human communities have shared experiences of the sacred and profane (see Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*). Likewise, only human communities can cherish works of art or consume wine ritualistically. Even mimetically learned behaviors among human beings go a step further into the realm of historicity by having a relation to tradition; this requires a recollection and "keeping the past alive," i.e. not merely living in the present. Giving mere acts of imitation the name "culture" disrupts what human beings actually experience as a cultural incubator. Just as the equation between human and animal culture is unjustified, so is the current animalistic attitude toward education. Hogenboom,

when commenting on animals and humans, reveals the unfortunate attitude that is currently gaining strength in our society:..."the point is that the differences are not stark and absolute, but rather a matter of degree—and they get subtler the more we investigate them. By that measure, humans are no more unique than any other animal."¹³ With this, the human being is roughly equated with the animal. One should expect consequences from this form of thought. (Perhaps, we should recall Bergson's distinction between a difference of degree, and a difference in kind?)

The Massacre of the Disciplines and the Decline of Culture

Now that the concepts of adaptability and practicality have been explained and how they play out in today's attitudes toward education has been overviewed, it is time to present some consequences that result from such orientations.

Students are currently bonobos preparing for the jungle. One obvious result of this is that students may not truly understand what intellectual virtue is for. Going through school, one might wonder why history and English, for instance, are at all important. When a bonobo-student asks its bonobo-teacher why math is a big deal, the usual and most immediate answer is, "Most high-paying jobs require math." Out of all answers, this sticks out to students as the best one given the current predicament of the world-environment. As the student takes this as the standard for all other classes, literature and music seem to be of very little use. Subjects like these are important due to less immediate reasons.

Literature gives people the thought and experiences of the author. It helps with the maturing of the human being and helps to bring him or her into a confusing and complex world. Its goal is at least partly clarification. Additionally, music is not only a special mode of expression. It gives way to the appropriation of skills. These are skills that require discipline and practice and they are gathered from a rich tradition of great musicians. Music also gives way to events of communal celebration. The animal herd does not celebrate in the same way as the human community. Before the invention of headphones or the speaker, music was primarily listened to in the public space. It helped to hold a community together. Under the current paradigm of education—with its mediated and telematic modes of communication—we, like the bonobos, experience mere 'contact' through a signal (input), receiver (output), and feedback loop. This is not a 'community'! The latter concept implies a coming together in terms of an idea or belief which transcends isolated individual concerns.

The centrality that animalistic conceptions of adaptability and being practical have in education works to justify their own grounds. Environmental attitudes such as these will inevitably lead to the situation of justified winners and losers. The losers at the bottom of the food chain can be blamed for bad scholastic choice-making and lack of skills demanded by the current market. Likewise, this mindset of having rightful hierarchies chosen by the marketplace, as central for the social order in which we currently find ourselves, justifies the mindset that education is mere preparation for a harsh environment. The means justify the ends which further reinforce the means.

Lastly, the value of a culture, with these educational attitudes, is destroyed. Immigrants and other groups often get targeted for being the downfall of what is usually called western culture. However, one must look elsewhere for any seeming destruction of our cultural incubator. The communal and historical greenhouse is in need of a proper refurbishing. After all, what better place is there for values and forms of thought to be learned than a well-functioning education system? Where else should human beings gather

Hogenboom, Melissa. "Humans are Nowhere Near as Special as We Like to Think." BBC, 3 July 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20150706-humans-are-not-unique-or-special>. Accessed 1 Sept. 2018. Web.

large groups of newcomers to the world and reveal to them their heritage? The student, in reality, is not a bonobo. The human being today is not meant to merely be prepared for a wild jungle, unforgiving in its animality and hostile in its pecking orders. If the shared cultural incubator is shrinking or becoming wobbly, it probably is not because the immigrants are not “integrating.” As the pillar of society meant for introducing people to such a historical world that can either be changed or conserved, education is, today, merely preparing us for a ready-made environment. It must instead reveal to them a cultural heritage, a gathering together of historically accumulated potential.

In this meditation on a savage scholastic-animalism, it becomes apparent that education as mere preparation, while satisfactory for the bonobo or any other animal, is not at all decent for the late-hominid. Human beings, as held out into an indeterminate temporal and futural world, are confronted with individual and societal possibilities. Young people can only take hold of such potential when education introduces them to it through the heritage-aggregation of multiple topics such as science, mathematics, the arts, history, English, and philosophy. Education can only do this well when it does not treat itself as mere preparation for an environmental actuality. Again, it is not the case that students should not be worried about adaptation at all, nor is it the case that education should have no responsibility in preparing the young for any difficult obstacles they may face. What is important, however, is living up to the human greenhouse function by keeping education in compliance with human existence as a project. Animals are practical creatures that are perfectly in tune with what ‘is’ the case while human beings are opened out to what ‘ought’ to be or could be the case.

Endnotes

1

“Scientists Successfully Teach Gorilla It Will Die Someday.” The Onion, [https:// www.theonion.com/scientists-successfully-teach-gorilla-it-will-die-somed-1819594897](https://www.theonion.com/scientists-successfully-teach-gorilla-it-will-die-somed-1819594897). Accessed 5 Sept. 2018. Web.;

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For an amusing essay on ‘primatology’, see: “Simia Dei, Reflections on the Pseudo-Event, and the Sad Case of Koko the Ape,” D.J. Ciraulo, *Deflationary Essays* (Amazon.com, 2019).

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A Cartesian Education

Andrew
Khazanovsky

A Cartesian Education

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The educational task is both greater and more mysterious and, in a sense, humbler than many imagine. If the aim of education is the helping and guiding of man toward his own human achievement, education cannot escape the problems and entanglements of philosophy, for it supposes by its very nature a philosophy of man, and from the outset it is obliged to answer the question: 'What is man.' Which the philosophical sphinx is asking.¹

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From Jacques Maritan's *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943) pp 47; found in William K. Frankena's *Philosophy of Education* (Macmillan Company, New York, 1965) "Man's Nature and the Aims of His Education."

When philosophy comes to be seen as anathema to education, then the question of "man," and the implication of any answer, fails to be explored and understood; insofar as any such philosophy is necessary yet unquestioned in education, the entire endeavor fails to be grounded and proceeds blindly. What if in our educational institutions we denounce any historically authoritative answer to the philosophical question concerning human existence, and then justify this attitude with the alibi of respecting liberal freedoms? That is, what if we reject the possibility of any answer to the question of human nature while allowing each individual her own idea of what human nature is? How could this be so if, as Maritan writes, a philosophy of man is presupposed by the very nature of education? Perhaps a hidden and particular philosophy of human nature pervades the background of our educational institutions, as well as our thinking—one that hides itself within our relativistic denouncement of any authoritative answer to this question. Surely some assumed nature of man must lead one to hold that any answer is relative: because man is such (X), there can be no truthful answer to the question. So, what is the 'X'—the philosophy of man assumed in our contemporary circumstance? We shall see, hopefully, and contend that our educational institutions, conceptions of education, and our very thinking about what 'learning' is, are all guided by a dualistic, Cartesian philosophy of man. While this subject-object (scientific) perspective may provide "information" and "tools" for education, it seems that a vital element of education goes missing—properly situating the student's self within the world around them. Perhaps by allowing our assumptions to become explicit, be challenged and expanded, we may reconceive education such that perspectives beyond the Cartesian frame of mind can enrich our educational experiences—ones that will, hopefully, be better able to care for the self by properly situating it within society.

This notion, that our current educational activities fail to properly care for the self, might seem to contradict our very thinking of what education is: the advancing and improving of an individual's knowledge, cognitive and physical and technical capacities, skills, etc. Yet, this seeming contradiction must assume a particular view of the self (and philosophy of man) in order to be seen—the self must be somehow situated within our view of the world for us to define education along the terms of such improvement. If we look at our ideas of the self, we tend to find the self as something obviously within (or dependent on) the mind; in turn we view the mind as within (and dependent on) the brain: thus, we think, the self is within the brain. We come to view improving the self in terms of improving the functions of the brain (e.g. processing, recognition, memory, connections, etc.). This 'obvious' picture is valid: without the brain there is no mind! But perhaps there is a less obvious danger in reducing 'man', and activities such as education and learning, strictly to this relationship. Meaning, if we reduce the care of the self to the sharpening of brain function, then we may become unaware of other, vital elements to such care.

The need for such a reduction, once again, stems from holding a dualistic, Cartesian philosophy of human nature. This conception of man is not necessarily one completely espoused by René Descartes himself, as he did not reduce the mind (*res cogitans*) to the brain (*res extensa*)—he kept them ontologically separate; yet, the implications and corollary notions of Descartes' dualistic thinking remained through the historically developed philosophy of human nature prevalent in our contemporary circumstance. Namely, that 'I' and the world/environment are essentially separated—I am 'in' my brain, interacting with the world outside of my brain through sensory mediums: optical, auditory, tactile, and olfactory senses...these are the channels between me (the 'I' in the brain) and the world (something completely outside of and opposed to my

mind). How physical phenomena transduce into mental ("what its like to...") phenomena remains a mystery, and in light of this mystery, I believe people are wont to entirely reduce every aspect of 'mind' exclusively to the scientific knowledge of the 'brain'.

While it seems evident that scientific knowledge of the brain is necessary for understanding the complexity of our consciousness, it is not sufficient. This notion goes largely unquestioned and becomes problematic when we strictly and exclusively oppose the mind-in-brain with the world-outside-of-brain. This understanding of human consciousness ignores other minds (an intersubjective dimension), the environment (where the physical environment guides the social, which in turn reshapes the physical, and so on), and certain structures in the world (perhaps language, history, and/or technology); but these features and structures seem necessary for any human consciousness (or self) to emerge—it is impossible to conceive of a consciousness without these. If we admit this, then we may dub these features and structures 'constitutive' of consciousness. To take this thesis to heart is to claim that consciousness (and my self) is not essentially separated from structures outside my brain; consciousness is not 'exclusively realized' by the brain itself, but it is partially realized by the world outside of the brain. This thesis is contradictory to the Cartesian picture: that is, that mind, self, and consciousness are entirely dependent on and exclusively realized by neuronal activity inside of the brain. The alien feeling of thinking other than the Cartesian picture is a testament to the prevalence of the picture itself—the public consciousness conceives of mind as being fundamentally explained by neuroscience alone. Even 'empirically responsible' psychology must aim to not contradict the Cartesian picture (and the resulting ontological reduction of 'mind' to 'brain') and always be aware of a way to tie psychological research 'down to' neuroscientific evidence. However, it is suggestive to conceive of consciousness as essentially dependent upon structures outside of the brain (e.g. the body, environment, action, etc.) and/or world features (e.g. language, history, technology, etc.). There cannot be a freefloating consciousness, conscious only of itself and its subjective world.

Of course, all of this discussion warrants dedication and understanding, and an imagination as to what may be wrong about the way we conceive of the mind, the self, and consciousness. Such research and inspiration is evident in philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Kitarō Nishida, and Michel Foucault; also Hubert Dreyfus, Alva Noë, Susan Hurley, and Mark Rowlands; there are also movements to pursue non-Cartesian, non-dualistic cognitive science and psychology (e.g. embedded, embodied, enactive, and extended approaches to mind). Regardless, fully explicating or developing any position in this domain remains beyond the scope of this essay; because, now, we must ask ourselves: "What could any of this have to do with education?"

Resting upon the Cartesian assumption, that the minds-in-our-brains are essentially divorced from the world-outside-our-brains, separates the student from the world—they become isolated minds dwelling only within their own skulls, and their only intimacy or connection with the world (including their teachers and peers) is through a system of rules and representations occurring off of sensory 'input'. We conceive of the human mind as the CPU inside of the brain-hardware which controls the input-output functions of the totality of cognition; our eyes are like cameras, ears are like microphones, all which send 'input data' or information to the visual/auditory processing modules of the brain (the video and sound cards). This incredibly Cartesian and machinic picture reduces the self to a structure internal to all of these functions; it whittles down the self to the confines of 'cognitive processing' and so prohibits any substantial development outside of the objectively, scientifically defined sense

of self. (Even the noself doctrine, as posited by the Buddha and supported by some neuroscientists, must be a notion that enriches our interaction with the world: in short, we might better care for the self by learning that there is no self! This non-Cartesian picture may enrich our interactions as long as it is philosophically understood.) These reductionist perspectives, however, do bear truthfulness. Light does enter the eye and allow vision, air vibrations do disperse and reverberate our eardrums for sound—but, we cannot rest upon the claim that such scientific knowledge ultimately gives us the entire TRUTH, nor that nothing useful can be thought beyond the realm of scientific knowledge of human nature. Entertaining merely this scientific view of man fails to ground an education that concerns itself with the care of the self; as Maritan writes:

Now it is obvious that the purely scientific idea of man can provide us with invaluable and ever-growing information concerning the means and tools of education, but by itself it can neither primarily found nor primarily guide education, for education needs primarily to know what man is, what is the nature of man and the scale of values it essentially involves; and the purely scientific idea of man, because it ignores 'being-as-such', does not know such things but only what emerges from the human being in the realm of sense observation and measurement...²

Expanding out of our overly scientific view of education is not simply remedied by a revitalization of the arts and humanities—though, a sense of this is necessary,—for the arts and humanities remain stripped of their humanistic value as long as the dualistic, Cartesian philosophy of man underlies their study.

If this is the general philosophy of man that we entertain in our thinking, then the thinking behind any educational activity is grounded upon a view that essentially separates the mind/self, which is presumably the thing being educated, from the world/environment that one must become educated about and ready to dwell within. This does not imply a solution by way of the education of entirely practical matters, though, again, a sense of this is necessary, but by way of revealing the student's cultural, historical, and philosophical 'situatedness': which means leading a student to an insight concerning what led to and how it came to be that we may think whatever we think (which, in turn, will foster greater practical knowledge). This includes educating a student about the history of ideas and how we arrived at this juncture: what led to our current conceptions of the self; how our contemporary thinking about the world still follows Cartesian thought; and about the fact that our objective knowledge of the mind/brain is powerful, but, nevertheless, relies on particular assumptions about the world. Such questioning and education leads a student to understand their own place in history, in society, and how it all came to be this way. Understanding what conditions throughout history have led to the present moment simultaneously offers students glimpses into the different worlds that humankind has constructed (i.e. how different epochs encountered reality and how those encounters organized life within civilizations). This depth of understanding allows the student to better imagine what the future might, could, and should be like: the students' imagination and creativity concerning present issues and their solutions becomes expanded through exposure to the evolution of different (heterogeneous) ideas throughout history.

The issue at hand is our model of thinking and learning as the receiving of information from 'outside' of the brain through sensory-channels into a separated and independent self 'inside' of the brain. Under this subject-object model, every educational endeavor is decontextualized and reduced to bare sender-receiver relationships; it frames the endeavor by conceiving of knowledge (or, the 'known') as a static, neutral 'bit' of information 'out there' that is to be received by a different entity 'in here' (the 'knower'). This model reveals a functional relationship between the student and teacher, but conceals a great deal of what has always been cherished in education and mentorship: a transformation of the student's self that is evident in their going-about in the world—this is fostered by understanding connections beyond what the Cartesian frame allows. This kind of understanding cannot be communicated through bits of information, but requires a particular kind of intersubjective relationship with a teacher (thus, online education will always fail to foster such transformations). Only in such relationships may learning foster a proper care for the student. Unfortunately, however, the dualism we are possessed with recasts not only what 'learning' is, but also what is to be learned.

History becomes a chronological system of accruing facts that are causally related in time and demand some archaeological evidence for any claim to objectivity—or else, any historical claim void of such evidence becomes a subjective opinion originating within some historian's mind. Any such claim fails to gain significance because that historian's mind is inherently disconnected from the world and requires objective data through the sensory mediums to secure any significance. Historically situating a student within their own context, under this model, is to merely facilitate a knowledge of dates, names, and events, and the rest is up to the students' cognitive capacities to realize any significance. I suspect most history teachers do not wish to conceive of history in such a way; but when students, parents, and other faculty members hold to such a conception, this ultimately limits a history teacher's ability to impart a truthful, historical insight into why things may be the way they are today. "We learn history so we do not repeat it" has lost any meaning in light of the Cartesian philosophy of man because it reinforces the notion of history as a dead set of information that we load into our 'memory banks' to improve our behavioral output. Perhaps it is, now, more enlightening to say: "We must learn history to learn that we are a reiteration of it."³ We are not historically-isolated beings, but are cast with a connection to something 'eternal' in history. We are not freefloating minds plopped down into history, but we are historically conditioned beings created with history: learning one's own place in history is learning the conditions of one's own consciousness. John Dewey in *Democracy and Education* describes our attitude to the subject of history:

The segregation which kills the vitality of history [the] divorce [of history] from present modes and concerns of social life. The past just as past is no longer our affair. If it were wholly gone and done with, is there would [indeed] be only one reasonable attitude toward it. Let the dead bury their dead. But knowledge of the past is the key to understanding the present.⁴

And, as Alfred North Whitehead writes: "The present contains all that there is. It is holy ground; for it is the past, and it is the future."⁵ It seems to be a reasonable standard for education to affect a person such that they understand how the problematics of their present circumstance developed out of, and in response to, past historical paradigms. Not only who came up with what, when,

and why, but how it came to be that discovery drives individuals into a manic frenzy about something that is invisible to the naked eye (e.g. an idea, a science, an artistic inspiration)—yet, is connected to something eternal within all of humanity (e.g. perennial questions and desires for knowledge).

Programs like the STEM initiative probably devalue any practical import of subjects like history to their endeavor (since STEM deals with knowledge concerning primarily the ‘outside’, whereas much of history deals with knowledge primarily concerning the ‘inside’), yet, we may listen to a voice that reshaped the philosophy of science, and introduced the notion of ‘paradigm’ into common U.S. lexicon, Thomas Kuhn. He begins his essay, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, with the following words:

History, if viewed as a repository for more than anecdote or chronology, could produce a decisive transformation in the image of science by which we are now possessed. That image has previously been drawn, even by scientists themselves, mainly from the study of finished scientific achievements as these are recorded in the classics and, more recently, in the textbooks from which each new scientific generation learns to practice its trade. Inevitably, however, the aim of such books is persuasive and pedagogic; a concept of science drawn from them is no more likely to fit the enterprise that produced them than an image of a national culture drawn from a tourist brochure or a language text. This essay attempts to show that we have been misled by them in fundamental ways. Its aim is a sketch of the quite different concept of science that can emerge from the historical record of the research activity itself.⁶

Thus, if our study of history proceeds along the Cartesian philosophy of human nature, and relies on a dualistic guide for what is to be learned and how, then such an historical education will fail to produce the “decisive transformation in the image of science” that Kuhn calls for. Divorcing consciousness from the world prohibits one from understanding how history, like science, “does not develop by the accumulation of individual discoveries and inventions.” Learning and thinking about history in this way results in the lack of a student’s historical situatedness, which is a failure to understand the present circumstance and their own position within it. A self that fails to understand (at least roughly) why and how the world that the self dwells within came to be, also fails to understand the historicity and problematics of the world around them; if this is the case following twelve or more years of education, then we may honestly say that the education failed to properly care for the student’s self.

Not only must an education that properly cares for the self attempt to historically situate a student, but it must also impart to a student certain nuances of understanding the world around them...The self must interpret the world, but these interpretations are not merely and relatively of the world—every interpretation must draw from the world and is always grounded upon something beyond our individual, subjective opinions and assumptions. This is because the self relates to something ‘eternal’. Though such a notion is alien to our scientific way of thinking, we must nonetheless admit that some form of understanding and empathy is universal to all of humanity; even if through suffering, there is a way by which every person may relate to one another in

virtue of our connection to something ‘eternal’—be it our genetic blueprint or the necessary tragedies of every human existence, regardless of their particular details. Awareness of such human dimensions opens up the chasm between reason and the emotions, and allows one to see how each may make one another and are not, after all, completely separate domains of the human mind. Being open to the connection between one’s self and the rest of humanity allows the student the opportunity to appreciate the difference of what is necessary, and what is contingent. Certain losses are necessary, but the ways we deal with those losses are contingent; the fact we must interpret and make decisions is necessary, but the forms of our interpretations and decisions are contingent. Learning a responsible appreciation of all such differences underlies the student’s ability to properly reap the fruit that education hopes to sow.

How to structure and conceive of an education that does properly care for the self is also, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this essay and warrants a worthy treatment; however, following the analysis presented thus far, we may perhaps begin to see how our current conceptions of education may fail to achieve such ends. Where we saw how our dualistic, Cartesian philosophy of human nature fails to provide an historical education that properly situates the student’s self, such an analysis may be easily extended to other subjects to reveal how these conceptions of education and learning rob students of what education ought to provide.

While our educational institutions may escape the responsibilities of properly caring for the student’s self by narrowing their efforts to the Cartesian conception of education, the demand to reconceive our conceptions of learning beyond the dualistic, Cartesian philosophy of human nature will undoubtedly provide the inspiration necessary to reconnect, conjoin, or reintegrate the student’s self to the world around them. This essay hopes to have shown how this Cartesian philosophy of man does indeed underlie our educational institutions, regardless of their denial to support any particular view of human nature; and, further, how this hidden assumption fails to provide an education that properly cares for the self. By entertaining the possibility of such criticisms, we have already begun to question the foundations of how we think about learning—and, in a time of failing educational standards and a time of intellectual decline in the United States, such a questioning is all one could ask for.

Endnotes

1

From Jacques Maritan’s *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943) pp 47; found in William K. Frankena’s *Philosophy of Education* (Macmillan Company, New York, 1965) “Man’s Nature and the Aims of His Education.”

2

For a view of these non-Cartesian approaches, check out Mark Rowland’s *The New Science of the Mind: From Extended Mind to Embodied Phenomenology* (Bradford Books, 2013).

3

From Jacques Maritan *ibid*; found in William K. Frankena’s *Philosophy of Education* (Macmillan Company, New York, 1965) “Man’s Nature and the Aims of His Education.”

4

John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (The Free Press, New York, 1997), Page 214. (Originally published 1916).

5

Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (The Free Press, New York, 1967), Essay #1, Page 2.

6

Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970), Page 1.

The Double Image of Education

Omar Fred Harb

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I Axel Freed, the protagonist of the movie *The Gambler*, will be used to show how one's internal dramatic process is central to the educational act. The act of teaching, at its best, brings about an agonal tension in the interpersonal psyche of both the one who learns and the one who is taught; that is, although both may be accomplished at the conscious social level, there is often a vast hidden world of unconscious desires, assumptions, conflicts, and beliefs which remain unquestioned. *The Gambler* brings out the dramatic dialogue of Freed and his Double which has its origins in a primal realm of desire which precedes any form of conceptualization.

1 Felman, Shoshana. "The Pedagogical Imperative: Teaching as a Literary Genre." *Psychoanalysis and Education: Teaching Terminable and Interminable*. Ed. Johnson, Barbara. Connecticut: Yale French Studies, 1982. 21-44.

2 Pile, Steve. *The Body and the City*. *Psychoanalysis, Space And Subjectivity*. London: 1996. Routledge, 1996. 124-126.

Freed's two psychic manifestations are his social self as a professor of literature, and his double self as a degenerate with a gambling addiction. The application of literature to the drama of personality creates a dialogue between Freed's conscious and unconscious life, because his literary knowledge informs his double life of gambling and vice versa. These two practices weave together and become one at the climactic point of the movie: namely, when Freed looks at his double image in the barroom mirror, which happens to be the last scene in the movie. Then, can we say that education in general is an art of revealing one's unconscious drives by bringing them to the surface of one's consciousness? This seems essential to the educational experience in one's own life.

This paper will attempt to focus on this pressing question.

What is intriguing about Freed's character is that, although he knows a great deal about literature, he does not know about the effect it is having upon his unconscious world. And "As Plato pointed out long ago," says Jacques Lacan, "it is not at all necessary that the poet know what he is doing, in fact, it is preferable that he not know. That is what gives a primordial value to what he does."¹ Freed's unconscious world, which he knows nothing about, is the primordial realm of desire in which his double self exists. Freed's knowledge of literature is fostered by his deeper unconscious interests in gambling because the knowledge of books is used to fuel his gambling addiction. The process of separation and fusion in which Freed's two aspects move, is similar to what Lacan says: "The mirror stage inaugurates a dialogical relationship between the...inner life and the exterior world."² Freed is both a teacher and a gambler, and his gambling addicted shadow eventually coagulates into Freed's mirror image which is a manifestation of his desire. Freed is unconsciously informed by the presence of his desire in terms of what he needs to read and lecture about, and who he does lecture about is Fyodor Dostoyevsky whose work, not by coincidence, represents the relationship of reason and desire. There is one scene in which Freed's unconscious and conscious dialogue comes to the surface: when Freed asks his student Spencer, a basketball player, to come in on a bet by not winning by more than seven points in the upcoming school game. Spencer agrees to the bet and accepts the five thousand dollar payoff. In this case, Freed's unconscious desire brings his educational world and his gambling world together, which takes place in an academic atmosphere. Freed's gambling double follows him like an ominous shadow seeping into his academic world. Both the teacher and his shadow meld together, which alters the contours of Freed's unconscious desire, in an academic setting.

Freed has a fantasy world, existing in the realm of the other, which draws material from literature. The other is the dimension of his unconscious drives, which he is unaware of in his conscious life. And, conversely, literary knowledge draws its material from Freed's fantasy world. In connection to this, there is an indication that Freed is imagining his bookie, Hips, because he acts, like the complete opposite of how a bookie is supposed to act. Hips is an imaginary manifestation of the world of desire, which is synonymous with Freed's double self, and he acts like Freed's guide through the underworld of the unconscious realm. How is it that a bookie can be a debtor's friend to such a degree as Hips is to Freed? So, Hips functions as a manifestation of Freed's unconscious world of the primal other. In connection to this, Freed's fantasy world draws its material from Dostoyevsky's fictional work "The Gambler." Hypothetically speaking, Freed's double blends with the fictional character Alexi Ivanovich. The latter justifies Freed's unconscious pursuit of his fantasy for gambling. Ivanovich asks, "For why is gambling a whit worse than any other method of acquiring money? How, for instance, is it worse than trade? True, out of a hundred persons, only one can win; yet what business

is that of yours or of mine?"³ Ivanovich justifies his gambling addiction by showing the hypocrisy of society and how gambling is not any worse than other more socially acceptable ways of making money. Furthermore, Ivanovich is saying that the world of the other, the addicted world of the gambler, is equally valid to the conscious world of social decorum. Freed's lack of awareness of his double self relates to what Shoshana Felman, in relation to Lacan, says: "Knowledge is what is already there but always in the other," and the life of his degenerate double is concealed from his literary knowledge.¹ Yet, as a professor, he unwittingly draws material from his double life and applies it to his literary pursuit. Ivanovich says, "However ridiculous it may seem to you that I was expecting to win at roulette, I look upon the generally accepted opinion concerning the folly and the grossness of hoping to win at gambling as a thing even more absurd."³ Freed is unconsciously attracted to Russian literature because it acts as a bridging device, in terms of connecting his conscious self and his unconscious self together in a pleasurable form. Freed's double self is woven with his conscious self. Conversely, his double feeds on Textual Knowledge in order to develop in the shadows, that is, his double is interpreted by the professor's literary knowledge and analyses.¹ The relationship between Freed's two selves is circular in nature because they both inform one another and wrap around one another. Freed ignorantly injects literary meaning into his double's pursuit for the intensities of gambling. So, Russian literature justifies Freed's double in terms of gambling, and Freed's literary knowledge fosters the growth and generation of his double self into an eventual mirror image. The image of the other can be elucidated if we jump to the last part of the movie when Freed fights the pimp in the bar suite: he first lifts the pimp's knife up to his neck and tells the pimp to kill him, but the pimp is caught off guard and does not kill him. Freed hits the pimp, the knife drops out of his hand, the prostitute picks the knife up and slashes Freed's face wide open. He then goes downstairs to a barroom mirror and looks at the stark wound of his double. This is captured very poignantly when he is looking at the reflection of the rivulet of blood running through the open wound of the other's demented face. This scene is the climactic point in Freed's education, because to the viewer's utter surprise, he sees his double for the first time in the whole movie. He sees the unconscious manifestation of his other, which is desire shaped into flesh, in the form of his reflected mirror image. This is the moment that the whole movie builds up to: the moment that Freed catches a glimpse of the appearance of his primal other. His facial image in the mirror visually expresses what Whitman says, "The thin red jellies within you or within me, the bones and the marrow in the bones...O I say these are not the parts and poems of the body only, but of the soul, Oh I say now these are the soul!"⁴ Whitman's soul is translated into Freed's unconscious world which as a conscious individual, he knows nothing about. This mirror image shows how education unifies Freed's consciousness and unconsciousness, which weave together into an abominable carnal form. Freed's image (imago) is reflected back at him. Lacan says "The fiction of the reflection exists in a virtual world which is both there and not there—and the imagos (images) of this doubled world can thus present themselves...hallucination, dreams, shadows..."² What Freed sees is his carnal fantasy of himself, as a demented and grotesque form of Ivanovich, which up to this point has been concealed from him. So, Freed goes through a process of education which, at this point, reveals his unconscious mechanism through the Dialectic that he has with the mirror. Both of his selves are woven together, by the process of desire which brings together the virtual world and the real world, in an eroticized educational union.

3 Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *The Gambler*. New York: Dover Publications, 1996.

4 Whitman, Walt. "I Sing the Body Electric." *Leaves of Grass*. London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2015.

The climax of the movie is reached by virtue of Freed's involuntary desire for ignorance, because he turns a blind eye to what is deemed safe for him by the people who care about him, like his mother Naomi and his girlfriend Billy. Freed does not choose ignorance, rather, his double is the one who represses Freed's conscious awareness of his actions as a degenerate gambler. What is conventionally considered dangerous is what he needs in order to fuel the life of his unconscious self. Like Oedipus, Axel Freed has a passion, as Lacan would say, for ignorance, because he refuses to see the effect his behavior is having not only on himself, but also the people who care about him. Freed's ignorance strengthens the visceral life of his double.¹ His ignorant state of mind provides fertile ground for his other self, because his literary knowledge is ground up and fed into his unconscious primal machine. This machine is fueled by "juice" which is translated into desire; the latter operates within a primal realm that precedes any conceptual framework regarding a certain type of knowledge. In one of his classroom lectures, Freed quotes a passage from *Notes from the Underground*: he says, "And what if it so happens that a man's advantage, sometimes, not only may, but even must, consist in his desiring in certain cases what is harmful to himself and not advantageous."⁵ What is not conducive to a comfortable lifestyle is translated to what is not socially acceptable or recognizable as morally good, which is made manifest by Freed's social double. So, Freed unwittingly accepts his other self and relinquishes responsibility to it, by his sheer passion for ignorance. This can be seen when Freed asks his mother Naomi to pay off his debt. The scene takes place at the beach, while freed is lying down watching his mother go for a swim. Freed writes the amount of his gambling debt, forty four thousand dollars, on the beach sand so that his mother can see it. By writing the money on the sand, he is relinquishing the responsibility of having his social self verbally tell the amount that he needs to borrow from her. So, he posits the amount in a domain of the unconscious other in which Freed is unaware of his asking his mother to take care of his debt. On the other hand, if his social self told his mother about the amount needed to be borrowed, then the enterprise of unconscious desire would have been compromised. Freed has an interest in a particular type of knowledge whose characteristic is that it does not know itself; and as Felman says, "literature, for its part, knows it knows, but does not know the meaning of its knowledge—does not know what it knows."¹ Freed as a professor of literature fits this description because he knows his literary genres very well and employs quotes from different genres in his classes. But why he does this he does not know, because what he does not know lies in the realm of his double self which builds itself out of the professor's literary knowledge until the last scene in the movie when his double solidifies into mirror image. Freed's literary knowledge gives desire the needed structure in order to operate on both conscious and unconscious levels of reality. In a class lecture, Freed says that basketball players have something in common with poets, which is that when they shoot the ball, at that moment, they know it's going in against all odds. In this way, the poet's knowledge exists in the realm of the unknown, in terms of the subconscious other. Similarly, Lacan says, "what the analyst must know is how to ignore what he knows."¹ A gambler is addicted to the idea that if he knows he will win, then he will win, and by doing this he ignores the odds that are almost completely against him. In this sense, Freed's double is going against the odds that he knows are not in his favor, since gambling is an activity that is at extreme odds with the player, but he nonetheless continues doing it because of sheer will and belief in winning. His hope for a win will come about by chance that has nothing to do with pre-existing knowledge on how to win. Take for instance the last gambling scene in Las Vegas in which Freed, in the double's guise, stakes all of his money on the hope that the card the dealer gives him will be a three.



He says to the dealer, "Give me the three," and the dealer gives him the three. In connection to this, in one of Professor Freed's lectures he quotes Dostoevsky, who says, "Reason only satisfies man's rational requirements, desire on the other hand, encompasses everything, desire is life".⁶ Desire, which encompasses Freed's entire being, finds its sustenance within his other self which is primordial and not bound by what the ego is bound by: societal limitations and pre-existing conceptions on appropriate forms of action. Freed's double tells Hips, his bookie, that all degenerate gamblers are "looking to lose"; he goes on to say, "if all my bets were safe, there just wouldn't be any juice," which reflects Dostoevsky's famous formula that is mentioned in one of the professor's classroom lectures: two plus two equals not four, but five!. What he is saying is that desire is not limited to what is conducive to a financially stable lifestyle, or even a life of physical safety. What he does is not rely on "ready-made" knowledge, in terms of economic and physical stability to inform him on how he will follow his desire at any given moment.¹ In this sense, gambling suggests the symbolic structure of the other because placing a bet is a reliance on pure chance which does not follow any predetermined path of knowledge, because the other is more akin to primordial instinct. When one places a bet, one takes a leap into a visceral reality in which conscious knowledge does not exist. One jumps into the realm of unconscious desire right at the point when the dice are thrown. The double refuses to live by financially conformable standards because he thinks meaning is found when one lives in the dangerous conditions of desire. So, having "juice," as it were, is not found in obeying conventionally known formulas, such as two plus two equals four. But, five!⁶ On the flip-side, this famous phrase is really emphasized in professor Freed's classroom lecture which points to his knowing the meaninglessness that comprises the core of literary knowledge. Freed's double is in continual dialogue with his conscious self and at certain times the boundary between his two selves blur. His unconscious double is given a poetic contour which is visually expressed when Whitman says, "It is in his walk, the carriage of his neck, the flex of his waist and knees—dress does not hide him; The strong, sweet, supple quality he has, strikes through the cotton and flannel..." and what strikes through Freed's clothing and appearance is his desire to go beyond the boundaries of the socially constructed self.⁴ Freed's desire even extends beyond bureaucratic restrictions; for instance, in the bank scene in which the bank officer asks his mother for two pieces of identification, and gives her some trouble when she only presents him with her driver's license, because two pieces of identification are needed in order to pull out large sums of money. As a result, Freed's double grabs the bank officer's arms and shakes him ferociously and says, "Look I came out of her womb, and I am telling you that she is Naomi Freed."⁶ This shows how desire pierces through the membrane of the intellect, right to the immediate fact of the act of being born. In this sense, the fact of birth symbolizes an essential function in the realm of the other, that is, the violent act of being born is always more than its societal definition. Even though this fact is defined by medicine and science, it is not limited to either of these interpretations. The sheer violence of giving birth cannot be pinned down to anything other than what it is, which is the ferocity of life. So in this sense, like Freed's other, the act of giving birth precedes any interpretation that may come after the fact. Look at it this way, when one witnesses the birth of a child, no amount of scientific or medical knowledge will alleviate the visual shock of the act of birth. This immediacy is what is conveyed to the bank teller and to the audience, which is expressed not by Freed's conscious self, but by his double. And this scene shows that what the double is more imminent than anything that is considered socially acceptable, because the realm of the double precedes any societally constructed ideas about the self. The double is as primal as the physical act of birth.

II

The erotic relationship that education has with desire is not usually a popular subject of discussion, but it is desire which draws one person to another and allows for the transference of ideas. Desire is generated in the primal realm of the other in which Freed's unconscious double operates in. The essential function of eroticism is destruction, in terms of the annihilation of the barriers that inhibit desirable transference. Education is a desirable transference from one person to another, or from one social structure to another. A significant function of the erotic process of learning, in our society, is breaking through the "Production Function," of the bureaucratic model of society, in terms of an organization producing a fixed quota demanded by the company.⁷ Desire pierces through corporate models and grants Freed's double the unification he looks for which transcends bureaucratic barriers. In connection to this, Felman says: "...transference is the acting out of the reality of the unconscious,' teaching is not a purely cognitive, informative experience, it is also an emotional and erotic experience...and,...'I deemed it necessary,' insists Lacan, 'to support the idea of transference, as indistinguishable from love, with the formula of the subject presumed to know.'" Similarly, when Freed shakes the bank teller's arms an educational process takes place because Freed's emotionally charged experience opens the flood gates of his unconscious world which pours into the conscious world; it is by this process that transference occurs. For us to understand how transference works in this situation, let us hypothetically assume that the bank teller is a representative of the bureaucratic system in terms of the requirement of an employee to perform a series of functions and inputs within a particular organization.⁷ Let us also assume that the bank teller is a representative of the conscious social world (for Lacan, the symbolic world). Then, the conscious world of the bank system, through an educational act of transference, takes on the appearance of Freed's unconscious double. This process of identification is produced by an erotic coupling of both known and unknown contours of flesh. As a result, Naomi Freed can get the money to bail her son out of casino debt. Desire injects a primal reality into the framework of the bank system which is defined as a series of performances with the pressing end of inputting data into the system. Pleasure is made manifest into a forming of knowledge which is known by and inherent in the world of the other. So, Freed through an act of childlike love, transforms into his double in order to get to a hidden type of knowledge which is what the other knows, as the one who is presumed to know. What this hidden way of knowledge directs us to is that the bureaucratic system does not sufficiently support people who need immediate help in the realm of the everyday world, which is seen in Naomi Freed's case. The bureaucratic world's identification with the unconscious other manipulates the contours of desire, in that, the conscious world and the unconscious world unify with one another and develop into an educational happening. Even though the bank teller goes against the bureaucratic system, the result that is produced is essentially positive because the educational act of transference changes the course of the bureaucratic outcome and resolves the situation by giving Naomi Freed the money she is asking for. The conscious world of bureaucracy is educated by an erotic coupling with the primal world of Freed's double, as the one who knows.

Let us shift the context of the bank space to that of the classroom space, so that by doing this one can then see the similar process that education has within these seemingly two different scenarios. The process of transferring an educational current from one world to another is also seen within the structure of the classroom. Similar to the bank scene, the bureaucratic model is destroyed by the sheer intensity within the concentrated space of the classroom. The act of transference occurs when the world of desire pours into the world

of academia, which creates an educational happening. One is made aware of the literary significance of desire by Dostoevsky's distinction between the world of reason and the world of desire, which Freed takes considerable pleasure in mentioning to his students.⁶ Bureaucracy exists within the world of reason, whereas education exists within the world of desire. Transference can only work outside of the bureaucratic performance of education, which is defined as: "[a] function whereby student performance is a function of inputs to the organization and various policies."⁷ When the teacher and the student are made aware of the unknown aspects of the other, by virtue of the act of desirable transference, they break through the bureaucratic barriers by the sheer immediacy of the learning experience exhibited within the structure of the classroom. Similar to desire, when education occurs within the classroom space it brings with it other aspects of society, and of the personality, into the structure of the classroom. The latter is the armature in which the educational fusion of different worlds occurs. The blending of different worlds occurs when the established input and output modality is confronted and transgressed. By going beyond the input and output model, one can delve into the pool of desire in which an educational experience occurs. Education is essentially a bridging together of different worlds which can only happen within the realm of the primal other, as that which transcends both the teacher, student, and bureaucracy. However, what often happens is that the bureaucratic model of education works against desirable and pleasurable learning processes, which creates a blunt barrier between consciousness and unconsciousness. The normal situation is that the teacher's performance is limited to the grading system, and with excessive focus on the quantity of students per classroom, which is numerically registered in the system. On the other hand, education operating within the realm of desire cracks wide open the bureaucratic mold so that reality can come in and develop into an actual dialogue between the teacher and the student. Education is synonymous with reality; and this assumes a world which, naturally manufacturing the images of desire, precedes any conceptualization and categorization established by conditioned ways of thinking.

III

The realm of the double is always more than one particular individual's unconscious self, which can be seen during a game of craps game in Las Vegas: when a man grabs the double's arm and rubs on it in order to share some of his luck which is poetically expressed when Whitman says, "To be surrounded by beautiful, curious, breathing, laughing flesh is enough..." Also, "...The armies of those I love engirth me and I engirth them/They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to them..." and his luck or desire is transfused to other people which suggests that desire is "spacial" and not limited to one individual body.⁴ The spatial body or the "sea of flesh" is suggestive of the relationship between academia and gambling, in that, both of these worlds are woven together at certain times of intensity and become like a "sea of flesh." Because of the melding together of these two worlds, one realizes the impact desire has upon the body and the realm of the sense. In connection to this, the double is the realm in which the educational process occurs as is seen when Freed takes his literary experience into the streets, in the guise of his double, because he needs to be around people of a different world than what he is used to, namely the academic world. He needs to be in unknown territory which can be seen at the beginning of the movie when he goes to an inner city basketball court and challenges black teenagers to play him, for a "dime."⁶ In connection to this, Felman says: "But the position of the teacher is itself the position of the one who learns, of the one who teaches nothing other than the way he learns."¹

This applies to Freed desiring to go into unknown territory because the realm of the other, where the unknown territory exists, is where the process of education takes place. Freed needs to move in unknown circles because, as he is not a fully complete self, the unknown territories exist within the gaps of his unfinished self project. Freed, the teacher, descends into his unconscious other in order to learn the way that he will teach in his conscious classroom life, in the form of literature. The material he draws upon is from his unconscious self where desire thrives. Freed goes into unknown territory because people symbolize desire for his other self, which is conveyed by Whitman when he says "...To pass among them, or touch any one, or rest my arm ever so lightly round his or her neck for a moment—what is this, then? I do not ask any more delight..." Freed's body and the body of others are one and the same, and they are in the realm of the big other, the Lacanian symbolic order.⁴ The unfamiliarity of people is the background of the other where Freed's conscious self unknowingly operates in. This background activates Freed's double which is why Freed is so attracted to being around other people who he does not know.

The double announces itself as a sign of good things to come in terms of Freed's intuition that he is moving on an inevitably good path. However, the message of the double can easily be misconstrued as a sign of evil things to come because the double operates in the realm of desire which is located in an unknown realm beyond intellectual understanding. For the most part, the intellect judges anything that is unknown as a threat and essentially as an evil. The scene that leads up to the recognition of the omen takes place after the school basketball game is over when, towards the end of the movie, Freed leaves Hips and goes into an unknown territory, namely a distinct African American sect of the city. This is a sign, in the conventional sense, of evil things to come in relation to Freed's double life of desire. As a reaction to Freed's descent into the unknown neighborhood, Hips says, "there are a bunch of cannibals there."⁶ According to Hips, an individual White male will be killed due to his intrusion on an African American world. Before Freed goes into this neighborhood which symbolizes the racial other, he tells Hips that it was never a question of luck that he managed to win back his outstanding losses because he was destined to win. Freed believes in "omens." and he takes with him his sense of fate when goes into the unknown African American social sect. Freed's move to the unknown sect of society leads into the mirror scene, which is the last scene of the movie, as mentioned above. This scene symbolizes a world of positive and negative merging together in a reflective dialectical relationship.² The mirror scene is the moment of recognition in Freed's life. He witnesses the mirror image of his negative self. The interplay of Freed's two worlds, conscious and unconscious, has led up to this point of educational clarity. Desire unifies these two worlds together by attracting the known and the unknown to each other in an erotic way. Freed gets a glimpse of his other negative self; negative because his other represents the antithesis of his socially constructed identity. Freed's negation is shown to the viewer by the reflection of the grotesque face with the knife wound. Felman says, "For teaching to be realized, for knowledge to be learnt, the position of alterity is therefore indispensable: knowledge is what is already there, but always in the Other."¹ What Freed learns is precisely what the image of his other has to teach him, and what is taught is fundamentally visual. The appearance of his other represents ferocity and primal aggression operating within the world of desire. The moments that precede this last scene are indicative in terms of understanding the significance of the double in relation to the omen, which is the inner voice that emanates from Freed's unconscious other. Right when the school game is over, Hips tells Freed's double, "...you was pretty fuckin' lucky. If they didn't put your boy in there at the end, you was

dead," and the double replies, "Luck had nothing to do with it."⁶ In this scene Freed's double is translating himself as a harbinger of good things to come identified as the Socratic inner voice, daimonion. The latter justifies the belief of Freed's double, in terms of inevitably following the way of a good omen. By way of speculation, the flow of desire operates within the same realm as the Socratic inner voice, since both desire and the inner voice are experienced within the realm of the senses. When Socrates speaks to the jurors in *The Apology*, he asks: "What has happened to me may well be a good thing, and those of us who believe death to be an evil are certainly mistaken. I have convincing proof of this, for it is impossible that my familiar sign did not oppose me if I was not about to do what was right."⁸ Freed's double is a manifestation of the inner Socratic voice which desires the illicit ways of life and going through the agonal throes that accompany the life of the gambler. However, contrary to the point of view of the inner voice being a sign of good things to come, Dimitrus Vardoulakis says that doubles "tend to be with evil and the demonic..." The double "presents the notion of subject/subjectivity that is defective, disjunct, split threatening, spectral."⁹ In this sense, what Freed's double is suggesting is that he is the exception to the traditional notion of the double. And yet, when the last mirror scene of the movie is considered, what is suggested by the mirror image of the double is not a portent of good, but of evil. Freed's double image looks like a demented and deformed animalistic being with a gash on his face. So, contrary to what Freed's double says about himself as being a sign of good things to come, the viewer has a different take on what the mirror image signifies: a sign of evil things to come. Nonetheless, it would be remiss if we overlook the compelling notion that it is precisely at the center of evil that the hopeful reality of daimonion exists. Out from the evil depths does the inner Socratic voice emanate towards the divine light, and creates a pathway of desire that Freed moves on towards the unified image of his double self reflected in the barroom mirror.

Axel Freed, the protagonist and anti-hero of the movie, is a split self since he embodies both a professor of literature and a degenerate gambler. His conscious self and his unconscious self merge together and become one at the end of the movie. The double is not only Freed's other self, but society's other as well. And the becoming aware of the other, through the merging process of Freed looking at his reflected double, is what education is about. Education is a becoming aware of not what is known, but what is unknown. Education is often thought of as a series of bits of information added to an already given fully conscious self. But in real life the self is a dramatic and 'transformative process, which is a play of both conscious and unconscious forces of the personality. In this sense, Freed's conscious self is not wholly complete by itself because it is in a dialogical relationship with Freed's unconscious other. Education reveals to Freed what he has been unconsciously searching for through the casinos and through the streets of New York. What happens to Freed after he gets a glimpse of who he is can only be discussed within the realm of speculation. But, perhaps after seeing his double, Freed outgrows his unconscious fascination with gambling and dialectally moves on to some higher plane. Or, perhaps the glimpse of his double has no effect on Freed the character but on the viewer who sees the image of the double. Regardless of what happens to Freed or the viewer, what can be said is that an educational happening occurs right at the point when the recognition of the unveiling of the double shows up in the form of a mirror image.

**Endnotes****1**

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The relationship of education and desire
Image credits to Omar Fred Harb

The background is a solid orange color. Overlaid on this are several thin, white, hand-drawn lines that form abstract, organic shapes. These lines are scattered across the page, with some forming loops and others extending across the width of the image. The overall effect is that of a sketch or doodle.

Time, Technology, and Teaching

D.J. Ciraulo

Time, Technology, and Teaching

D.J. Ciraulo

“The general public’s impotence in the face of the collapse of teaching institutions, a collapse that forms the academic context of the battle for intelligence, largely emerges from the theoretical denial, by the majority of the intellectual world, of the mnemotechnical and the hypomnesic nature of all current forms of knowledge, even while the programming industries’ domination of programming institutions moves toward its empirical mastery of the contemporary forms of psychotechnologies of hypomnesis.”¹
—Bernard Stiegler

1
The term 'mnemotechnical' refers to any device or extension (paper, book, or computer screen) that enhances our memory; 'hypomnesis' is used by Stiegler to characterize the quantitative changes (smaller, faster, more spectacular) which create a more seductive element and affect; see: Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 2010) p.112.

*
Thinking 'inceptively' refers to a going back to origins; but in no way should it be understood in the literal and reactionary sense of a simple redoing or repetition of an already worn out belief system (this would constitute an ideology); rather, it involved an act of interpretation (hermeneutic) which returns to a decisive historical 'event' which, although past, still constitutes the horizon of our present condition. One returns in order to recollect a certain crisis and a 'problematic' situation which is still our own. We will discuss the word hermeneutics (interpretation) in the later part of our talk.

2
Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato; The Republic Book VII* (University of Chicago Great Books, vol.7, 1952) p. 388.

*
See: D.J. Ciraulo, *Deflationary Essays, "The Children of the Screen"* (D. Monroe Press, San Jose, Ca, 2018).

By this time in our meetings we see that philosophy and education were born together in the quest for the good order of the psyche and the city (polis) as measured by the Cosmic Logos and the problematics of appearance and reality. It is quite fitting then, and as we come to our last talks on education and the art of **inceptive thinking**,* that we revisit the site and 'compact symbol' of Plato's Cave. In his own words:

Behold! Human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open toward the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been since their childhood, and having their legs and necks changed so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented from turning around their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way, and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like a screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.²

Although Plato's Allegory of the Cave allows for different hermeneutical levels of analysis—ontological, epistemological, and political, and so forth—we will use it for a critique of technotelematics and teaching. To wit: what happens when both young and old are surrounded by a world of dancing shadows, images (simulacra), and the cacophony of sounds and opinions (doxa) bouncing off the back wall-screen of the cave? Today, of course, we have portable micro-screenomatic technology which enables one to carry in the palm of their hand a portal, or mouth, to another cave-like encompassing network—a portable black hole which glows around its event horizon before sucking in, consuming, and transforming information back into its preindividual ground. (In other essays I referred to the desire for cave life and the altered and manipulated light of simulation as the Logic of Las Vegas.)*

With the flight of the gods and the loss of the old Olympian order, the newly freed psyche of the Athenian demos found another kind of sheltering; no longer was the collective psyche shocked and in wonder (thaumazein) at the emergence of beings into light (phusis), but were, rather, amused by their own creations (techne), the satiation of their appetites and passions, and the expression of opinions with their newly found voice. And, in order to keep it that way—free from the imposition of any aristocratic or hierarchical order—they, like us, will construct shelters of distraction, amusement, and suspended time. They will invent the Dionysian festival and the theater where the tragedies of Sophocles and comedies of Aristophanes would play out the hubris of Kings and Queens and the pretensions of ordinary men and women.

But from what does one require shelter? In the case of the body we, like all living things, seek cover from the elements of nature; but once the first caves were appropriated by archaic humans, the need for a different shelter—a meta-shelter—for another kind of threat became quickly apparent: ...the danger of chaos, disorder, disorientation, and the possible regression to 'bare life' will require the counterfactual and normative order of the 'ought'; and with the imposition of discipline, which comes with the ought, comes the emergence and agon of the individual psyche and the social-political-collective psyche. This latter dimension of existence—one proper to humans, qua humans,—will require more than physical walls and roofs; it will be built within the opening of

language which, being more than mere animal signals of reaction, provides for the eidetic constructs, or canopy of ideas, for order, identity, and cohesion of a people outside the cave and beyond. But the need for shelters of all sorts—from the womb to caves, and to the religious canopies of the sacred and the profane—brings us to the pedagogical problem at hand.³

With the advent of the need for acculturation (education)—for which cave walls and screens are a necessary part as the material conditions for capturing the attention of the young and facilitating the transmission of cultural memory through stories, songs, images, and symbols (mnemotechnologies)—comes the problem of addiction and rigid identification with what is a **second reality!*** It is understandable, but hardly healthy for the psyche-soma complex in its real space relations with others, that one would begin to prefer, and stay in, the artificial light and 'second reality' of the cave-theater, that is, to stay in a dream state interrupted only by popcorn, popups, and hotdogs. (No doubt, Plato would, if he could, tell us that our junk food is correlative to, and consistent with, a life lived in the 'second reality' of simulacra!) Of course, what Plato has described with his allegory is the ideological (conceptual junk) state of consciousness where one's head cannot turn, or see, in any other direction. The attention of the mind is, today, captured and totally immersed in the seductive mode of a digitally enhanced and amplified world of screenomatic iconics (analogously, the persuasive art of the Sophists relied on the seduction of language for the capture of the crowd's attention). But what is being refused by the inhabitants of the cave and its 'second reality'?

It was Nietzsche, who with decisive humor, diagnosed the pathology of desiring alternate worlds: this desire for a 'second reality' is, for Nietzsche, due to **resentment!** What comes with any encounter or converse with others in real space is the agon of asymmetrical relations of power. Whether they are of a brute and physical nature, or in terms of learning a skill from an authoritative craftsman (techne, or art), or obeying the moral and ritual imperatives of a religious discipline, or with the imposition and intervention of a generational difference with its warnings, rules, and advice, Nietzsche reminds us that we (the 'Last Man') have for most of our history suffered under the indignity of a Master-Slave relation. As a consequence 'we slaves' bare the scars of a distorted psyche which seeks to invert the old aristocratic scale of values: ...the weak and humble—and not the strong and noble—shall inherit the earth! ...and so on, and so forth. Hegel, being more optimistic than Nietzsche, understood the master-slave dialectic in a more ironic way. For Hegel, this relation is the motive force of history in its progressive project toward freedom: we slaves 'make things' for the master who goes to war and kills; and if one thinks about it, 'we slaves' have made the tools of war which essentially are devices and extensions for eliminating distance and material resistance: the sword brings the body of the other closer; stirrups, saddles, and horse shoes, make for a faster passage through space-time and allow for a harder blow. From the wheel, chariot, ship, train, car, and airplane, ...to the telescope and electron microscope, one can see the urphenomenon (the essential form) for the elimination of spatial distance and speed in our technology. And then, of course, the Cold War and the need for lighter payloads gave us the solid state computer chip and cellphones as extensions for instantaneous information (communication in the restricted sense of contact) and the near complete elimination of real space relations, ...or at least for their need or relevancy.*

We can now better understand Hegel's strange notion about the 'cunning reason' of history which operates behind the back of actual affairs: with every extension 'we slaves' build for the master, the master becomes weaker and more dependent on what slaves produce and soon becomes historically irrelevant! Hegel would not go this far, but 'we slaves' are in the

3
Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres I, II and III* (Semiotext(e), Pasadena, CA, 2014); also see: Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (Anchor Books, New York, 1969).

*
The notion of a 'second reality' refers to being in the condition of deception, individual or collective, which relies on a system of ideas (Gnostic, Marxist, Fascist, various religious cults, and perhaps today's AI and the notion of a utopic post-human condition) in order to occlude and deny our existential participation in the flow of becoming and death. See: Eric Voegelin, *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism* (ISI Books, Wilmington, Delaware, 1968) pp. 25-7.

*
For the classic exposition of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, see: Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (Basic Books, Ithaca, London 1969) ch.2; for, hopefully, a more humorous take, see my essay on Moby Dick: "We Slaves, or the Problem of Ahab's Whale-Bone-Leg" in *Deflationary Essays* (Available on Amazon).

4

Ibid Plato #2 above.

*
Much has been written on the term pharmakon which meant for the Greeks both a cure and a poison; see: Jacques Derrida's essay "Plato's Pharmacy" in Dissemination (Continuum, London, New York, 1981); also see: Bernard Stiegler, What Makes Life Worth Living, on Pharmacology (Polity Press, MA, 2013).

5

Ibid Sloterdijk #3 above.

*
For the French philosopher and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan—under the influence of Freud (superego) and Heidegger (das Man = they self)—the child is born, or 'thrown' out of the pleasurable immediacy of the womb into the symbolic domain of family order, social norms, history...and so on. This is for Feminist theory the world of the phallic master-signifier (god, king, father, and so forth).

6

Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. Walter Kaufmann (Viking Press, New York, NY, 1970) p. 252.

process of constructing a global 'second reality'—life lived as nodal units safely ensconced in the interstices of a screenomatic cyberspace-cave! Without having to look over one's shoulders, as in real space, or hear the sound of distant horse hooves riding in from the horizon, 'we slaves' can finally experience the ersatz of security and the satisfaction of 'self-recognition' within the enclosed borders of screenomatic time-space and its Narcissistic feed-back loop. (This technotopology makes possible the new pseudo masters of late capitalism—the CEO and finance banker—who do not ride in from the real space horizon, but cunningly hide in the hardware and software...like Plato's puppeteer behind the wall at the mouth of the cave.)

As you know, Plato introduces into the enraptured state of the cave dwellers a disturbing event:

And now look again and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look toward the light, he will suffer sharp pains.

Plato implies that this venture into the open will require the aid of a mediator-teacher for the adjustment and reorientation of the prisoners:

And you may further imagine that his instruction is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them—will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?⁴

Is it any wonder then that our technotelematic extensions take on a pharmacological use*—a defense mechanism that with one click puts up a screen-wall of images and representations 'between' the released prisoners and their guide. The portable cell-cave allows for an immediate refusal of the asymmetrical relations of real space and a return and regression in real time to an earlier phase of psychic 'individuation'—back to a kind of Dream Time found in the sheltering and closed system of a mother's womb.⁵ This is a placental place of immediacy and resonant jouissance enjoyed before being 'thrown' out into the historical symbolic and often brutal world of the Father.*

When Nietzsche diagnosed what we talked about as the desire for alternate worlds and the inversion of values—first in religion then in philosophy and its various ideological offshoots, and now in the promethean desire and effort to reverse engineer creation and strip it down to its binary skeleton—he speaks, as we pointed out, of resentment. And if resentment is prolonged due to weakness or incapacity and left unabated, it turns into its active manifestation of revenge!

The spirit of revenge, my friends, has so far been the subject of man's best reflection.

But revenge against what?

This, yet, this alone is revenge itself; the will's revulsion against time and its it was.⁶

How strange! But if we think about it, our existence is experienced in a flow of time; and if one were to object that human temporality is only an illusion or epiphenomenon produced by the brain (which from the 'third-person' objective view is correct), this would, arguably, be scientifically satisfying; but it would be quite trivial as one rushes 'toward' one's own end, and recounts foolish things of the past, and wrings one's hands in regret over what 'has been'. The present as experienced in the 'first person' is pervaded and challenged by the measure, judgement, accomplishments, and atrocities of the past which grow more ponderous by the second. Perhaps then, and due to the accumulative dimension of internal time consciousness, it is not so strange that we take a stand against the 'it was'—to refuse the past and take refuge in the 'specious present' of cave-screens of some sort. When consciousness is absorbed and held captive by the redundant amusement of simulacra, this latter condition is shorn of its temporal horizon and in a deficient mode of being present. We 'Lotus Eaters' wait only for future 'innovations'—for novelty, and not natality, as Hannah Arendt would say—that are faster, smaller, and displayed in more spectacular modes and means of transmission. We Lotus Eaters stand in waiting for our coming 'transhuman' condition, ...or being 'beamed up' and out of real space altogether!

Moments of relief from stress and struggle are, of course, necessary to the human condition; but today, and as Bernard Stiegler has pointed out, teachers are in a 'battle for the attention' of the student psyche in order to help continue its ongoing process of 'individuation'. Being overwhelmed, and inundated by the constant proliferation of new gadgets, apps, and 'innovations'—and caught up fatalistically in what appears to them as the inevitable winds of progress—the new Education-Administrator-CEO now understands the teacher to be a 'facilitator' of information access and cyber-pilot of Smart Room technology. With this thoughtless response—thoughtless because ahistorical and without critique nor question—we conform to what is happening in the world by throwing more of the same at the problem: ...'students need more information exchange, more rubrics for assessment, and more captivating and intense images—more puppets, more current puppet dance routines; and above all else, the facilitator needs to replace to the fire at the mouth of the cave with a laser projection for Hi Def images projected on the back-wall-screen of the cave (PowerPoint)!' But the incipient moment of education given in Plato's Allegory of the Cave tells us of something else.

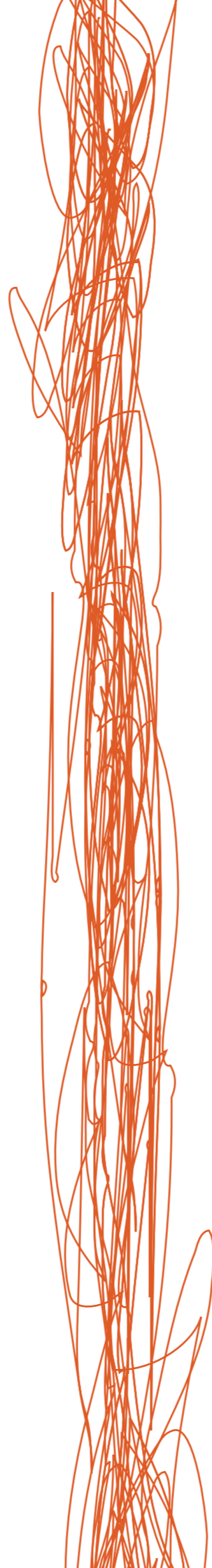
When Plato's prisoners return to the cave from the light of the sun, most will be glad to be back to their former environment and state of consciousness; but a few more courageous souls, or perhaps fool hardy, will try to tell the prisoners of their own captivity in view of the world of light outside. And now we approach the event horizon—the moment of truth—where Plato gives the clue to the essential calling of the teacher as one (Socrates?) who decides, at considerable risk, to step between the hidden puppeteer (purveyor of seductive simulacra) and the enthralled individual psyche. Teaching is a constant battle for the attention of the psyche and its redirection (educere = to lead) to the ideas proper to its health and growth.* The teacher as guide tries to expand the horizon of the narrow ideologically addicted psyche from its **micro-psychotic** state—today living within the screenomatic frame of certain unthought and unquestioned assumptions and momentary sensations in the false 'now' of the 'specious present'—to what the Greeks called the megalopsychos, or the larger and magnanimous soul. Today, this battle is decisive! We can now see before our eyes that not only children and adolescents, but also parents, and even teachers, reach for their screenomatic-transporter-escape mechanism in the middle of a conversation, social situation, or even dinner! We can call this a **refusal to be in real space with others!** Bernard Stiegler calls this telematic-psycho-social behavior a form of **generational inversion:**

*

The 'specious present' is a notion first used by William James, and later by Whitehead and Varela, to designate a deficient sense of time restricted to the now of distraction (focal instead of field awareness).

*

Usually when educators hear any criticism of technotelematics, they respond with: ...'But this is the reality!'—the 'given' situation of technological progress! In doing so, they betray the incipient moment of their own vocation—their call to take care of the self of those entrusted to them who are most vulnerable to the allurements of appearances and opinion (philodoxy Lec. I).



7
Ibid Stiegler #1 above p.3; also see:
Katherine Hayes, "Hyper and Deep
Attention: The Generational Divide in
Cognitive Modes." www.nlajournal.org.
*

Suffice it to say for now that although
Simondon is in disagreement with
Aristotle on the primacy of form over
matter, that is, that form, for Simondon, is
also a product of an individuating process,
he is, nevertheless, in agreement with
Aristotle on the dynamic nature of matter
as being always in a state of potency.

8
Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and
Philosophy* (Harper Torchbooks, NY,
1958) p. 41.

*
The 'preindividual' domain is in its
being (ontology) always in the process
of becoming and complexification
(individuation). By itself the proton has
an identity (+) and weight but is far from
equilibrium and ready to combine with
an electron (-); it finds a more stable
condition in the hydrogen atom that in
turn is in potency to becoming helium,...
and so on.

Through this generational inversion, the
segment designated 'minors' becomes
prescriptive of the consumption habits of
the segment that is ostensibly adult—but is in
fact infantilized: adults become decreasingly
responsible for their children's behavior, and
for their own. Structurally speaking, adults thus
become minors, the result being that adulthood,
as such, judicial as well as democratic, appears
to have vanished.⁷

II.

What is happening around us, and more specifically in regard to
technomnemonic learning, is an interruption of what Gilbert Simondon called
the process of 'individuation'. The latter term—one that at the human level
designates what we ordinarily call maturation—is used to describe, in a more
ontological and scientific way, the greater ground of our existence and how
any entity becomes individuated. When we say, ...person, human, subject,
individual, animal, or atom, we assume a finished, stabilized, and self-identical
entity. But Werner Heisenberg—one of the founders of quantum mechanics—
warned his fellow physicists that it would no longer be correct to describe the
atom as Democritus would, that is, as that which is uncuttable (a-toma), or as
the smallest particle of an element—a micro cannonball crashing into other
little particles in compliance with the classical-Newtonian laws of space and
time. This latter picture is no longer supported by experimental facts which, for
Heisenberg, rather support the Aristotelian ontology: if you remember from our
previous talk on epistemology (Lec. VI) that, for Aristotle, the being of a thing
is a combination of **act** (what it is) and **potency** (what it can become); and by
general consensus the particle is now understood as always being accompanied
by 'probability waves'. This means that a particle is only one abstract moment
in an overall process of becoming.* Talking about the new physics,
Heisenberg says:

It was a quantitative version of the old concept
of 'potential' in Aristotelian philosophy [...] a kind
of physical reality just in the middle between
possibility and reality.⁸

In like manner, but in regard to the nature of the self and the act of teaching and
learning, departments of education still assume, and quite stubbornly so, the
deposed—both by brain neurology and philosophical analysis—metaphysics
of the self as a 'substance' or already actualized and complete individual entity
possessed of an already formed opinion (a priori) held as though it was a piece
of property—or better, as though it was an abdominal discomfort which merely
requires expression for relief and a feeling of regained self-confidence.

Simondon, being in fidelity to the calling of philosophy as the essential
moment and event of secular education, is concerned, as was Plato, with the
order of the psyche in its process of **individuation** and its necessary relation
to the collective psyche. And the good order of the psyche in its process of
development can only take place if the psyche understands its ontogenesis—its
becoming and location within the larger 'preindividual' reality. All things for
Simondon emerge from the metastable state of **preindividuality***—the ground
and greater process of ontological becoming (individuation). No more than we
can speak of an isolated and solid atom can we speak of an isolated, free-range,

and complete individual psyche (social atomism). Today, and since the beginning
of the Cold War, we go about the business of education and indulge in political
talk without understanding our assumptions, the historical genesis of our
valued opinions, and our metaphysical commitments. This gives the conditions
for what Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, called our **inauthentic** being-in-the-
world: we engage in the superficial back and forth of **idle talk** and **curiosity**—
superficially going from one thing to another—in an effort to keep things in
'the twilight of ambiguity.'⁹ It is obvious that these Heideggerian categories are
meant to describe a 'deficient mode' of existence and flight from the awareness
of our participation in the larger encompassing of Being. Much like one who
skates on thin ice, or like Siliconers dreaming in the valley, this awareness
would reveal the fragility and contingency of our being in the face of a greater
Being—and, perhaps, a state of dizziness. But it is precisely this preindividual
ground of beings which necessarily constitutes the deepest archaeological
stratification of human existence and acts like a strange attractor on the psyche
of the philosopher. In an effort to explain Simondon's criticism of the abstract
valorization of the individual (Classical Liberalism), Muriel Combs puts it
this way:

It is impossible to stress this point enough, that
it is not a relation to self that comes first and
makes the collective possible, but a relation to
what, in the self, surpasses the individual. [...]
What is real in the psychological
is transindividual.¹⁰

It is anthropologically obvious and a universally cross-cultural practice that
the initiation of the young takes place through rites of passage—rituals,
intergenerational wisdom, stories, religion, and cosmogony—through, that
is, the teaching of what is the transindividual element in the collective. But
today our young—being confident that 'the Old Man in the sky' is no longer
there—are captivated by the simulation of transindividuation as 'nodal units' of
exchange in the larger engineered encompassing of the Internet.

The vocation (calling) of teaching—if in fidelity to its engendering
moment in the problematics of philosophy—requires one to take a stand
between the youthful psyche and the surrounding world of mediated and second-
hand information (the common doxa), that is, to be engaged, as we said earlier,
in a 'battle for attention' of the student psyche (Stiegler) and its redirection. The
bombardment and sheer bulk of information is, for the most part, formidable
and is aimed at the appetitive and passionate parts of the psyche (Lec. 1)
against which our young have very little defense. Without some intervention and
immunological counter measures, the attention of the young will stay distracted,
subdued, and held captive by the seductive and addictive screenomatic loop
of image-desire-consuming. (And can we really have a conversation about
opioids or addiction in general, and hundreds of deaths a day, while in the
ahistorical, One-Dimensional and excremental, input-output, way of life?) The
protection of the psyche first falls, of course, on the parents and family of the
young whose authority has usually been grounded in what the Greeks called
the **nomoi**, or laws and traditional norms. But the older means of cultural
transmission—extensions for memory which Stiegler calls **mnemotechnologies**
(oral stories, songs, print, books, and rituals, and so forth)—have today been
interrupted and co-opted by commercial interests. The transversal intersection
of digital programming, solid-state physics, and miniaturization has created a
misleading and seductive toy-like appearance and simplified operational use of
our extensions. As such, being 'smart' has, today, nothing to do with the physics

9
Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*
(Harper and Row, NY and Evanston,
1962)
p. 210-217.

10
Muriel Combs, *Gilbert Simondon and the
Philosophy of the Transindividual* (MIT
Press, London, Cambridge, 2009) p. 41.

* In the essay 'Children of the Screen' in *Deflationary Essays* I talk about the Star Wars Bar Effect: no matter how far back, or how futural, or how far away in time and space, there will still be a sword fight, class difference (Princess Leia), drag races in the desert, but off the ground, and with laser-guided violence; and there will always be a watering hole, or bar, with funky creatures, drinking weird pink and green concoctions, and still looking to screw you out of some money. Capitalism is infinite!

and mathematics congealed below the flashy, fashionable, plastics encasements of mnemonic technology, but refers to knowing the code or sequence of clicks and digital maneuvers that allow for the power of instantaneous access to the constant flow of images and information.

In this way—the way of the magic wand, bauble (fool's scepter), and the Star Trek transporter—children gain the power of making the far near, and what is near irrelevant; and with the wave of the hand, or movement of one finger, they make images appear and disappear. Technotelematics, with its nihilation of real space relations, create the a priori conditions for a **generational inversion** (Stiegler). Parents themselves are caught up in the libidinal economy of capitalism—caught without historical-cultural reference (time) in a deterritorialized city (space)—and live, like their children, in the same constant 'now' of the 'specious present'. They are the original **Children of the Screen**, and for some time have dreamed of being-beamed-up; and they also have been weaned on the toonomic representations in the direct transfer of their attention from nipple to screen. Parents no longer have the will nor space-time conditions to step between little Narcissus and his image. And further, parents are the product of the Hollywood propaganda machine which presents the future as more of the same, ...but faster and further away! Real space relations have been abandoned and left only for autonomous vehicles, bots, war, and destruction. All of the above, and much more, has created a halt in the process of individuation, or in the collateral case of parents a regression and infantilization of the psyche.*

Excursus: By the time concrete cases of 'generational inversion' show up on SNL as comic sketches (Computer Guys), or make it on to our local Nightly News, the problem is well on its way to becoming an endemic cultural pathology: there was a particular story on the News (KPIX S.F. 5/11/18) concerning the case of a student hacker who evidently, and according to his own word, had 'no problem' breaking into his high school information system in order to apply 'his own criterion' for grading. When asked what his measure (rubric) was, the student replied, ...“I raised the grades of people that I liked, and lowered the grades of people I didn't like!...I felt I could do anything!” (I wonder if school psychologists, the police, and grief counselors are listening to the breathless candor of this Infantile Grandiosity?) And when another student was queried about the incident, he apologetically said, ...“I don't want to say the teacher [whose computer was hacked] was not educated enough, ...but he clicked on one of those goofy little icons [fishing email]” ...“this is beginner stuff!” “Yes,” said a fellow teachers, “the teacher was careless!” But the story doesn't end here. It turned out that while the interrogation was going on, Rufus the sniff dog found the loaded thumb-drive hidden in a bag. If one is following the logic, Rufus would, therefore, be more educated than both hacker and teacher, ...and even the police!

But the ideology and metaphysical assumption concerning technology and the progressive movement of history (Hegel and Marx) is far more pervasive in its discursive effects and actions, that is, it cannot be contained within the classroom or home. 'Generational inversion' works, rather, like a contagion, or retro-virus, which shows up at all levels of social-political life when agitated or under stress. Once again, ...“I read the news today. Oh boy:” it seems that while we were sleeping, a number of people have been hit or run over by autonomous or semi-automated cars. When certain corporate representatives responded, they said it was the fault of the 'old streets' which should obviously be up-graded into 'smart streets' in keeping with the progressive 'power-

knowledge' of technology. What we hear again is the reckless abandon of responsibility and sense of entitlement which accrues to 'true believers' in their indubitable faith in belonging to a higher history and transhuman condition. How else can one account for the acceptance of approximately 50,000 deaths and 250,000 mutilations a year by automobile then by a kind techno-religious potlatch and strange need to sacrifice this much flesh for the future of teleportation?*

Recursus: The teacher must be able to present a counter-pull which operates on that part of the student psyche which is, even if unrecognized, opened out (nous, mind, reason) to its preindividual ground—the experience that Plato recognized as our 'participation in Being'. But we know from Plato's allegory that teachers cannot intervene and redirect the attention of the psyche unless they can re-engage the existential experience that they have themselves undergone! The overwhelming experience (thaumazein) of standing in the sun of Being (the Good and the Beautiful—Kaloagathon)—even if for only a short time and limited sight—will produce in our future teachers the affective state (mood) of being shocked! And from that event forward, the psyche will take on the more enduring and sober condition of being-in-wonder about the larger encompassing of Being itself. No amount of information, simulation, amplification, recitation of facts, nor collaboration will free the psyche from its screenomatic-cave captivity unless the facts and the content being taught are...Wonder-laden! To this end, teaching is in its essence hermeneutical.

III.

The term 'hermeneutic' is in its origin the Greek word for interpretation, or way of understanding a more oblique, overdetermined, metaphorical, or mystical use of language—usually historical texts of a divine, poetic, or legal nature. Because of the obscure heavenly discourse of the Olympians, direct communication was not deemed possible. For the Greeks, Hermes was, among other things, the mediating god and messenger from Zeus to the Oracle at Delphi, which, in turn, required the further translation and interpretation by the priests of the Temple. Although hermeneutics was later structurally differentiated as a method for Biblical exegesis in the Medieval schools (the four levels of the allegorical, literal, analogical, and moral), and later in the 19th century with the German theologian Schielamacher, Heidegger gives the term new life and meaning in *Being and Time*: instead of studying only the historical-cultural background conditions of the text or artifact in question, that is, from the putatively objective, neutral gaze of the cogito (I think), the hermeneutical, for Heidegger, describes the existential structure of our very being...“Dasein dwells hermeneutically.” And this means that we always find ourselves in a larger historical and ontological encompassing. And what Heidegger means, when he says that our understanding is one of being in a 'hermeneutic circle', is that the observer-interpreter of a text or artifact of the past always finds oneself in a pre-interpreted situation. Our being-there (Dasein) is never outside of a world of meaning, or without, a temporal-historical horizon. This inherited and finite condition is understood by Heidegger's former student Hans Georg Godamer¹¹ as constituting an existential 'prejudice' or mode of comportment to the world which itself must first be put in question and problematized as a necessary condition of understanding. The 'prejudice' of one's own historical horizon is not to be bracketed out, or be deconstructed, merely in order to find a neutral, ahistorical position, and more objective 'I'—a more purified and disinterested gaze for the application of a more rigorous calculation, interrogation, and dissection of the object—but, rather, brought to light in order to allow the text, philosophical persona, or artifact to speak, and, perhaps, put a question to us and our own self-understanding.*

* We have all become followers of Marshall Applewhite, the spiritual leader of the Heaven's Gate community, who had his followers and fellow programmers drink vodka spiked with phenobarbital—this, in order to be 'beamed up' to an alien spacecraft following the Hale-Bopp Comet.

11 Hans Georg Godamer, *Truth and Method* (Crossroad Press, New York, 1989).

* As we come to the end of our talks, I hope the hermeneutical approach has become obvious, that is, that the concepts discussed constitute the silent frame of ideas through which we encounter any attempt to understand the various phenomena of our world. By acknowledging this background of ideas as problematic, we hopefully avoid the deadly fall into ideology.

12

Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgement (University of Chicago, Great Books, Chicago, 1952) vol. 42, p. 495.

13

Eric Voegelin, Anamnesis (University of Missouri Press, Columbia, London, 1990) ch.8.

14

Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man (Beacon Press, Boston, 1964) ch.3.

15

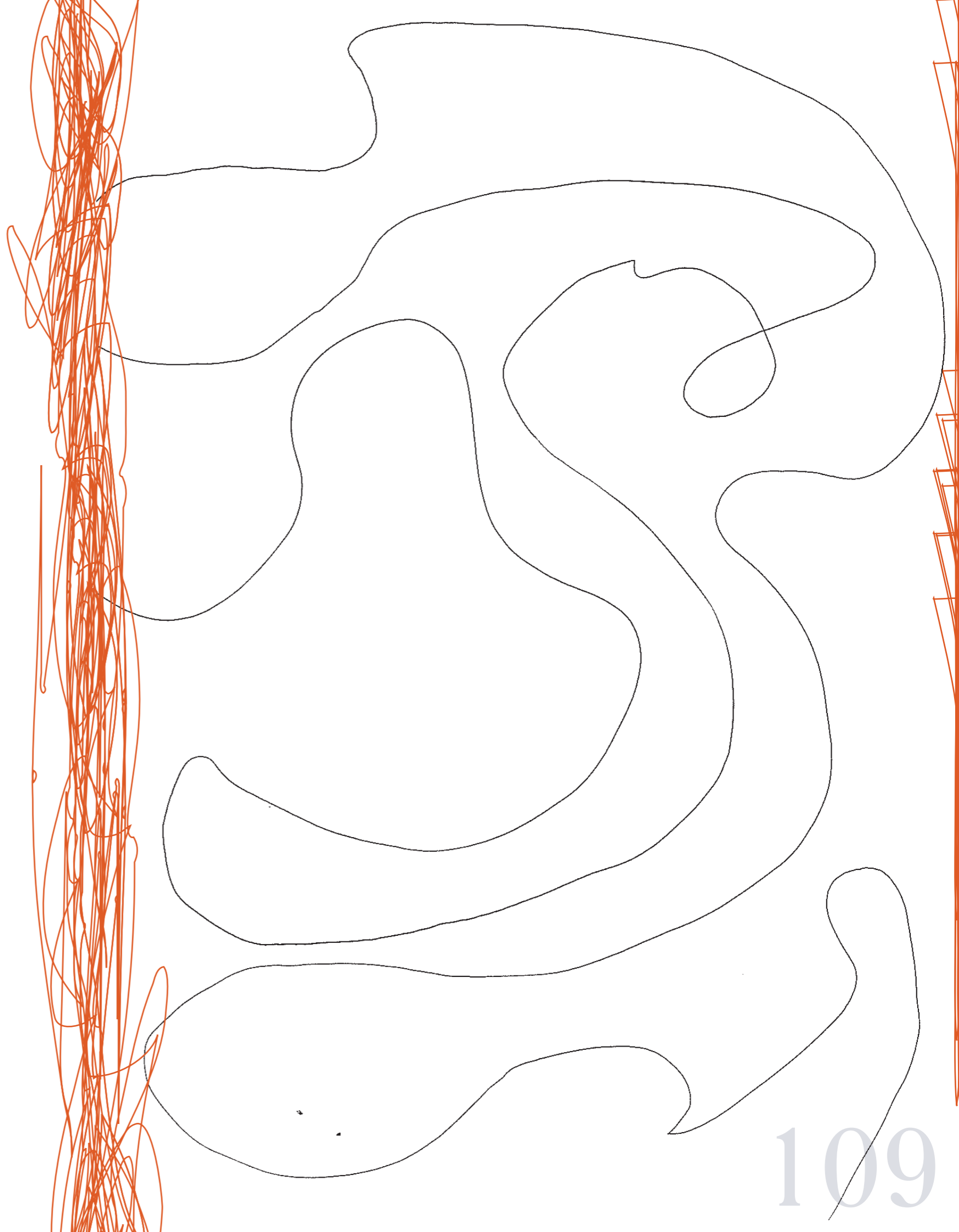
Giorgio Agamben, What is Philosophy? (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 2018) ch. 29.

At minimum, the act of teaching hermeneutically is a way of relating the part to the whole, that is, a way to present the material not in a reductive and decontextualized way, but in an additive and connective manner that shows the particular content being taught in the larger light of the historical and cosmological whole to which both observer and observed belong. When Hermes brought his message from Zeus, the Greeks were reminded by this medium of delivery that their problems and concerns were embedded in a larger Olympian household (oikonomia—ecumene). But with the departure of the gods and the rise of the demos, and the collateral clamor of opinion in the polis, it fell to the philosophers to remind the Greeks of their relation to, and emergence out of (phusis), the overwhelming constellation of Being (what, with Simondon, we are calling the preindividual domain). Kant called that which confronts us as overwhelming and threatening...the sublime! Unlike the appearance of a thing of beauty, which is pleasing and seductive, the confrontation with the sublime—like a great mountain peak, tsunami wave, great whale, earthquake, black hole, or the possibility of a multiverse—throws us back on ourselves in the brute recognition of our finitude and the helplessness of our freedom.¹²

From the Symposium we know that Plato's reference to the sun as the Good and the Beautiful (the two words are often used together—Kaloagathon) does not, as we said, point to the beauty of a phenomenal and sensory kind but, and as Diotima teaches Socrates, rather points to Beauty in itself—that toward which all material things are moved in an effort to find their always elusive fulfillment. In an analogous way the hermeneutic mode of teaching attempts to present and frame the conceptual content to be taught within the more pervasive and affective field of the **preindividual** and 'sublime' ground of Being to which both teacher and student belong. We can all acknowledge and 'feel' at a pre-reflective level that our consciousness is embedded in a historical sea of ideas and events, and that we still carry in our bodily composition the mass and energy of the **Beginning** (arche) event which moves in time to an unknown **Beyond** (eschaton). Ideally, the teacher as hermeneut stands between the sublime and the student in an effort to convey and transmit the 'experience of participation' in the metaxic tension (being in the middle) which constitutes what is most essential and universal to human existence.¹³ The historical works of speculative philosophy concerning metaphysics and ontology are attempts to bring into language the whole to which we all belong, that is, what in our singularity is universal.

We should be careful, however, not to confuse—as we do with the on-going Neoliberal, commodity-driven economic ideology and process of globalization—what is **homogenous** and the 'same for all' with what is **universal** to the human condition. Global homogeneity is carried on through the capitalist mode of selling and consuming, and as such, is directed, through advertising, to the capture of our attention and desires—qualities which are necessary for sublimation and the creative process—in an effort to degrade and redirect them to our appetitive drives. Through the feed-back of immediate satisfaction, the creative urge, or Eros, is **desublimated!**¹⁴ We can call this online libidinal economy—one which moves in a horizontal and 'one-dimensional' way from seduction to consuming, to satisfaction, pollution, and finally to the terrible lack felt in addiction—the homogeneity of The Excremental View of Life!

What is universal, on the other hand, is not constituted by the sameness of mediating technology (cellphones) nor equal access to information and the objects of desire and consumption, but the sameness of human dignity! And this latter designation means that we are all under a 'demand'¹⁵ (not just a social or psychological construction, but a demand intrinsic to our being as an ongoing process of individuation) to add to the factuality of current reality (what is) the obligation (ought) of making it better and more humane in the future (reality



reveals itself to us as a process of becoming and not a static situation to be defended). The teacher as hermeneut delivers the message (information, facts, and ideas) along with what is problematic and questionable about its meaning, use, level of importance, and tacit assumptions. This interpretive care is born of the 'excess' and 'accursed share' (Bataille) that belongs only to humans! All existentialism tells us is that our being is more than our factual-animal nature but endures in time as a **possible being**. The imperative 'demand' of the ought which hopes for things better for the human condition—and not merely for novelty or innovations and changing fashions—comes to us from the not-yet of our possible being and process of individuation.

A further complication in regard to the educational process occurred with the merger of commercial service industries (high tech media delivery: Google, Face Book, Twitter, Microsoft, Amazon, and so on) with Post-Cold War-Military-Digital-Screenomatic Technology (science has, for the most part, been folded into both business and technological war applications). The problem with the Business-Military Technology-Education triumvirate is that the new telematic extensions, or hypomnemata (artificial memory supports), allow for the direct access of commercial interests to the student psyche as consumer—the direct and instantaneous entry of **private** capital with all of its financial power and audio-visual techniques for seducing the libidinal energy of the young—while in the **public space** of the classroom. With a screen and its simulacra—no longer a fixed screen on the back wall of a cave—standing between the student and the teacher, the teacher must now 'battle for the attention' of the student psyche... before its libidinal desire for creativity (Eros) is desublimated (given what it desires without delay) and transformed into the drives of the appetites to consume (**thanatos**—death instinct). Unless the teacher is grounded in the 'spirit of philosophy'—unless, that is, they have ventured out of the cave and into the overwhelming light of the Sun—whatever content they deliver will not be **wonder-laden**! And, as such, the message will lack intensity and thus appear banal and unable to break into the pit-bull-like grip of the Pavlovian feed-back loop of stimulus (signal) and response—to weak, that is, to capture and redirect the attention of the student in order to continue the process of individuation:

**To individuate oneself is to transform oneself;
and the transformation of ways of life is
the formal law of human life—of existence.
Man cannot but sub-sist; he ex-sists
[projected into the future], and that
means he transforms himself.**¹⁶

All the magical power of the screen will short-circuit the 'trans' in what Simondon calls the **transindividuation**, or the reaching out and going beyond our own psyche to what is universal in the collective psyche. (This is much like Rousseau's difference between a 'majority' and the 'general will' of the people: a majority made up of putatively individual, self-interested singularities cannot, as Socrates pointed out, guarantee what is 'just' until each sees in him or herself what is good for all.) And ironically, Simondon, as a philosopher of technology, does not find the clue to our transindividuation in the force of technology alone, nor in conquering death and outer space (the Silicon Valley Syndrome), but in recognizing the sublime in our preindividual encompassing.

When we connect the process of teaching and learning to its deeper stratification, that is, when we relate the particular to its whole—and this is what philosophy does,—we can see that when something is learned, an older metastable condition of the brain has changed and moved its rhizomatic connections, not merely in a horizontal and linear way from one system of coordinates to another, but in the way of building (Bildung—culture): when we build we don't get rid of or move off the foundation; the foundation is hopefully stable but ready to receive (metastable—potential) and support other formations (walls, and so forth); and this new stratification will also be in a metastable readiness and open to further configurations (individuation). For Simondon, what is meant by being, ground, or reality is actually, and at bottom, a metastable process of individuation or becoming: the hydrogen atom, like any element or particle, is in a metastable state; it has a structure formed from a previous state of individuation and is accompanied by a probability-wave-matrix that acts as the condition for a possible future combination with oxygen and the production of a more complex water molecule, ...and so on up the evolutionary scale; and when we analyze water, we do not forget about its prior ontogenesis nor its potential for combination with other molecules in the future. The notion of 'complexity' found in early process philosophers (Morgan, Alexander, Bergson, Simondon, Chardin, and Whitehead) is understood, as we said, with the process of building or adding something new while retaining the older substrate.

But most important for the hermeneutical approach to teaching—which is, as such, in fidelity to the 'spirit of philosophy'—is the ability of the teacher, no matter what subject is being taught, to reinstill a sense of wonder by referring students to the fact that they, like all other beings, emerge from a **preindividual** ground of being. As you have already learned from our earlier talks on metaphysics, philosophers have, for the most part, and until the last century, searched, not only for the being of particular things, but for the Being of the whole. Whether with the pre-Socratic quest for the unifying principle—the **One** of the cosmos, or the attempt of Heraclitus to listen to the Logos, or with Pythagoras and his search for the geometry and music of the spheres, or the Socratic-Platonic examination of the individual psyche in terms of virtue (arete) and its relation to the collective psyche of the polis (dikia, justice)—no matter what the particular investigation, philosophy is the quest for what constitutes good order! And the concept of good order implies a relation of parts to each other and to a common measure (metron) which transcends both.

Once again, and finally, the teacher, as hermeneut, does not return to the past—to the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, or Chinese, and so on—in order to reuse their principles and apply them to our current situation, but returns in order to understand the 'incipient' moment of an essential problem which still belongs to us as problematic: What is just? What is good? And what should be done?

Endnotes

1

The term 'mnemotechnical' refers to any device or extension (paper, book, or computer screen) that enhances our memory; 'hypomnesis' is used by Stiegler to characterize the quantitative changes (smaller, faster, more spectacular) which create a more seductive element and affect; see: Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 2010) p.112.

*

Thinking 'inceptively' refers to a going back to origins; but in no way should it be understood in the literal and reactionary sense of a simple redoing or repetition of an already worn out belief system (this would constitute an ideology); rather, it involved an act of interpretation (hermeneutic) which returns to a decisive historical 'event' which, although past, still constitutes the horizon of our present condition. One returns in order to recollect a certain crisis and a 'problematic' situation which is still our own. We will discuss the word hermeneutics (interpretation) in the later part of our talk.

2

Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato; The Republic Book VII* (University of Chicago Great Books, vol.7, 1952) p. 388.

*

See: D.J. Ciraulo, *Deflationary Essays, "The Children of the Screen"* (D. Monroe Press, San Jose, Ca, 2018).

3

Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres I, II and III (Semiotext(e), Pasadena, CA, 2014)*; also see: Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (Anchor Books, New York, 1969).

*

The notion of a 'second reality' refers to being in the condition of deception, individual or collective, which relies on a system of ideas (Gnostic, Marxist, Fascist, various religious cults, and perhaps today's AI and the notion of a utopic post-human condition) in order to occlude and deny our existential participation in the flow of becoming and death. See: Eric Voegelin, *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism* (ISI Books, Wilmington, Delaware, 1968) pp. 25-7.

*

For the classic exposition of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, see: Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (Basic Books, Ithaca, London 1969) ch.2; for, hopefully, a more humorous take, see my essay on Moby Dick: "We Slaves, or the Problem of Ahab's Whale-Bone-Leg" in *Deflationary Essays* (Available on Amazon).

4

Ibid Plato #2 above.

*

Much has been written on the term *pharmakon* which meant for the Greeks both a cure and a poison; see: Jacques Derrida's essay "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* (Continuum, London, New York, 1981); also see: Bernard Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living*, on Pharmacology (Polity Press, MA, 2013).

5

Ibid Sloterdijk #3 above.

*

For the French philosopher and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan—under the influence of Freud (superego) and Heidegger (das Man = they self)—the child is born, or 'thrown' out of the pleasurable immediacy of the womb into the symbolic domain of family order, social norms, history...and so on. This is for Feminist theory the world of the phallic master-signifier (god, king, father, and so forth).

6

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (Viking Press, New York, NY, 1970) p. 252.

*

The 'specious present' is a notion first used by William James, and later by Whitehead and Varela, to designate a deficient sense of time restricted to the now of distraction (focal instead of field awareness).

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7

Ibid Stiegler #1 above p.3; also see: Katherine Hayles, "Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes." www.nlajournab.org.

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8

Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy* (Harper Torchbooks, NY, 1958) p. 41.

*

The 'preindividual' domain is in its being (ontology) always in the process of becoming and complexification (individuation). By itself the proton has an identity (+) and weight but is far from equilibrium and ready to combine with an electron (-); it finds a more stable condition in the hydrogen atom that in turn is in potency to becoming helium... and so on.

9

Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Harper and Row, NY and Evanston, 1962) p. 210-217.

10

Muriel Combs, Gilbert Simondon and the Philosophy of the Transindividual (MIT Press, London, Cambridge, 2009) p. 41.

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In the essay 'Children of the Screen' in *Deflationary Essays* I talk about the Star Wars Bar Effect: no matter how far back, or how futural, or how far away in time and space, there will still be a sword fight, class difference (Princess Leia), drag races in the desert, but off the ground, and with laser-guided violence; and there will always be a watering hole, or bar, with funky creatures, drinking weird pink and green concoctions, and still looking to screw you out of some money. Capitalism is infinite!

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We have all become followers of Marshall Applewhite, the spiritual leader of the Heaven's Gate community, who had his followers and fellow programmers drink vodka spiked with phenobarbital—this, in order to be 'beamed up' to an alien spacecraft following the Hale-Bopp Comet.

11

Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (Crossroad Press, New York, 1989).

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As we come to the end of our talks, I hope the hermeneutical approach has become obvious, that is, that the concepts discussed constitute the silent frame of ideas through which we encounter any attempt to understand the various phenomena of our world. By acknowledging this background of ideas as problematic, we hopefully avoid the deadly fall into ideology.

12

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (University of Chicago, Great Books, Chicago, 1952) vol. 42, p. 495.

13

Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis* (University of Missouri Press, Columbia, London, 1990) ch.8.

14

Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (Beacon Press, Boston, 1964) ch.3.

15

Giorgio Agamben, *What is Philosophy?* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 2018) ch. 29.

16

Ibid Stiegler p.30.

The Question Concerning Education

Bhardvaj
Patel

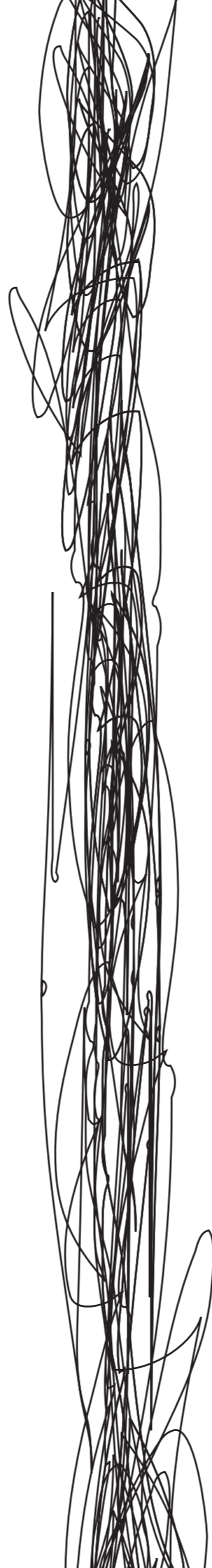
The Question Concerning Education

**Bhardvaj
Patel**

May 1968—The people of France well and surge like a tsunami meeting shore amidst a month-long strike and protest that swept up close to a quarter of the population. In an echo of the protests seen in America at the apex of the student revolution, the situation of the people in France proved to be an aftershock that out-quaked the initial tremors. What began as students in solitary standing against the physical barricades erected around a college campus, and an authoritarian administration that all together created the visceral atmosphere of a prison, grew a countrywide movement which called on a society to demand more — adamant in a refusal to be broken up or short-changed before the piper had paid up in full.

Today, we seldom stand in awe at the collective feats of those who came before, carving out the canals and beating the unbeaten paths which we now traverse in a malaise-laden, daze day in and day out. How often we are told of the greatest generation, come and passed, by bold virtue and brazen action of which we are lucky to have this freedom, these comforts, that opportunity—those choices. We have our parents, our families to thank for the years of toils and choices that went into giving us this opportunity—these voices. Momma didn't raise no fool, but she didn't work a nine to five and race to class for twelve units by night with time to raise us fine enough to know—that she didn't raise us just to fold every time a rough wind blows either.

Today we stand in the wake of celestial tides of tension so thick, the elephant's now the herd that threatens to stampede. Today we stand in the relentless torrents of booming revelation. Civilization lays naked—we can see where it's Gods bleed. Today we stand atop the belly of upheaval. Her swollen stomach kicks like the seed begets the destiny of a people.



Today we must once again ask ourselves and our institutions the question of destiny, a human destiny, a worldly destiny. Before we can ask any question of destiny—the destination that emerges in view solely through the confluence of a nebulous constellation configured from seemingly infinite permutations of possibility—we must first trace the stellar threads back toward their weavers. Only upon locating the weavers in the exercise of their craft can we begin the most fundamental line of questioning. Chiefly, we must ask about our World and how we find ourselves in it. Alas, one of the principle vehicles by which we come to travel and know our world, and thus find ourselves within it, is our education. There is no better place to begin such a substantial inquiry than within the institutions charged with incubating our World weavers and preparing them to hoist their visions to the cosmos, as Atlas hoists a world upon his shoulders—buffeted by a sea of uncertainty.

Contributors

TB:

Terry Blocher studied Psychology at West Valley College, and is currently studying at San Jose State University. He has an interest in therapy and the human mind. He also dabbles in script writing.

DC:

D.J. Ciraulo (Mr. C) is Professor Emeritus at West Valley College and was for many years the adviser to the Philosophy Club. He is the author of Deflationary Essays, The Keeper of the Flame, The Rebirth of Education out of the Spirit of Philosophy, and World Philosophers on Death.

OH:

Omar Harb studied at West Valley College and went on to do a B.A. in Comparative Literature at San Francisco State University. He is currently a figurative painter in oils on canvas and writes from time to time about the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy. See his works at www.omarharbpaintings.com.

EI:

Emiliano Ibarra studied philosophy at West Valley College and is currently enrolled at SJSU. He was born in Venezuela and has been living in the U.S. since 2006. He also, and most important for our project, gives his time as editor of The Gadfly.

AK:

Andrew Khazanovsky was a philosophy major at West Valley College and went on to do his B.A., and is finishing his M.A., at San José State University. He is also the recipient of the Arturo B. Fallico Award in philosophy.

RL:

Robert Lee studies philosophy as an undergraduate at the University of Montana after having studied at West Valley College. Before philosophy, marching percussion was his primary pursuit. Music remains for him an important hobby and he currently plays guitar in the San Jose math-rock band, Process.

MM:

Mannie Menéndez-Pidal is a native of Silicon Valley, and he has transferred from West Valley Community College to UC Berkeley, where he is continuing to study philosophy.

BP:

Bard Patel attended West Valley College and graduated from San Jose State University in 2017 with a B.A. in Philosophy. He is currently employed as an Associate Center Director at Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes in Los Gatos and its K-12 subdivision Lindamood-Bell Academy.

JZ:

James David Zoland is an alumni of West Valley College and San José State University, where he took a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Philosophy. He built and maintains the West Valley Philosophy Club site, and currently works as a Software Developer in the Public Sector.



