

Proceedings of International Conferences on Philosophy of Education (2013–2017)

Volume I

*Edited by
Prakash Iyer*

**CONCEPTUALISING EDUCATION,
AND RELATED ISSUES**



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Prakash Iyer



Azim Premji
University

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Preface

Azim Premji University's charter includes Knowledge creation and establishing domain knowledge, in various areas to help engage in issues related to theoretical and practical concerns in education and development. This means both intensive work (deeper in relevant disciplines) and extensive work (covering multiple disciplines). This naturally also implies taking up work in important and popular as well as important yet ignored/unattended areas of knowledge – towards generating interest and initiating a discourse in a particular discipline.

The series of annual conferences in Philosophy of Education, from 2013 to 2018 were part of this initiative to generate interest and contribute to the philosophical discourse on education in India. This annual event sought to involve educationists, practitioners, philosophers, and students of education to engage with these issues philosophically. The response to these conferences and related events organized have been both overwhelming and gratifying. We believe that the nature of responses we have received is indicative of the need for forums where philosophers and practitioners can come together and engage in a dialogue with one another, and increasing consensus about how fundamental and urgent the task of addressing and engaging with philosophical issues and ideas concerning education is.

We are extremely grateful to several philosophers and practitioners of education working on a wide variety of issues, who have taken keen interest in this event. This volume has select papers from the first five conferences which are related to issues faced in conceptualizing education (and related concepts like teaching, training, intelligence etc. which contribute to a better understanding of education).

Introduction

The Philosophy of Education conferences organized by Azim Premji University from 2013 to 2018 were part of the University's effort to contribute to and develop philosophical discourse in education. In this series of annual conferences, over 100 presentations were made, by accomplished philosophers of education and relatively new entrants into the domain of study. Most of the video recordings from each conference are available online, but we realize that is not enough. It is equally important to bring these important papers in print form and initiate a written dialogue among educationists and educators.

This is the first in a series of 3 editions, and comprises a selection of papers that engage with some foundational conceptual questions related to education. Section I starts with two articles that argue for the need of philosophy of education (henceforth PoE) and then other papers that engage with issues related to the idea of aims, education, teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment.

In the first article – which serves as a proper introduction to this volume - Dhankar elaborates on the need for PoE, rather philosophizing about educational theory and practice. Through three examples – a pedagogical practice, a policy decision, and a conversation that represents how educationists think of philosophy of education – he demonstrates and brings to fore the limits of the public discourse in relation to educational practice, and the need for PoE. He further demonstrates how employing PoE in such situations would immensely benefit the domain of education; and that philosophising is a necessary condition for educational practice to be meaningful and useful. He then demonstrates the methodology that PoE adopts, criteria to

mark the domain of educational issues and concepts that can be addressed by PoE, and moral and intellectual dispositions required to do so.

Pring further argues on the same issue: educational thinking, both in theory and practice, involves raising and responding to questions that are in the “province of philosophy”. Failure to see this is bound to lead to “defective policy and research”. He analyzes and derives responses to issues related to the concept of education, conflicting approaches to education like academic versus child-centered education, standards in the assessment of educational practice and teachers as researchers. Through these arguments he argues that reflection is not a distraction from practising education, and that adequate thought on these issues and deriving good acceptable responses are a necessary condition for any research in education.

Elgin raises the questions: “What constitutes good education? What makes an education good?” and traces some responses to these questions provided by philosophers over time and argues that democratic societies ought to function the way Dewey describes in “Democracy and Education”. She centres the ends of education around the notion of deliberative democracy that Dewey describes, which she says redacts the dichotomy between individualism and collectivism, by pointing that rather than clashing with each other, they in fact reinforce each other.

White’s paper takes the notion of aims of education further to describe the problems with a subject based curriculum and argues that curriculum should be aims-based; which involves logically breaking down larger aims of education into more specific smaller aims that lead us to blocks of curriculum.

White describes fundamental flaws in the rucksack view of the curriculum - a collection of many subjects - that is currently vogue in most schools across the world, including Indian schools.

Stojanov raises the issue that the concepts of education and teaching are conflated in most of the work in philosophy of education. Stojanov describes the various contrarian meanings of education as proposed by Dewey, Peters and Scheffler, and the relationship they establish between an individual's growth as a human being and the criteria that determine growth. He argues that the concept of *Bildung*, described and advocated by Humboldt and Hegel, provides a comprehensive idea of education that cleaves apart education from schooling and teaching.

Hinchliffe analyses the idea of knowing (or having learnt) using Plato's metaphor of the cave. He elaborates the epistemic and psychological state of people living their life in the cave of vicarious or second-hand knowledge in the form of shadows, and habitual interpretations of meaning from the shadows. He further compares people experiencing the real world temporarily and returning to the cave finding the interpretive life rather unengaging. He juxtaposes the idea of knowledge in Plato's metaphorical cave with Hirst's forms of knowledge. He argues that theoretical knowledge of disciplines is not enough to explain or change our life experiences in any manner. Rather we need to develop the ability to make judgments to comprehend our experiences through the lens of concepts learnt in formal education.

In Section II, Schapira, Stojanov, Phillips, Pring and Siddharth take up specific educational issues that influence the way we think about aims, policy, university, school, and curriculum. Schapira argues that many discussions of the university are trapped in the "ideas discourse," which focuses on the history

of ideas as opposed to the variegated history of the institution itself. He examines various ways in which higher education has moved from a public to a private good, focusing not only on ideas, but also the historical conditions which gave rise to the post-war university, and this informs the challenges it faces today. He argues that universities should describe their relationship with the state and private sector with a historical inflection that will provide an expansive view of the contemporary university.

Stojanov criticizes the “learnification” of education which results in treating education only in its functionalist and instrumentalist sense which makes it impossible to grasp the ethical character of aims and process of education. He elaborates on the notion of learning and aims of education and learning from the Humboldtian concept of *Bildung* which treats aims and processes as normative concepts with ethical underpinnings.

Phillips describes the most common misunderstandings about epistemology, and discusses the criticisms of mainstream epistemology raised by academics who believe that it is a tool used by the majority to dominate minority groups. He argues that “these educational scholars have made the mistake of trying to express these concerns in the language of epistemology when they themselves are not trained in epistemology nor are the basic concerns essentially epistemological!”

Siddharth examines the relationship of intelligence with agency and consciousness. Since intelligence is classified as a conscious and intentional achievement, it implies a direct relation between intelligence and agency. To establish the relationship between intelligence and consciousness, he first separates decision (which is the result of an algorithm) from judgment (which is an act done by an agent). He

further argues that phenomenal consciousness is a necessary condition for judgment.

The papers in section III deal with specific issues in the practice of teaching and learning like the effect of technology on learning, the necessity of scepticism in the practice of learning, authenticity and teaching, the relationship between knowledge and emotions, and assessment in education.

Lewin navigates through techno-optimism and techno-pessimism to find ways in which technology can be made useful, particularly by finding ways of retaining the attention span of users of online mechanisms for learning. He says pessimists are worried that online education combined with learnification and constructivism, veers our focus to the process of learning rather than the purpose(s) of learning. He argues that we need to be ambivalent in our view to technology because the issues we perceive with technology, attention for instance, exist as much in us outside of technology too.

Iyer's paper first establishes specific purposes of learning to philosophize and its value for practitioners of education. Subsequently, dissatisfaction with our beliefs is identified as the source of the impulse to examine and possibly revise or reaffirm our beliefs. Using Kant's definition of practice, Iyer identifies learning as a practice and analyzes three normative aspects of learning – the end of learning, the procedure of learning and a necessary attitude towards learning. He argues that these normative demands lead to the conclusion that experiencing a sceptical moment, defined as suspension of judgment, is a necessary condition for learning philosophy of education.

Sarukkai and Siddiqui express the concern that knowledge and knowing has been the center of a learning environment

because of the perceived importance of objectivity and the seeming unavailability of the “process of learning” to the teacher. Their argument is that “there is a primordial and essential experience of learning that accompanies learning of different kinds”. Using the Heideggerian idea that teachers “confront our finitude”, when she comes to the limit of her teaching, they say we need to pay attention to how we continue teaching even when we see that it is not achieving results. Based on an empirical study and interviews with teachers of dance and music, they analyze the conception of truth in relation to the student experiencing her own version of performing the art form and acting it out themselves in the way their body (and mind) acts it out. They describe and critique the ways in which this situation is made ethically problematic when one teaches other disciplines like mathematics or social science.

Ams’s paper seeks to address the role of emotionality in processes of learning. Based on Maslow’s notion of self-actualization, Ams traces an alternate epistemology of learning that focuses on the question of what it means to be a human being in general and a human being in particular. The attempt to explicate such a form of emotional knowledge is pursued by considering learning as that which occurs beyond the ambit of formal language practices and in the domain of day to day experience.

Bajantri attempts to discern the most inseparable part and practice of school curriculum and that is assessment. The kind of assessment being inquired into is the one whose purpose is to understand learning in a context, largely that of the classroom with multiple learners and the kind which serves certain pedagogic purposes and not those of judging an individual for his or her potential or ability to do something in future (famously the entrance

examinations etc.). The following discussion attempts to abstract theory of assessment and its alleged connection with learning, through various philosophical perspectives and reasoning by thinkers and educationists.

This book engages with a wide range of educational issues and the chapters would seem disparate and even divergent. What connects them together are two things: a demonstration of the need for philosophy of education, and the emphasis on the need to analyze some fundamental concepts that inhabit educational theory and practice which keep evolving and changing over time and seem to transcend varying social contexts.

Section I

A Practitioner's take on Philosophy of Education

Rohit Dhankar

Professor of Philosophy of Education in Azim Premji University, Bangalore. He has been part of many NCERT initiatives in developing material and curriculum through various committees.

The general attitude of educationists in India to philosophy of education is that it is of limited use in deliberating on aims of education, and has almost nothing to offer in curricular and pedagogical decisions. The aims themselves are considered either almost irrelevant to actual task of educating children as they are too remote from the immediate concern of, say, teaching a school entrant reading and counting. Alternatively they are already determined by the goals of national development, which basically is a political economic decision. Therefore, even in deliberating on aims, the role of philosophy of Education (PoE) is limited to working out implications and possibly some conceptual clarification. Another view is that in the Indian tradition, philosophy of education is woven into the overall analysis of education from sociological, political and economic perspectives. Working out a territory and method of PoE on its own is a western idea of recent origin, and the Indian approach of an overall analysis is more robust and fruitful in our context. Without immediately challenging any of these contentions we will identify three issues which may throw up unavoidable philosophical issues, and then try to see how PoE might help there.

Recently a short video of a math teacher went viral first on social media because a business tycoon tweeted it. Then a very famous Bollywood star was floored by its simplicity and effectiveness, and sent it to the largest online tuition group in India, then TV channels picked it up. In the video a teacher is explaining a very interesting and simple way of multiplying 9 by any number less than 10, in other words working out multiplication table of 9. To multiply 9 by 4, she asks one child to raise her hand and show ten fingers of both hands. She writes “4” on the black board. Then holds the 4th finger on the child’s hand and asks: how many fingers are to the left of this finger? Children reply “3”, and she writes “3”. Then she asks how many fingers are to the right of this finger and children say “6”. She writes 6 after 3, and the number on the board becomes “36”. She declares “Multiplication is done”, implying $4 \times 9 = 36$.

We have to be a little careful in understanding the issue with this method of teaching. First, the teacher is doing a good job of teaching children a “math trick”, which could be very useful, if certain other conditions are fulfilled. We will come to those conditions presently. Second, goodnatured and socially concerned business tycoon and Bollywood star are appreciating the teacher’s work, and promoting it, which is very kind of them. The TV channels are going berserk in declaring that this can happen only in India. All this raises a suspicion (hopefully for some) that this is going to be used by a large number of mathematics teachers in the country. The hope or suspicion is not unfounded, there are scores of videos propagated by foundations, NGOs and teachers with such tricks and teaching methods.

One can ask, “What is the issue here? This sounds so good.” To understand the problem first let’s note that mathematics classroom activities should be necessarily directed to achieve

aims of teaching mathematics. Our National Curriculum Framework 2005 states that “[D]eveloping children’s abilities for mathematisation is the main goal of mathematics education”¹. It further states “[T]he higher aim is to develop the child’s resources to think and reason mathematically, to pursue assumptions to logical conclusions and to handle abstraction. It includes a way of doing things, and the ability and the attitude, to formulate and solve problems.” Methods such as shown in video, unless followed with discussions and explanations concerning the clarification of concepts and logic involved, are very unlikely to achieve these aims. It requires understanding the nature of mathematical knowledge, logic behind mathematical procedures or algorithms to create a dialogue which can ground mathematics in reason. How many teachers might be doing that? My guess is less than one percent.

The problem in this example is not the teachers using this trick to simplify multiplication table of 9. The problem is that philosophical considerations of nature of math, mathematical logic behind procedures and epistemic grounds for accepting math conclusions are absent. And these are philosophical considerations. Proliferation of math videos like this one seems to be a direct result of neglecting philosophical issues involved in math teaching in teacher development and generally in the country.

Let’s take a second example to understand the roots of problems in classroom teaching. Presently the Indian public education system is seriously infested with so-called improvement programmes initiated by foundations created by large corporates to channel their own CSR funds. One would have considered it a very welcome development and avoided the word “infested” had these corporations

1. NCERT, National Curriculum Framework 2005, New Delhi, page 40.

been careful about their theories of change and theories of education. But the only strength they have is their money. Most (there are some exceptions as well) of them are running on half understood ideas borrowed from the west. Therefore, it is important to understand and analyse their thinking on education.

The head of an organisation running a few thousand schools for poor children very seriously put a question to an educationist: “How essentially should pragmatic goals of (i) acquiring knowledge, (ii) acquiring skill-capabilities, (iii) acquiring-reinforcing attitudes-values, and (iv) acquiring the capability to learn, be facilitated by philosophical discussion of issues involved.” The educationist very confidently replied: “In my opinion not worth the effort”. At present this is the way most of the people in India who are influencing education at a large scale think.

The question itself can make any meaning only when one has reasonably clear answers to a host of sub-questions: What is Knowledge? What is a Skill? What is the difference between a Skill and Capability? What are Values? What are Attitudes? How is an Attitude different from a Value? Where do they come from? What is the ‘capability to learn’? How do the ‘capability to learn’ and ‘learning itself’ differ? How do I know that X has it? What is the relative worth of knowledge, skill, attitudes and values in achieving educational aims? Obviously, all these are philosophical questions requiring conceptual analysis. If someone is making decisions regarding curriculum and teaching-learning without having coherent and reasonably clear answers to these questions then she is groping in the dark.

Both the questioner and the respondent here are assuming that sufficient clarity to weave these capabilities, concepts and values into curriculum and pedagogy is available in

common sense understanding. But actual observation of Indian curricula, textbooks and classroom practices all militate against this assumption. Another very influential assumption in India is that if a group of teachers, curriculum framers or textbook writers get together to work on practical problems of their respective domains and share ideas and experiences, such clarity will naturally emerge. Whether the assumptions hold or not requires a rigorous empirical study. Philosophy cannot really say anything about this assumption. However, in India wherever it has happened, for there are such examples, these groups necessarily had one or more members who could think philosophically and were good at conceptual analysis. On the other hand, there are a large number of such groups working for years and producing no clarity .

Let's take a third example from policy level. Recently there was a national debate on something called "no-detention policy". In brief, no-detention policy emerged from Section 16 of the RTE Act 2009 which states "[N]o child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class"². In other words, promotion to next class is independent of satisfactory learning achieved in the year, it is the right of the child to be promoted to the next class, irrespective of whether she can cope with the curriculum or not.

There was a nationwide debate and controversy on the issue. Majority of teachers demanded that this policy be done away with, because the only motivation for learning for school students is "passing an examination". Politicians supported the teachers and finally the no-detention policy was made optional for states to decide by an amendment passed in the parliament. Most of the states repealed it. Progressive educationists' (all Indian educationists are progressive by

2. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Act 2009.

definition) assertion that no-detention is a progressive policy and its removal or limitation would be a retrograde step in our education reforms, was completely ignored.

In this entire debate no one noticed that the RTE 2009 has messed up the very definition of Elementary Education. Under present provisions, a common sense (nothing particularly philosophical) analysis of the interrelated stipulations of RTE will reveal that elementary education has no necessary relationship with learning achievements of the children. All it requires is spending one year in the school at 8th class, being admitted in “age appropriate class” at the age of 14 years. The point I am making is not particularly philosophical, it is rather a common sense observation. But the issue of definition of any defined stage of education and standards of learning achievement is important, and requires serious philosophical deliberations together with help from sociology and psychology of education. Can education be defined purely in terms of time spent in the school? This is a conceptual issue having bearing on definition of education. A whole society and particularly its educationists ignoring it in order to make psychological and sociological arguments in favour of no-detention reveals an attitude of unconcern for conceptual clarity and coherence. It is unimaginable that the educationists did not know about this messing up of definition of elementary education, they did not pay attention to it because it weakened their psychological and sociological arguments against detention in the same class for non-achievement of required learning standards. This unconcern for conceptual clarity and coherence is a philosophical issue with much wider ramifications than just the detention-no-detention controversy.

We have deliberately taken three examples starting from the actual classroom practice to curricular decision making

to policy level confusion which require philosophical deliberations; concerned with either epistemic or ethical perspectives. This involves conceptual analysis and responding to normative questions.

The range of issues

The issues indicated in connection with the video are one extreme of the spectrum of issues PoE has to deal with. To get a rough idea of the complete spectrum lets have a cursory look at the other extreme of the spectrum. Often people claim that the most abstract extreme of the issues PoE has to deal with is aims of education. This may be true if considered together with justification of aims, but is false if interpreted only at the level of understanding and working out implications of the educational aims. Educational aims reflect our views on human nature, our imagination of good human life and desirable society; among other things. Thus, the most abstract end of the spectrum that PoE considers is human nature and human capabilities. Aurobindo states that “there are three things which have to be taken into account in a true and living education, the man, the individual in his commonness and in his uniqueness, the nation or people and universal humanity”³. This puts in the centre the notion of human being, the nation or the society and a vision of humanity.

Tagore articulates his notion of human being and humanity thus: “It is an insult to his humanity, if man fails to invoke in his mind a definite image of his own ideal self, of his ideal environment, which it is his mission to reproduce externally. It is the highest privilege of man to be able to live in his own creation. ... And what is more, man is not truly *himself* if his personality has not been fashioned by him according to

3. Sri Aurobindo, A Preface to National Education, in Early Cultural Writings, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry, 2003, page 425.

some mental picture of perfection, which he has within. ... It is for him inwardly to see himself as an idea, and outwardly to show himself as a person according to that idea. ... He is an artist, whose medium of expression is his own psychology. Like all other artists, he has perpetually to struggle hard with his materials, to overcome obstructions, inner and outer, in order to make definite his manifestation.”⁴

The nature of human being, her capabilities, good life for her and a desirable society necessarily demand philosophical deliberations, as they involve values and normative considerations. A rational scheme of education is not possible without considering these aspects of humanity. The first quote above indicates a necessity to keep human nature at the root of educational thinking, and the second indicts the complexity and abstractness one has to deal with in forming any notion of human nature.

Between these two extremes are situated aims of education which connect the ideals of humanity and human life on one side, with the practical task at hand in the classroom on the other. There can be umpteen ways of articulating aims which may serve to workout a connection between these two extremes. One good example (just as an example, not necessarily recommended) could be found in Basic National Education⁵ which is approved by Gandhi: “the new scheme which we are advocating will aim at giving the citizens of the future a keen sense of personal worth, dignity and efficiency, and will strengthen in them the desire for self-improvement and social service in a co-operative community”.

4. Rabindranath Tagore, Man the artist,
https://www.parabaas.com/rabindranath/articles/pRabindranath_MantheArtist.html, downloaded on 18th May 2020.

5. Basic National Education (Report of Zakir Hussain Committee), Hindustani Talim Sangh, Waradha, (1938). Page 16.

Since everywhere in this spectrum there are multiple perspectives and views, the connections worked out look very tentative and speculative. In addition, there have to be a large repertoire of tools, one can call them as content literature, which themselves sound very abstract and unconnected to the classroom practices but are necessary to connect the vision, the aims and the actual teaching practices. As the necessity of developing all this conceptual material is not immediately clear to the pragmatic man, and the connections worked out are neither as firm nor as clear as in Science; he gets frustrated and suspicious of the whole activity called PoE; and reaches the conclusion that it is not worthwhile to spend resources and time on this. However, as we have seen above, the necessity of dealing with philosophical issues can not be dismissed without losing our way in the long and complicated path from classroom to aims; and then to politics.

The important issue here, then, is: how do we conceptualise and fashion work in philosophy of education that may do its job properly, and can also convince the teacher and those who control education either through policy and administration or through their financial resources? One cannot answer this question from within PoE. Therefore, what I will do below will only be a tentative suggestion which may work..

Philosophy of education

On Dewey's advice we can begin with accepting that philosophy of education "is not an external application of ready-made ideas to a system of practice having a radically different origin and purpose: it is only an explicit formulation of the problems of the formation of right mental and moral habitudes in respect of the difficulties of contemporary

social life”⁶. Since our focus is on PoE we can restrict present considerations to the difficulties of contemporary education. A relatively more recent expression of a similar view is articulated by Barrow and Woods when they say: “[O]ne of our main objects will have been achieved if we can help readers to become more skilful at philosophical debate, able to think about and discuss in a philosophic manner issues which they have not met before and on which they have not read what other philosophers have to say”⁷.

Accepting PoE as a way of identifying philosophical issues in education and thinking about them, we need to think of it as an area of knowledge as well. An area of knowledge to become a reasonably well defined discipline for such a purpose will necessarily require

- (i) a methodology, at the least for initial stages in studying it and to finally fall back upon even in the advanced stages when nothing else is at hand,
- (ii) a more or less clear set of criteria to mark the boundaries of the domain of issues and concepts it is likely to deal with, and
- (iii) moral and intellectual dispositions expected from its study, as well as the requirement to practice it properly.

We will try to outline a brief sketch of PoE in the Indian context in three aspects mentioned above.

Before that, however, two preliminaries are in order. One, it is not a rigorous definition and delimitation of PoE for philosophers. It is a somewhat simple outline of PoE as a

6. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, Aakar Books, Delhi, (2004) (First published 1915), page 356.

7. Robin Barrow and Ronald Woods, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education* (4th Edition), Routledge, London, (2006). Page 1.

discipline for educational practitioners. Two, there is nothing particularly Indian about what I am saying below except keeping in mind interest and concerns of Indian audience as stated in the first part of this article.

Philosophical enquiry and its method

For the sake of simplicity, taking cue from Hamm⁸, we can start with examining the kind of questions philosophers ask, rather than the issues or particular areas of human knowledge they take up for reflection. According to Hamm “they ask, and try in various ways to answer, three sorts of questions:

- (1) What do you mean? (Or, what does *it*—the word, the concept—mean?)
- (2) How do you know? (Or, what, in general constitute the grounds or kinds of grounds for claiming to know something?)
- (3) What is being presupposed? (Or, what assumptions or presuppositions are you now making or must you make for the proposition you are now asserting?)”.

And further he rightly states that “[It] is when one acquires the habit of asking these questions about one’s own and others’ speech and writings that one begins to be a philosopher.” These questions and hope of developing the habits indicate a tentative methodology and expected dispositions.

The first question (What does it mean?) encompasses the entire range of conceptual analysis. Conceptual clarity in philosophical investigation is of paramount importance,

8. Hamm, C.M. (1989) *Philosophical Issues in Education: An Introduction*, RoutledgeFalmer, London and New York. P5.

as concepts are the basic building blocks of human understanding. This insistence on clarity of concepts does not demand flattening notions people may have (say of education or any other x under consideration) by imposing an uncompromising uniformity; all it demands is being conscious of the overt and covert differences in meanings of the same word people could be using in a discourse. In other words, it demands that one knows what one is talking about. Since language is a rule-governed system of symbols, and it offers endless scope of formulating grammatically well-formed sentences, the possibility of meaninglessness may creep in. That may very quickly lead to building of a tower of Babel, if the question “What do you mean” is not seriously asked. Thus, if one is not clear about what one is saying s/he is not doing any good philosophy; at most a sloppy one. This also indicates and emphasizes a thought through response to any issue being discussed. One of the biggest problems in a dialogue, be that educational or political, is responding without fully understanding the meaning and import of the speaker/writer. Thus, conceptual analysis indicated in this question demands clarity from the speaker/writer and responsibility of effort to understand from the reader/listener before reacting to any idea. It should also strengthen the disposition of patience in doing philosophy.

The second question (How do you know?) demands grounds for accepting or rejecting a proposition. Philosophy does not deal with assertions or received knowledge; it has to be squarely a rational activity if it is to have any worth at all. Therefore, the understanding of grounds on which one proposes something and their consistent employment in discourse can hardly be dispensed with. Again, the question does not preclude or prescribe any particular criteria for assessing the epistemic worth of grounds proposed; all that is demanded is banishment of arbitrariness and unjustified assertions.

Asking for reasons to accept something demands epistemic responsibility from the one who advances a proposition; and at the same time asserts dignity and independence of the one who is supposed to accept that proposition. This gives the discourse a meaningful seriousness and dignity. Thus again, asking for grounds emphasises making an attempt to be correct in the theoretical sense; as well as emphasising independence of mind as a disposition.

The third question (What is presupposed?) is to bring into open unexamined or, at any rate, not yet articulated, beliefs and assumptions. In most of the arguments what we say and hear is just the tip of the proverbial ice-berg of fondly held beliefs replete with unexamined assumptions. The discourse or argument that does not look under the visible tip is likely to be misunderstood and misjudged. Asking for articulation of assumptions is not the same thing as their rejection, it is just a serious attempt to render them visible, and open them up for examination. It will bring to the surface all the buried metaphysics (as well as more common assumptions) without which no discipline or discourse can take off. Looking for presuppositions hints at what Dewey describes as a “disposition to penetrate to deeper levels of meaning—to go below the surface and find out the connections of any event or object, and to keep at it”.⁹

Thus, these three questions seem to be of undeniable importance in doing philosophy. To quote Dewey again: “It is of assistance to connect philosophy with thinking in its distinction from knowledge. Knowledge, grounded knowledge, is science; it represents objects which have been settled, ordered, disposed of rationally. Thinking, on the other hand, is prospective on reference. ... Philosophy

9. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, Aakar Books, Delhi, (2004) (First published 1915). Page 351.

might almost be described as thinking which has become conscious of itself—which has generalized its place, function, and value in experience”¹⁰. These three questions taken as a method help a novice practitioner of philosophy to develop required dispositions and make her thinking “conscious of itself”. Additionally it seems to me, they are equally useful to a more advanced philosopher when she is stuck for want of a proper method to deal with complex situations.

However, philosophical deliberations on education are not armchair reflections of a spectator. They are concerned explorations directed at finding solutions to practical problems of education and to give direction to possible action. Therefore, whatever judgment one forms on theoretical issues has implications for further development of thought as well as practice. PoE can not stop at arriving at a well-considered theoretical judgment and leave implications for practice to be worked out by someone else. Philosophers of education are mostly reticent to spell out the implications for practice, as it is largely an empirical domain. The relationship between ideas can be understood purely through speculative methods; but the relationship between action and its effect, whether one assumes it to be correlational or causal, requires empirical observation and analysis of data gathered from that observation, which is beyond PoE. Still, to realise its full potential PoE has to venture into the world of the practical. All three examples given in the beginning are illustrations of PoE indicating problems and hinting, however tentatively, to possible practical remedy through informed action.

Philosophical analysis can help in this in two ways. One, showing contradictions as in the case of RtE, that what is self-contradictory cannot be implemented in its true spirit; simply because it has no true-spirit or has a conflicting

10. Ibid, page 351

spirit. As a general principle it can adopt the idea that what cannot pass a rigorous theoretical examination cannot bear significant fruit if implemented practically; however, the reverse, that that which passes theoretical examination necessarily produces good results, is not always true. Second, it can help in identifying limited number of possibilities and direction for action which are likely to bear fruit; which otherwise using a trial and error approach would be endless possibilities. Thus, action does not remain blind trial and error but acquires a reflective character. In other words, it helps turn random activity into guided practice and/or enquiry.

Therefore, we have to add a fourth question to Hamm's three we have considered above: What are the implications? If a proposition is accepted it would have its own logical implications for all that is connected with it and may have been already accepted in the discourse (or argument). Rational enquiry cannot afford to contain contradictions; and therefore, implications of accepting a new proposition may induce unforeseen changes in the entire belief system.

To reiterate, we can say that irrespective of the content, philosophy of education organises its enquiry around four key questions:

1. What does it mean?
2. How is it known?
3. What is presupposed? And
4. What are the implications of its acceptance?

Now we can round up our discussion on the method of PoE. One aspect of the method is already outlined above in characterising philosophical enquiry, namely: investigation around the four key questions. The second aspect can be tentatively captured in articulation of the way

philosophy approaches these questions. One suggestion worth considering is that philosophy tries to build a rational discourse through argumentation. Argument is important in order to encompass all possible aspects and interpretations of an issue. The philosophical argument is characterised by its emphasis on coherence or at least attempts to avoid contradiction. Since philosophical investigation is primarily speculative and is aimed at coherent organisation of human thought, it has very little to fall back upon for its justification other than consistency of the thought itself. This coherent system of thought is built on the ground (however shaky) of: agreement in intuitions, agreement in use of language, the principle of non-contradiction, logic, and open-mindedness to examine accepted positions. Adherence to these principles builds rational rigour, as the ultimate method in philosophy.

The above discussion takes care of the core of the general method of PoE. The method also hints at the dispositions required:

An attitude of careful examination from all possible directions before proposing or accepting any idea, principle, fact, and so on.

Recognition of epistemic responsibility and cherishing the value of cognitive clarity.

Epistemic independence in accepting or rejecting any idea.

Equal respect to reasons advanced by others irrespective of one's own position; or impartiality in theoretical deliberation.

Courage to accept inadequacies and mistakes, and open mindedness to revise one's position, and

Willingness to put in hard work to examine grounds for and against any ideas before arriving at any judgement. That brings us to the domain of PoE.

Domain of PoE

Making a list of issues that can be dealt with in PoE or demarcating its domain as clearly as that of sciences or mathematics does not seem to be possible. However, leaving the question of domain relatively open does not mean that philosophy has equal interest in all issues or it is equally capable of contributing to all issues. For example, the issues which can be settled on the basis of available empirical evidence, though are not out of bounds for philosophy, but at the same time are also not of great interest. In order to convert an empirical issue into philosophically interesting, one has either to investigate the epistemic veracity of the available empirical evidence, or the use of that evidence in argument building; which also includes normative aspects of epistemic criteria involved. Another aspect of an empirical issue that can be of interest to philosophy is working out its implications for human understanding and human conduct. Thus, the preferred terrain of philosophy is fundamental questions of human situation, understanding and conduct, that involve normative considerations.

Any philosophical enquiry arises from the present conflict in meaning making and ideals in the society. But since it tries to find general unifying principles, it has a tendency to become technical and abstract very quickly. The issues philosophers get interested in may seem to be completely abstract and arcane, with no relation to the practice of education. If all that PoE becomes interested in is of this nature, it loses its relevance. Thus, connection with the pragmatic issues of education ranging from classroom to research is a necessity for PoE. But we should also remember that often finding solutions to practical problems requires theoretical resources, without which it would be impossible to imagine new ways of tackling a problem. Such theoretical resources can not be

built on demand immediately when a problem arises. One can not dig a well each time one is thirsty. Mathematics has proved amply that in the world of abstract ideas, useless but rigorously developed concepts and results (theorems) may become useful after decades or even centuries of their first formulation. Philosophical explorations do have a similar propensity. The abstract and seemingly unrelated but meaningful in the discourse and rigorously worked out ideas and studies may become useful in future problem solving and development of knowledge. For example, a comparative study of *Nyaya* and *Inca* logic may sound very esoteric and useless to a practical minded person. Moreover in actuality, it may not give any results that are immediately useful in curriculum and pedagogy. But it may be an interesting topic to a philosopher of education, and the conclusions drawn may become very useful someday. One should not scoff at this hope of becoming useful someday.

Actually, it is building a repertoire of intellectual tools. Larger the repertoire of intellectual tools to understand the world one has, better chance one stands of finding a suitable tool when the need arises. This also helps in developing knowledge. In mathematics there are plenty of theorems which are of no direct use themselves, but very useful and important theorems can not be proved unless one first proves the 'useless' ones.

Therefore, the domain of PoE necessarily has to include very abstract ideas related with human understanding and human situations. However, to repeat, unless the larger part of the discipline deals with conceptual and normative issues which can throw immediate light on the practice, it can not hope to gain support from the society; and runs the danger of becoming completely useless. Therefore, a balance is certainly needed in the domain; a balance tilted towards

that which helps solve current problems of the practice and theory.

Conclusion

The above discussion provides hints on how to approach educational issues and what methods to use. The entire educational endeavour could be seen as an integrated whole comprising educational practice, system and theory. Philosophy of education in this sense, as Dewey noted, is not an application of content of philosophy to education; but should be seen as spotting and approaching the issues in educational practice and theory in philosophical manner.

Philosophy of education then will have a double task to perform in education. One, as a component of educational theory contributing assumptions and insights regarding educational practice; for example, analysis of aims of education, possible curricula, pedagogy, human nature, knowledge, etc. And second, constructing an umbrella framework in which all aspects of educational theory can be understood in relationship with each other and in relationship with educational practice and critiquing educational theory. It would be gross misunderstanding to take the second aspect as an attempt to establish any kind of disciplinary hegemony; in its more appropriate and justifiable form it is labour of love undertaken and responsibility accepted to ensure coherence and interconnectedness within educational theory and between educational theory, between practice and system. This task is philosophical by nature as the most fundamental principles used here would necessarily be normative; the analysis of their nature, range and application being one of the primary tasks of philosophy in any case.

Prima facie, this operational understanding of philosophy of education seems to be capable of encompassing all aspects

usually considered within this discipline; from analysis of aims, curricula, pedagogy etc. to epistemology, ethics, socio-political philosophy and issues of special interest in education like critical thinking, creativity, environment, *et al.* I am unaware of other countries, but Indian education for the last at the very least fifty years has been an arena of irresponsible play of unexamined and half understood ideas. This happens in the name of improvement and keeping abreast with current developments. The remedy is not to stifle new ideas through any kind of systemic restrictions, that would be a disaster as it will kill all new initiative. The solution lies in rigorous philosophical examination of all such attempts and ideas, and a proliferation of philosophical writing which is closely connected with the practice at the ground one hand and most generalised and abstract but rigorous theory on the other.

The Aims of Education: Philosophical Issues for Educational Research

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Why philosophy of education?

The place of philosophy of education in educational discourse and thinking is never secure. It needs to justify its place and relevance. Sometimes it succeeds and sometimes it does not.

Richard Peters, a mainstream philosopher at London University, was appointed to the Chair of Philosophy of Education at the Institute of Education, London, in 1962. He famously said that the job of philosophy in such an Institute was to remove the mush from educational theory. And he strenuously worked at bringing what then was mainstream analytic philosophy to bear upon educational questions.

He and his team were very successful. This coincided with the establishment of a Bachelor of Education degree, taken by most teachers in training, because the politicians and others who ran the educational system believed that teachers would be better in their jobs if they were able to reflect more deeply and critically on what they were doing – the aims and rationale of education, the nature of the knowledge being taught, the values implicit in their activities.

Therefore, philosophy became a component in the training of all teachers. It became popular in the further professional development of teachers through various Masters programmes. Many books were written, sold and read on the philosophical critiques of government reports and policies. One thinks, for example, of the critical examination of the Plowden Committee Report on primary education – the philosophical critique of the otherwise uncritical advocacy of child-centred approaches, of the failure to distinguish ‘needs’ from ‘wants’, and of the ill-defined notion of ‘creativity’. And the influence of this philosophy team spread widely, establishing close links with philosophers abroad – for example, Scheffler and Schwab in the United States.

But such widespread success did not last for ever, and philosophy of education is ever in need of justification if it is to survive. Indeed, it can be seen by those in charge of education as distinctly dangerous. It gets in the way of political initiatives which set forth the targets which teachers have to attain if standards are to be ‘driven up’ (a mode of expression often used). Philosophers have the unfortunate habit, for example, of questioning those targets and the underlying concept of ‘standards’. In a system which is target-driven and in which teachers are seen as ‘deliverers’ of those targets, philosophical reflection and criticism are seen as a dangerous distraction. Hence, the massive decline in the support for philosophy of education at every level and of those teaching the subject.

We should not be surprised. That great teacher, Socrates, was made to take the hemlock because his philosophical questioning was seen to corrupt the youth of Athens. The American philosopher, John Dewey, whose *Democracy and Education* has inspired generations of teachers across the world, was called ‘worse than Hitler by some who felt that

he infected schools with epistemological relativism and substituted socialisation for true education' (Noddings 2005).

However, philosophical problems are embedded in educational thinking, planning and practice, and it is important to acknowledge this and to face the problems. First, however, it is important to explain what I mean by 'doing philosophy'.

Doing philosophy: 'what do you mean?'

Take the following statement from England's Secretary of State for Education:

Our society has not always valued academic achievement as it should ... the poor suffered because of the left-wing doctrine that pursuit of academic excellence was somehow narrowly elitist. The argument for uncompromising emphasis on academic excellence has been won ... tomorrow's A Level results will show we've buried the nonsense about child-centred learning (*Times*, 15.08.2012)

But this statement depends on the meaning of two key words – 'academic' and 'child-centred'. What do they mean? One aim of philosophy has been to analyse what is meant by central but contestable concepts – to undo what Wittgenstein referred to as 'the bewitchment of the intelligence by the use of language'. By contestable is meant that how words are used has a history which reflects different assumptions about values to be held, ways of understanding the social and moral worlds we inhabit, the nature of the mind, and so on. Hence, in asking 'What do you mean?' one is often taken into those traditional fields of philosophical argument such as ethics, epistemology and philosophy of mind. And this is certainly the case in educational discourse, as the following examples, I hope, illustrate.

Academic

The longer Oxford English Dictionary provides one amongst several definitions of 'academic', namely, 'boring'? Is Mr. Gove recommending very boring education – possibly as an excellent preparation for a boring life after formal education? The point is that as soon as you begin to ask what you *mean* by academic, you get into trouble. In much educational and political discourse, it is contrasted with the practical and vocational. But, then, are the study of Engineering, and Design and Technology thereby not academic, even though they are intellectually demanding? And for art to be academically respectable, must it become the History of Art – thinking theoretically about Art rather than doing or being engaged practically with it? The unresolved conceptual difficulties here are resulting, in England, in a new English Baccalaureate which excludes the Arts and also Design and Technology.

Child-centred

Or, again, with regard-to 'child-centred', this word has a history, reflecting different understandings and attitudes towards children. Surely, teaching children requires some attention to how children are thinking and to what is motivating them. Can education be anything other than child-centred? On the other hand, there have been advocates of education arising solely or mainly out of the interests of the child – 'realising the potential' is the phrase. But the slightest glance at the newspapers shows that we have as much potential for evil as we do for good. Child-centred in that sense is unacceptable, but was such a notion ever held by the left-wingers whom Mr Gove wants to overcome? There is, of course, an emotive meaning attached to the use of words (which, for some philosophers such as A.J.Ayer, was the central meaning of moral words - see Ayer, 1963). And

no doubt Gove was trading on that emotive meaning. There is no obvious logical connection between academic and non-child-centred which his 'argument' seemed to assume. It all depends on what you mean.

Standards

A second and connected example concerns the appeal to standards and the need to 'drive them up'. Much is made of the need to raise standards, especially as a result of the OECD's PISA four-year survey of educational performance of 15 year olds in reading, mathematics and science across 65 countries. These surveys demonstrate, so it is claimed, comparative standards between countries, as well as declining or rising standards over time within the respective countries. They are taken very seriously by the countries concerned. Thus, for example, the UK came 27th in reading competency, 28th in mathematics and 21st in science, indicating both a decline in league table position and poor education in comparison with our main competitors.

But what do we mean by 'standards' – and what could be meant by such standards going up or down? Take for example, language and reading capacity. The reading measures in the 2009 survey, but not in the previous ones, included understanding and navigating around electronic texts. Quite possibly many who scored high in the 2006 survey would have done badly on the 2009 survey, including the writer of this paper. Standards change as education tries to keep up with the changing social and economic challenges. Standards cannot go up or down – if they were to, it would be by reference to a higher standard by which standards are judged to go up or down – and thus into an infinite regress. Rather is it *performance* according to agreed standards which go up or down. Standards are the benchmarks against which performance is judged to be good or bad, elegant or

crude, intelligent or stupid. But the standards themselves *change*, not rise or decline, and that change in standards relates to changes in what you think to be important. They logically relate to the purpose of the activity. The meaning of educational standards, which underpin much educational research, depends on the aims of education, and thus on the values which are embodied in such aims. You cannot decide on what are the standards by which to judge performance without first making explicit what the aims of education are – standards logically relate to the aims of an activity, and to what one means by being educated.

Interim conclusion

Therefore, philosophy, as Socrates demonstrated, often begins with the question ‘What do you mean?’ It is the job of philosophy to scratch beneath the surface of what are thought to be ‘agreed meanings’ and to show that our accounts of the world are much more complicated than is often assumed – that our intelligence is often bewitched by the misuse of language. As Wittgenstein explained. ‘My aim is to teach to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense’. (1958: 1.464)

Education: its meaning and its aim

Much follows, therefore, from the particular use of language, especially when the purpose of education (on the basis of which learners are judged successful or failures) lies in *hitting targets* defined by politicians and their civil servants. The targets become the standards. Thereby, teachers’ activities are directed to hitting the targets, rather than developing understanding – to teaching to the test. (see Mansell, 2007, for evidence).

In recent decades in Britain and the USA, the language of performance management has permeated educational

discourse and thereby the language of educational research. The importance attached to 'raising of standards' has led to interest by policy makers, and therefore by researchers, into the 'effective school' – the school which, if it follows well-researched procedures, will attain the desired results. This in turn has created the 'science of educational deliverology' (a centre for which has been established in Washington by Sir Michael Barber, once 'Director of Delivery' for the former Prime Minister). The science of deliverology has the tools whereby teachers might 'deliver the results', that is, 'hit the targets' which politicians have declared to be the mark of the successful school. As a result a new language has arisen which shapes political discourse about educational standards, teacher discourse about educational practice, and thereby the discourse about educational research. Thus, there needs to be specification of *measurable targets*, *performance indicators* by which the attainment of targets is judged, *effective delivery* of curriculum by teachers so as to hit the targets. The teachers, as *deliverers of targets*, are regularly *audited* by inspectors to ensure that the targets have been hit and that the *clients* or *consumers* (i.e. the parents and students) have the results they desire. The assumption is that by making public the targets, which have been hit and then translated into school league tables, teachers will strive all the harder so as to compete in the *market* created by *free schools* for parents who can now exercise *choice*. Standards are thereby *driven up*.

This new language of education is beguiling. But we need to ask whether it has anything to do with what we mean by 'education'.

If one changes the metaphor from that of performance management to one which more accurately reflects what it means for people to think, to deliberate or to engage with other people, then teaching, and thereby educating, are

seen very differently – affecting the nature of educational research. Ends and means are not contingently related. The means embody the ends. The teacher of literature introduces a book or a play because it embodies the educational values (the feelings, the understandings, the sentiments) which are to be internalised and which transform the person. The book or play is part of the educational conversation between the teacher and the learner, and thereby between the learner and the culture we have inherited.

Michael Oakeshott (1962) spoke of man [sic] as ‘what he learns to become: this is the human condition’. It is through learning what is worthwhile (knowledge and practices of many different kinds) that one learns to live a distinctively human life. Schools, ideally, give access to deeper and wider reflection on the human condition. Education, therefore, for Oakeshott is a ‘conversation between the generations of mankind’ in which the young learner comes to appreciate and participate in what he refers to as the ‘voices’ of science, of poetry, of literature, of history, of philosophy. The metaphor of ‘conversation’ creates different expectations from that of hitting targets. One criterion of a good conversation is that you cannot anticipate the outcome. To do so would not be the nature of serious interactions taking place between two interested people – for example, the teacher and the learner.

There are, therefore, two aspects of this language of education which I wish to emphasise.

First, as Peters (1965, p.25) argued, the logical characteristic of ‘to educate’ is like that of ‘to reform’. If I talk of reforming someone, then I am assuming that I am changing that person for the better in some respect (for example, no longer a criminal). Similarly, to educate someone (as opposed to mere training or instructing) is to imply that the learner is

in some way transformed for the better by what he or she has learnt. He or she has, in Oakeshott's sense, come to live a more distinctively human life. At the centre of *educational* thinking by policy makers or by teachers, therefore, there must be deliberations over what it means to live a more human life. What is it to be and to become more fully a person?

The paradox of 'educated' in the descriptive sense of having a lot of learning and 'educated' in the evaluative sense of living a more distinctively human life is finely expressed in this letter which the principal of an American High School sent to her new teachers.

Dear Teacher

I am the survivor of a concentration camp.

My eyes saw what no man should witness:

Gas chambers built by learned engineers

Children poisoned by educated physicians

Infants killed by trained nurses

Women & children shot and burned by high school
and college graduates

So, I am suspicious of education.

My request is: Help your students become human.

Your efforts must never produce learned monsters,
skilled psychopaths, educated ichmans.

Reading, writing, arithmetic are important but only if
they serve to make our children more human.

Second, one aspect of what this means to be educated – to become 'more human' - is that learners are enabled to enter

into that ‘conversation between the generations’ and thereby to understand better the social, physical and moral worlds they have inherited. And the educational engagement is a constant interaction through which those understandings evolve and improve. What one person understands or values may not be exactly what another understands or values. But through that engagement with others and with the wisdom of the past, so are the learners enabled to see things more critically, to engage in the conversations more fully and to advance in understanding. Oakeshott refers to education therefore as an engagement – between learner and teacher, and between learner and what others have written, said and illustrated. And, like all good conversations, there is no way of predicting the conclusions. Standards lie in the quality of the engagement, not in the preconceived and measurable targets to be hit.

To educate, therefore, is essentially evaluative, concerning how people are enabled to realise their humanity, to understand better the physical, social and moral worlds they have inherited, to enter into the conversations between the generations - to become more fully persons. It is a process of constant becoming through contact with what others have done or said over the generations. It is to be enabled to exercise judgment on the life worth living and to have nurtured the dispositions to live accordingly.

The concept of *person* therefore must shape educational policy and practice, and therefore what is distinctively educational research.

Educating persons

We train dogs and horses. We educate persons. To recognise someone as a person is to recognise them, not as objects to be used for others’ purposes, but as ends in themselves, worthy

of respect. In that sense, the concept of 'person' is more than a descriptive term for a physical object; it is a moral concept expressing the recognition of their own distinctive rights, worthiness for respect, and capacity to have views of their own. They are ends in themselves, not to be treated as means to an end.

This distinction between people as physical objects and people as persons is crucial to our understanding of education and to our criticism of research which, in collapsing the distinction, reduces people to mere objects. That depersonalisation of people is seen in so many ways in current policy backed up by research. Successful learning is equated with what is easily measurable, teaching is reduced to producing the behaviours which will gain the required grades in national tests, priority is given to learners who are borderline between success and failure so that schools can rise in the league table. As a result, lost is the focus on the different ways in which children struggle to learn. Little time is given to the personal exploration of value and meaning through poetry and the arts since such personal exploration does not enter into the specifications for grades. It is as though the learners are seen as objects to be changed for purposes other than what is personally significant or valuable. So easily do the learners become, not ends in themselves, but means to some end other than what is of value to the learner – for example, the place in the schools' league table, the successful attainment of targets laid down by Government, the supply of skilled workers. Hence, the 'logic of action' which equates educational research to being a branch of the social sciences.

By contrast, education describes not a neutral process that is instrumental to something extrinsic to that process (for example, improved employment opportunities). It is an initiation into a way of life which is judged to be intrinsically

worthwhile. It is so judged because that way of life is part and parcel of what is meant to be a person and to become one more fully. That is why at the heart of education are the essentially moral questions about what it means to be and to grow as a person. That in turn entails that ethical considerations and judgements are at the centre of educational discourse, determining what counts as *educational*. Fundamental, therefore, to the Nuffield Review of 14-19 education and training for England and Wales was the question: *What counts as an educated 19 year old in this day and age?*

As with all moral questions, one cannot expect unanimity. Different people and societies will reach different conclusions. But such differences should not preclude critical examination of the often unexamined value assumptions underpinning educational policy, practice, and research. That critical examination requires reflection on what it means to be and to grow as a person: for example, having the knowledge in its different forms for what Dewey referred to as ‘the intelligent management of life’, the capabilities to flourish practically, the virtues and moral seriousness for living a distinctively human life, and the sense of community whereby one recognises the interdependence of one for the other.

Explaining human activity: linking the social science to educational thinking

If, then, educational thinking is essentially moral (concerned with what counts as development as a person), then is it quite separate from the concerns and interests of the social sciences?

Educational policy and professional practice are ultimately about getting people to learn what is deemed to be of value. To educate is to develop the capacity to think, to value, to

reason, to appreciate. These are states of mind, mental capacities, distinctively human qualities.

Such a mental form of life is logically different from a purely physical form of life which is the object of the physical sciences and subject to causal explanations. In many respects the social sciences from Auguste Comte onwards followed the example of the physical sciences, and sought to provide causal understandings of persons' behaviour and of societies. Obvious example of the former was the work of behaviourists such as B.F. Skinner. More recently one has seen the importance attached to the large scale and carefully matched experimental and control groups, in which a particular intervention within the experimental group (all else being held equal) would demonstrate its causal significance – a key to educational improvement. And there are excellent examples of the success engendered by such interventions – the effectiveness of 'Reading Recovery' and the phonological training of children with reading problems. However, such explanations have their limitations, because of the limitations of such a narrow concept of causality where human situation are concerned. Let me explain

Can there be a 'science of man' – the question raised by the once prominent logical positivist, A.J. Ayer (1969)?

Explaining a person's behaviour requires reference to intentions, motives, prior understandings through which interventions are interpreted. I can observe the hand raised in the same way that I can observe tables and chairs. But I cannot observe the intentions that would explain whether this is a signal, a bit of stretching, or a request to speak. And even if I knew the meaning as that is explained by the intention, I would not necessarily know the motive – whether to be polite, or to create disruption, or to indicate

disapproval. Explaining human action requires reference to intention and motivations, not to causes.

Furthermore, these intentions can be understood only within the context of social rules, often implicit, through which that particular hand movement is to be understood. Raising the hand, say, is a socially understood way of seeking attention. One needs to know the social rules through which social intercourse is enabled to happen. And these social rules will change from social group to social group, from society to society. To explain human action (and to engage therefore educationally with the learners) requires not only insight into their intentions and motives but also into the social rules through which they interpret others' words and gestures.

Education – the pursuit of what is seen to be valuable in terms of understanding, practising, appreciating, moralising and socialising – is necessarily an engagement between minds, not a set of interventions to cause preconceived behavioural outcomes.

But caution is required. In one sense, each individual is unique. My thoughts and intentions are mine, not yours, unique to me, the product of different backgrounds and interactions over time, through which I see the world and interpret what others say and do. That is why policy makers wrongly assume that their detailed interventions will produce the results which they envisaged and hoped for. What is clear to them, the policy makers, is not necessarily clear to the teachers or interpreted in the way intended.

On the other hand one must be careful of the 'uniqueness fallacy'. Each person and each society is unique in some respect but not in others. I am unique in terms of my exact history, but not unique in terms of my having shared that

history to some extent with other people in my social group. And that social group shares basic human needs with other social groups – the need for food, affection, community. As Winch (1958) argued in *The Idea of a Social Science*, we can come to understand from the inside how other societies work and how other people within those societies interpret (generally speaking) the interactions with others. No two languages translate exactly. But there is sufficient proximation to exactness, *given the human form of life that we share*, for the outsider to enter into the way of thinking of the other.

Hence, generalisations can be made but they are inevitably tentative, provisional, open to interpretation, not necessarily applicable to all individuals, some of whom might come from very different backgrounds with very different ways of seeing the social and moral worlds. That is why there can be no direct transmission of the conclusions of general statements to the particular case. The teacher always needs to exercise judgement as to whether the general conclusion applies to this particular learner.

None the less, that deliberation recognises indirectly the validity of generalised conclusions drawn from social science research. The contrast between uniqueness of each individual, on the one hand, and the large-scale explanations of individual or society behaviour, on the other hand, is a false dualism. The reconciliation lies in the deliberations of the decision-maker, whether that be policy maker or teacher. Moreover, entering into such deliberations or *praxis*, though not necessarily explicitly, are the educational aims and values argued for above.

Teachers as educational researchers

Many of the great philosophers have had something interesting to say about teaching and teachers – Aristotle,

Plato, Augustine, Aquinas, Rousseau, Dewey, Wittgenstein and Oakeshott. Each offers insight into the ways in which ‘teaching’ has been (and could be) conceived, given quite different philosophical presuppositions about the nature of knowledge, about what is worth learning, about the centrality of experience, and, above all, about what it means to be human – and to become more so. They see a moral dimension to what it means to be a teacher.

From different social and philosophical perspectives, what it means to teach partakes in a wider understanding of what it means to help young people to flourish as human beings, to provide access to cultures which shape that humanity, and to engage in what is judged to be worth learning,

To understand teaching within this broader ethical and social context provides the basis for challenging how policy makers often conceive of teachers – as did such ‘radical reformers’ as Ivan Illich, Carl Rogers and John Dewey. Teaching for Dewey lay in the transformation of the experiences which the young learners brought from their families and communities, in the provision of further enriching experiences and in critical reflection upon them. So understood, the educational journey is helped by, for example, the ‘teacher’ introducing at appropriate moments those aspects of the inherited ‘wisdom of the race’ (Oakeshott’s ‘voices in the conversation of mankind’) which may help transform those experiences.

This is most important in thinking about what is distinctively educational research. We have seen, on the one hand, how engaging thoughtfully in education requires addressing the aims of education (*What counts as an educated person in this day and age?*) - essentially moral considerations. We have seen, too, how policy makers and teachers need to take into account what social scientists may say through the

various forms of empirical research which bear upon the attempts to answer that question in this context and with these learners.

But reconciling and integrating these different considerations requires systematic and critical deliberation. Such critical and systematic deliberation is at the heart of educational research, and for that reason the teacher has to be seen as a researcher in the following sense.

The teacher is trying to realize in practice certain educational goals. Those goals embody the educational values he or she is committed to. The reflective teacher will constantly try to articulate those goals in the context of his or her practice. And, no doubt in the light of what others say, what the teachers see to be of educational value for the learners in his or her care will evolve through criticism. Furthermore, in implementing those educational aims, the deliberations of the reflective teacher will take into account what researchers (especially the social scientists) have said – not slavishly because, as I argued above, what is generally applicable may not be so for these children in this situation. For example, generalisations about the benefits of the phonic approach to the teaching of reading would not apply to children with glue-ear!

All that applies to the ‘reflective teacher’. That is not quite the same as the teacher as researcher – but a pre-cursor to it. What turns reflection into research is

- clarifying as precisely as possible the aims of educating these learners – the knowledge and practical capabilities that are valued, the issues of social concern that impact on them, the sense of personal worth which each is striving to acquire;
- gathering evidence which would support the claim that

such aims have been implemented – or not, in which case new approaches have to be found, tested and refined in the light of further experience. Part of that ‘refining’ would lie in openness to criticism of others – other teachers and the feedback from the learners.

The essence of the research, therefore, is the clarity of the *thesis* (the claim being made), the evidence which is relevant to challenging that claim, and the openness to critical scrutiny of the thesis and of the evidence provided.

For this to happen, teachers within or across schools need to become supportive communities of researchers. Knowledge grows through criticism and so one needs to create the sort of communities where criticism can flourish – where the ‘thesis’ can be tested, hopefully survive, or (where that is not the case) be refined. This is so important because the natural human instinct is to avoid criticism and to avoid exposure to any evidence which makes one question what one believes to work

Conclusion

Educational thinking, whether that be in policy or in practice, raises questions which traditionally have been within the province of philosophy – ethical questions about the aims of education and what is worth learning, about the nature of the knowledge to be acquired, about the relation of private to public good. Failure to address these question leads to defective policy, practice and research. That philosophical questioning often begins with the puzzlement over what is meant when policies and practices are advocated – with the realisation that there is ambiguity in what is said and that at the centre of such ambiguity are assumptions about values or about what it means to know or about what counts as an educated person. Furthermore, key to such

educational questioning should be the teachers, who, far from being ‘the deliverers’ of the curriculum, must be the curriculum thinkers. Furthermore, philosophically aware and questioning, the teachers need to engage in the research which will enable them teach better.

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The Ends of Education

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Many animals learn from experience. They learn where to forage, whom to flee, where to find mates. Some, such as wolves and lions, learn to work collectively to pursue their prey. Some, evidently, are taught. Lions apparently teach their cubs how to hunt. Humans do more. We learn not just from those nearby, but from people remote from us in time and space. We can do so because we have developed languages and other symbol systems that enable us to communicate our ideas, express our feelings, engage in cooperative enterprises, and rationally evaluate our own and one another's actions and ideas. Moreover, we need to do all these things. Individual members of our species are poorly equipped to fend for themselves. Unlike zebras, who are ready to run and fend for themselves shortly after birth, we have an extended period of dependency. One might even argue that our dependency is lifelong. We live in communities and rely on one another to provide goods and services that we cannot provide for ourselves. Unlike the other animals, we have and need a heritage – a constellation of evolving understandings, practices, institutions and techniques that we learn from past generations, then modify and transmit to future generations.

This means that education, broadly conceived, is as distinctively human as any activity. And it is vital. Without

a suitable education, a human being probably could not survive. Obviously it does not follow that a human being could not survive without schools, or homework, or final exams. But we have to *learn* much of what we need to know. And we have to learn how to learn much of what we need to know. To a considerable extent, this requires being taught. Whether schools, homework and final exams figure in the best way to teach such things remains to be seen.

Our reliance on education raises important questions. What can we know? To answer this requires investigation into the nature and scope of knowledge. What can we learn? We need to investigate the physical, psychological and/or social factors that facilitate or inhibit learning. We need also to investigate whether different methods are effective for different populations or at different stages of development. How does a person learn? To answer this requires devising methods that would enable us to investigate learning. Do we need to develop a science of education to discover what methods are effective? Or is it sufficient to draw on other sciences – psychology, neuroscience, sociology? (See Dewey 1929). Then we must consider what is worth learning. It is surely not the case that every opinion, institution, practice, or approach is worth accepting, acting on, passing on to our descendants. Among the things that *could* be learned, which ones *should* be learned? What criteria should we use to decide? Do they vary with circumstances?

It might seem that we need not worry about such questions. Inasmuch as educational institutions and practices are in place, our predecessors have already implicitly answered them. Such complacency is problematic. To say that we have educational institutions and practices is not to say that they serve our ends. Perhaps they are ineffective, or outdated, or unjust. Perhaps they overlook opportunities we could benefit from. To say that we are doing *something* is not to say that

we are doing *what we ought to do*. To develop and sustain an acceptable educational regime, we need to ask fundamental philosophical questions: What constitutes a good education? What makes an education good?

These questions are as old as philosophy. Plato asks in the *Republic*: What sort of life is worth living? And he recognizes that this question cannot be answered independently of determining what sort of education equips citizens with the abilities, desires, and motivation needed to live a good life. Abilities alone are not enough. If people are to live a good life and a good life requires reading, then they need not only to be able to read, they also have to want to read and to be inclined to read. So desire and motivation are crucial. If a good life requires contributing to the well-being of the community, then people need not only to know that they should contribute to the community's well-being, they should be motivated to do so. Moreover, the various skills, desires, and motivations need to be integrated. They must be suitably woven together so that they support rather than undermine one another.

Education, whether formal or informal, is an essentially reflective enterprise. Unlike indoctrination, which might proceed smoothly without any consideration of what is being indoctrinated, education involves critical reflection on its own ends and means. What are we trying to convey? Why are we trying to convey just this? What benefits accrue from having conveyed this? What means are effective and appropriate for conveying this sort of thing? What are the criteria for being effective and appropriate? Philosophy of education provides resources for investigating such matters. It grows out of and feeds into all aspects of educational theory and practice. And it grows out of and feeds into all branches of philosophy.

It asks basic questions in an attempt to identify and investigate assumptions that ordinarily go without saying. What is knowledge? How does it differ from understanding? What is learning? How does learning something differ from merely developing an opinion about it or changing one's mind about it? What is teaching? How does teaching differ from indoctrinating, from coaching, from inculcating? These might seem to be psychological questions. There is clearly a psychological component to them. They all have something to do with how people think. But psychology alone will not provide us with the answers we seek. For knowledge, understanding, learning, and teaching are success concepts. They involve a commitment to the idea that something has been mastered, or done well, or done correctly. So the questions arise: what is the appropriate standard of assessment, and what justifies the choice of that standard? For Jan to have learned the causes of malaria or the consequences of the Opium Wars, it is not enough that she has acquired some opinions on the subject. She must have acquired a sufficient number and range of at least roughly correct opinions on the subject. She must have done so in a way that involves cognitive activity (rather than, for example, as a result of a kick in the head or an implant in her prefrontal cortex). Perhaps, in addition, the way she came to have her opinions or can now support them must afford some reason to think that they are correct. Then she can give a credible answer to the question 'How do you know?' Obviously, a lot more analysis is required to explicate exactly what it takes to have learned something. To understand what it takes requires knowing what kind of *accomplishment* learning such a thing is. That is a normative question.

Certain ways of inculcating beliefs for moral reasons evidently do not count as teaching. Although coercion or operant conditioning or surgical implants might bring it

about that a person believes something, it is not obvious that someone who has undergone such procedures has actually learned or been taught anything. An appeal to a student's capacity to think and a respect for a student's intellectual autonomy seem required for bringing a change of mind to qualify as teaching her. Advertising and propaganda attempt, in Plato's terms, to 'influence us unawares' – that is, to get us to adopt certain beliefs without being aware of what leads us to adopt them. In effect, such methods intentionally bypass our critical faculties. This is disrespectful of us as intellectual (and moral) agents, even if the content conveyed is correct and the beliefs are valuable ones to impart. Education demands responsiveness to reasons. It should equip students to ask for reasons, to recognize reasons, to provide reasons for their beliefs and actions, and to be skeptical of claims when no adequate reasons are available.

At the heart of the philosophy of education is the question: What is the goal of education? What is the point? What exactly are we trying to do? There may be multiple answers. Perhaps education as a whole serves many ends. Or perhaps different spheres of education serve different ends. But if we do not seriously examine this cluster of questions, we will be at a loss to know how to design our educational practices, policies and institutions. For different designs serve different ends.

John Dewey (1916) argued that universal public education is necessary for a democracy. Having the right to vote will not do citizens much good if they do not have the resources to decide for themselves who and what is worth voting for. They are vulnerable to rogues and charlatans if they lack the ability or the incentive to assess issues and candidates for themselves. So in a liberal democratic society, there is a political justification for universal public education. Is this justification sufficient? Apparently not. First, it apparently

applies only to democracies. Nothing seems to follow about whether there is any justification for universal public education that applies to societies that are not and do not aspire to be democracies. Second, it is not clear that citizens in a democracy are entitled to only the level of education that they need to function well as citizens. Suppose, for example, that to function effectively as a citizen required no more than a 10th grade education. Would that mean that a society's obligation to educate its people would stop at grade 10? Or should society provide its young with more? I will below suggest that Dewey is more concerned with what it takes to be *a participating member of a community* than what it takes to be an active citizen of a country *with a particular form of government*. But the issue here is that there seems to be something unduly narrow about assuming the full justification for education derives from enabling someone to function as a citizen.

Throughout the world it has recently been claimed the goal of education is to prepare students for the work force. If so, the skills and abilities that education should impart are those that will turn students into good workers. These may be contextually circumscribed. At different points in history, workers need different abilities. No doubt equipping students with marketable skills is worthwhile. But is imparting such skills the only thing education should do? Should it prepare future workers at the expense of other educational objectives?

People are more than just workers. They are members of families, of circles of friends, of communities, of cultures. They have interests and aspirations above and beyond those that figure in their jobs. If education is concerned exclusively or primarily with preparing people for the work force, it is apt to be narrow and skewed. It is likely to skirt the development of skills, orientations and capacities whose value lies in other

aspects of their lives. It will thus fail to equip them with the resources needed to be good parents, friends, citizens, amateur artists, athletes, and appreciators of the diverse ways humans can excel.

Moreover, if preparing the populace for the work force is education's overarching objective, we face a daunting task. Once it was reasonable for educators to think that they knew how to do this. In the fourteenth century, if a man was a farmer, he could take it for granted that his sons would be farmers and that they would farm the land in much the way that he did. So he could teach his sons to farm, imparting his skills and know-how, thereby equipping them for their place in the world of work. But today the world is changing rapidly. We have very little idea what specific skills and abilities the work force will need in 20 or 30 years, when our current students will be workers in their prime. Thus insofar as we are preparing our students to be workers, we are preparing them to work at something we know not what. This involves identifying and imparting a quite different set of skills from those needed to farm or cook or fix cars or program computers as we do today. It requires that we equip our students with higher order skills that enable them and motivate them to learn how to learn, and to recognize when established ways of doing things are becoming outdated.

Aristotle contends that human beings are essentially rational (Richard McKeon, 1941). If rationality is the human essence, then the end of education should be to enable each human being to function as a rational agent. Then each would realize his essence and be able to perform his proper function. This might require more or different skills, propensities and orientations than those that are required to enable each of us to function as a citizen or as a member of the work force.

To see whether the Aristotelian position figures in a viable philosophy of education, we need to explicate and justify a conception of human flourishing, where to flourish is to function well as a rational animal. Rawls suggests that flourishing involves satisfying what he calls the Aristotelian Principle: ‘Other things equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities) and that this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized or the greater its complexity. A person takes pleasure in doing something as he becomes more proficient at it, and of two activities which he performs equally well, he prefers the one that calls upon the greater number of more subtle and intricate discriminations.’ (Rawls, 1971, p. 414) He goes on to say, ‘Presumably complex activities are more enjoyable because they satisfy the desire for variety and novelty of experience, and leave room for feats of ingenuity and invention.’ (Rawls, *ibid.* p. 427). Rawls does not, of course, think that flourishing requires relentless self-improvement in all aspects of life. He notes that it would be ridiculous if someone were to invoke the Aristotelian Principle as a reason to continually devise more complicated ways to tie his shoes. Nevertheless, Rawls thinks that flourishing involves realizing the Aristotelian Principle in some important aspects of one’s life. If this is right, and if enabling people to flourish is an aim of education, then we need to equip and motivate students to continually improve their performance in some significant areas of their lives, and refine their abilities to make subtle and intricate discriminations.

We might wonder whether there is such a thing as human flourishing. I do not mean by this that we should wonder whether human beings flourish. Plainly some do. The question is whether flourishing is a single property that all those who flourish share. If so, all those who flourish are in

an important respect alike. The ancient Greeks thought that the answer was ‘yes’. Flourishing had to be characterized at a level of abstraction, so that the relevant features could plausibly be general. But there was a single good – the good for man – that all aim for, and that all who were successful achieved.

The conviction that there is such a single good waned with the Enlightenment. Different people, it seems, quite reasonably value different things. They consider their lives to go well when they achieve different objectives. They do not all flourish in the same way. So if the Aristotelian Principle holds, it must be interpreted in a way that recognizes that different people seek to satisfy it in different domains.

This marks an important change that is highly consequential for education. For if there is value in people’s living lives that *they consider good*, then rather than thinking that the educational establishment – society, or the ministry, or the family – should set the goals from the outside, education should enable and equip students to set their own goals. In Rawls’s terms, education should enable people to determine their own conception of the good and equip them to pursue that good, their pursuit being limited by the rights of others not to be harmed and to have the same liberty to pursue their own conceptions of the good. A person’s conception of the good is a scheme of ultimate ends that she reflectively endorses, whose achievement is likely, barring disaster, to result in a life that she would consider well lived.

Formulating and pursuing a conception of the good requires a variety of abilities that children, and some adults, lack – information, foresight, the capacity to rationally assess alternatives, and so forth. Rawls is sometimes criticized for overlooking this fact. I do not think this criticism is sound, given that he was attempting to characterize the moral

features that fully functioning members of a well ordered society need. Children are not yet fully functioning members of society, and some people never will be. Still, the criticism points to an incompleteness in Rawls' account, and one that is significant for the philosophy of education. What more is needed?

Here it pays to turn to Amartya Sen (Sen, 1995). He maintains that to be able to form what Rawls calls a conception of the good, people need a range of capabilities. Some are inborn, others are acquired. Among those that are acquired are the capability to recognize opportunities, frame alternatives for oneself, and imaginatively entertain the possibility of adopting different goods as one's own. The opportunities must be live options, not just pipe dreams. Because the opportunities in question must be, and be recognized as, genuinely available, exactly what capabilities students need to develop is keyed to circumstances. Nevertheless, if a person's purview is too restricted, her ability to form a conception of the good will be stunted. She will be unaware of the range of opportunities actually open to her or of the reasons she might have to consider them desirable. If, although she can form a viable conception of the good, her resources are unduly limited, she is not equipped to pursue her conception of the good. As Sen makes clear, it is not enough that she is equipped to lead a life that she considers good simply because she is easily satisfied. Nor is it enough if, simply because her purview is restricted, she identifies as a good life what is merely the best of a bad lot, when there are real options that, had she been aware of them, she would have preferred. She must be capable of surveying and entertaining a fairly wide range of genuinely available options.

To be sure, some limitations are inevitable. Regardless of our aspirations, we human beings cannot fly by flapping our arms. Others are inevitable for some people, but not for

others. Unless their sight is restored, blind people cannot pilot commercial aircraft. That option is foreclosed to them. Yet others can be remedied by supplying absent resources. A young woman, living at a distance, becomes able to attend school when she gets a bicycle; a member of a group barred from a trade gains the opportunity to pursue that trade when the laws are changed. Yet others – the ones that concern us – can be removed or ameliorated by education. Literacy and numeracy enable people to both entertain and pursue careers, hobbies and activities that would otherwise be closed to them. The capacity for critical thinking enables people to judiciously entertain and assess alternative conceptions of the good. Expansion of one's imaginative range, by broadening one's perspective, enables one to recognize and appreciate the pros and cons of various options, as though from the inside. Through imagination, a person can ask herself, not just what is good or bad about this way of life simpliciter, but what would be good or bad about this way of life *for me*. There is, and should be no suggestion that the capabilities education fosters will lead all students to form the same conception of the good. Rather, they will enable them to survey and assess the options, and decide for themselves what goods they value most. Education should recognize that there is a diversity of lives that reasonable people consider good, and should equip students to formulate and pursue a life that they personally would consider well lived.

It is likely that without some measure of civic engagement, some personally and financially rewarding career, and some sort of family life most people would not consider their lives well lived. So the familiar ends of education are apt to be interwoven into an individual's conception of the good. But because the weight they are given is apt to vary from person to person, for education to overemphasize any of them would be an error.

It might seem that, like preparing students for citizenship or for the work force, this sets education a distal objective.¹ Looking back in old age, each person can assess whether her education provided her with the capabilities she needed for a life she considers well lived. This is so, and it may be that only by surveying one's complete life that it is possible to tell whether that life as a whole has been well lived. Nevertheless, this is only part of the story.

Still, this may sound very individualistic, perhaps objectionably so. I do not think it is. For, as I said at the outset, human beings are social animals. We form societies and create the institutions, practices, and norms that shape our collective life. To see how this modulates the Rawlsian/Senian conception, let us look back to Dewey.

Standardly, I suppose, we think of democracy as a form of government, one where the government rules by the consent of the governed, where the will of the majority settles (most) issues, where voting is the mechanism for making political decisions.¹ Dewey does not deny that political democracy has these features. But he considers democracy not just – and not mainly – a form of government. For Dewey, democracy is primarily a way of life. It is a form of association, an orientation toward joint enterprises, common and sometimes divergent aims, collective social life.

The model for Deweyan democracy is not the United States Senate, but a New England town meeting. A town meeting is a direct democracy. It is a form of government that was common in 19th century rural New England towns like the one where Dewey grew up, and still occasionally exists in vestigial form. Under such a government, the residents of a town meet together to decide what the town should do. All residents are eligible to participate, and have both a right and

1. I thank Morwenna Griffiths for raising this worry

a duty to take part. All are, from a political point of view, free and equal. They are free to advocate for any course of action they favor, entitled to be heard, and have an equal say in what is done and how things are done. What Dewey calls 'democratic deliberation' is a form of mutually respectful collective deliberation. The background assumptions are, first: that there are problems that the group needs collectively to solve. Deliberations in the town meeting are practical; they concern what to do – perhaps about schools, taxes, roads, law enforcement or public health. Second: not everyone agrees about what to do. Different people have different opinions about the desirability of different ends, their relative importance, the effectiveness and efficiency of different means to achieve various ends, and so on. To get the deliberators to adopt the policy a person favors, he must convince his fellow citizens of its desirability. This is fairly obvious.

In order to prevail, an agent should understand his opponents' points of view. If John knows why Mary objects to his favored course of action, he is in a better position to rebut or deflect Mary's objections. If he knows what she wants, he is in a better position to insure that her desires do not conflict with or override with his. This is so even in purely adversarial proceedings. Any political operative would recommend coming to the table with such knowledge. But, Dewey believes, *democratic deliberation is not adversarial*. The goal of democratic deliberation is not to get others to do what one already wants. It is to reason together to achieve the common good. Although John and Mary have antecedently formulated ideas about the common good, the discussion is not a winner-take-all contest to see which of those ideas will prevail. Their ideas are common fodder for deliberation. They do not argue in order to realize their own antecedently fixed objectives and to discredit those of their

opponents. Their motive for informing themselves about each other's points of view is not to block, rebut, or co-opt them. Rather, if they understand one another's points of view, they learn what each other's interests and objectives are, and why each thinks that those interests and objectives are worth pursuing. They thus enrich their understanding of the problem situation, the ends that might be realized, the courses of action open to them. This may lead them to modify their own position, to modulate it into something that accommodates, reflects, or respects the positions of those with whom they initially disagree. They argue *from* initially disparate points of view in order to arrive at a common, mutually satisfactory solution.

By accessing the opinions of others and the reasons for those opinions, we extend our data base. We gain more information about the available options and their desirability. So rather than seeing those who disagree with us as opponents, Dewey thinks, we should see them as allies who, by envisioning things differently, extend our epistemic range. Diversity of opinion on Dewey's view thus is not an impediment to deliberation, but a resource for it. It follows that undue deference is a vice. If a deliberator, out of deference to a colleague, fails to voice her opinions where they diverge from his, she deprives him and the rest of the community of her insights. This is a form of disrespect. And it is epistemically costly. It may prevent the community from coming to the best available decision. What Dewey calls democratic deliberation is not restricted to the political realm. It is collective deliberation that affords access to insights and approaches that may prove beneficial, but that no one person, on his own, would ever have considered.

Dewey focuses on democratic deliberation in contexts where people seek to come to a consensus about their

common good. But its contribution to such contexts does not by any means exhaust its value. Because democratic deliberation extends an agent's epistemic range, it is equally valuable in contexts where a person is concerned exclusively with her own good. For from the fact that she is, in such a context, self-interested, it does not follow that she knows where her interests really lie. Suppose, for example, she needs to decide whether to undergo a risky course of therapy. The decision is hers alone and her situation is such that she need only consider what is best for her. Still, she would do well to consult others – not just medical experts, but also people who know her well and perhaps patients who have undergone the therapy. Even though she gets to decide, and only her interests need be consulted in making the decision, she may not know what to decide or how best to decide. She may lack information or insight that others could provide. By deliberating with others, she gains access to alternative points of view. These may reveal important features of her current situation or currently espoused end which she has overlooked. Through such deliberation she gains access to information and experiences beyond her immediate purview. She may, as a result, modulate her ends or means. Whether or not she does so, she will be on more solid ground, since her decision will have been subject to greater scrutiny.

As I have characterized it, democratic deliberation is a way that people should work together to solve common problems and achieve collective goods. But it is considerably more than this. For Dewey's democratic deliberation is *essentially educative*. It is a way – perhaps the best way – to learn from one another. By reasoning together in a context of mutual respect, deliberators draw on one another's insights to figure out what to think. By reasoning collectively about how to figure out such things, they collectively devise and revise

methods of inquiry and standards of acceptability. So by participating in democratic deliberation, students learn from others. And by learning how to participate in such debates, they learn how best to learn from others. Since participation is required, learners are not passive. They contribute to ongoing debates. Their ideas are fodder for those debates – they are insights that might be endorsed, modified or rejected as impracticable, unfounded, or simply not as good as a rival proposal. Nor are the students mere proposers of ideas. They also function as critics of the ideas of others, and formulators of ideas that no one has yet entertained. So they learn how to take a critically reflective stance toward their own and other people’s ideas.

A person needs to have a particular set of skills to be able to contribute to and avail oneself of the resources democratic deliberation provides. Very roughly, deliberators need to be adept at both the giving and taking of reasons. This is something they need to learn to do.

In my description of the town meeting, I said nothing about rules or procedures. According to Dewey, these, as well as substantive decisions about policy, law, and practice, are not given *a priori*, but emerge in the course of deliberation. As people collectively deliberate about what to do (in enacting a law, formulating a policy, implementing or modifying a practice), I am grateful to John White for prompting me to make this point clear, they develop shared views about what sorts of considerations rightly bear on deciding this sort of thing and what sorts of practices foster effective deliberation. They develop second-order views about how such deliberation should be conducted. They come to recognize that certain rules or reasons or procedures strike them as unacceptable, so they collectively decide not to appeal to them, use them, or give them weight.

Deliberators monitor the results of their procedures and modify their practice in light of those results. If, for example, they find that one approach leads to animosity, to endless debate, or to outcomes that on reflection they consider regrettable, they revise it in hopes of doing better. Gradually the standards of collective debate evolve, as they recognize that the reasons it makes sense to offer are the reasons their interlocutors should be expected to endorse, or at least seriously entertain, and these depend on the diversity of opinions among those they are deliberating with. The evolution of the practice of collective discourse, and the rules and constraints deliberators consider it subject to, are accepted for the nonce, as reflective of what they currently think are the best ways to deliberate about their collective lives. This holds not only in deliberations about a common good, but also in deliberations about an individual's good. When a group of people are collectively deliberating about what one of them should do given her own conception of the good -- whether, for example, she should enroll in a dangerous but promising clinical trial -- they have learned to avoid ad hominem arguments, unjustifiable appeals to authority, adducing ad hoc considerations to avoid unpalatable consequences.

At the heart of Dewey's conception of democratic deliberation is a deep-seated mutual respect. Deliberators respect one another in taking each other's views seriously, and in taking responsibility for their own views, so that they are worthy of being taken seriously. Their deliberations display a critical reflectiveness about ends and means. The fact that a course of action accords with tradition is a point in its favor, since it is some evidence that that course of action has worked well in the past. But since deliberators need to look forward as well as back, they must consider whether circumstances have changed in such a way that what worked well in the past

will not work so well in the future. This is not to deny that deliberators can appeal to experts. But if they do, they need to accompany their appeal with intersubjectively acceptable reasons for thinking that the chosen expert is in this case trustworthy. Fallibilism is required as well. Deliberators must be willing to revisit previously accepted conclusions in light of their consequences, and to revise or reject them if things did not turn out as well as they hoped.

If democracy is a way of life, these virtues, which are at once cognitive and moral, should characterize our relations to one another, to our shared problems and our common world, generally. Whenever we are deliberating about matters of common concern, we should display the virtues of democratic deliberators: mutual respect, answerability to the evidence, foresight about social and material consequences, fallibilism, and so on. Since, according to Dewey, all deliberation is public deliberation, these virtues should infuse our lives.

If, as Aristotle said, our overarching objective is to flourish or to live a life we consider valuable, and as Enlightenment figures such as Rousseau, Wollstonecraft and Kant said, not everyone considers the same sort of life to be valuable, then as Rawls and Sen maintain, education must equip individuals with the resources to form their own conception of the good and the capabilities to pursue that good, constrained always by the provision that an individual's pursuit cannot interfere with the equal liberty of others to pursue their own goods. The goal of education is not to enable people to realize some externally specified good, but rather to enable them, in a suitably unfettered and responsible way, to devise and pursue lives that they consider good. Since people are different, there will be a diversity of viable conceptions of the good.

Education should foster the recognition of that diversity and the appreciation of its value. Since human beings are social animals who can flourish only in communities, we need to be able, as Dewey argued, to form, critique, and modify our ever evolving conceptions of the good by appealing to the insights of others. And we need to appreciate how tightly the realization of our individual conception of the good is tied to the good of our society, hence to the goods sought by other members of our society. Rather than individualism being at odds with collectivism, individualism and collectivism are mutually reinforcing. The capacity to appreciate these insights and the motivation to realize a community that fosters them is, I contend a fundamental goal of education.

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The idea of an Aims-based Curriculum

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In a longer version of this conference presentation, I have said a lot about the shortcomings of the traditional subject-based curriculum. More on this can be found in White (2011). But here I turn from critique to a positive alternative. This is an aims-based, rather than a subject-based, curriculum.

Curriculum statements in every country are usually prefaced by a statement of aims. Too often this remains something like a high-sounding mission statement that teachers and others who use the curriculum statement quickly skim over and forget in their desire to find what detailed syllabuses are required in geography or some other subject.

In the new book that my Institute of Education colleague, Michael Reiss, and I are publishing in February 2013, called *An Aims-based Curriculum*, we argue for aims that are no longer curtain raisers to a pre-determined curriculum, but aims *that go all the way down*. Our vision is of schools whose every activity is a reflection of its fundamental aims and justifiable by reference to them. It is a vision that does not protect a special place for traditional subjects or for anything else. It starts from very general aims on which there is likely to be wide consensus in a liberal democratic society, and derives more specific aims from these.

This is what the first, lengthier part of our book provides. The second part looks at how this scheme can be practically realised – at issues relating to political control, the division of curricular responsibility between state and school, and implications for assessment, inspection and teacher education.

Here I focus on the first part: the aims-based approach itself. The model we adopt is a kind of unfolding. We begin with very general aims, then show how these generate more specific aims and how from these in turn even more specific ones can be derived. We show that in this way one can derive aims just as detailed as those found in conventional curriculum planning, including many that overlap with these.

As an example, if we take it that if a major aim is to equip students to become responsible citizens, they will have, among other things, to know something about the society they live in. One aspect of this is having some understanding of its economy. This in turn requires some grasp of relevant aspects of the science, technology and mathematics underlying this economy. At the level of detail, there will be much overlap here with current requirements in these fields. The difference is that those teaching the specifics will be constantly referring back to the wider and wider frameworks within which these particulars are set: the economy, our society, citizenship, our personal and collective well-being. They will be less guided by the specialist requirements of a school subject.

We see our task in the book as mapping out the larger aims and relationships between them. At the most general level, this takes us into the realm of ethics and political philosophy. In the book we can do no more than touch on this, and so have to refer readers at many points to further discussions in the philosophical literature.

I'll now briefly outline the major aims from which we start.

We begin from the suggestion that school education should equip every child

- to lead a life that is personally flourishing,
- to help others to do so, too.

Then we show in more detail what each of these involves.

There is now a large philosophical literature on what it is to lead a flourishing life. We draw on this to suggest that this life has much to do with being enjoyably, wholeheartedly and successfully immersed in worthwhile relationships and activities. Some people, not least in education, confine intrinsically worthwhile pursuits to intellectual and aesthetic ones, but the present account is much broader. It includes such things as intimate relationships, meaningful work, making music, scholarly research, gardening, eating good food, watching an excellent film.

Nearly all of us in a modern society like our own assume it is ideally up to us largely to choose the mix of relationships and activities that best suits us. Unlike many of our ancestors, nearly all of us are deeply attached to personal autonomy as a value.

A central aim of the school should be to prepare students for a life of autonomous, whole-hearted and successful engagement in worthwhile relationships, activities and experiences.

In order to lead a flourishing life, certain basic needs must be met. We all need air, water, food, shelter, a certain level of health, a certain level of income. Psychologically, we need companionship, respect, recognition, security and freedom from attack, arbitrary arrest and other impositions. Schools

cannot provide all these things, but to some, like health and money management and recognition, they can make various kinds of contribution.

Working with parents, too, they can also help to develop the personal qualities that help us to live a fulfilling life – things like proper regulation of our emotions and our bodily desires for such things as food, drink, sex and novelty; a measure of confidence and self-esteem; independence of thought; moral courage.

The second, altruistic, aim about helping others to lead a flourishing life, has three dimensions. First, a moral one. We help others to flourish by possessing certain other-directed personal qualities: cooperativeness, kindness, tolerance, fairness, treating people with respect, helping them to meet their needs.

Secondly, within this broad moral aim, we can place more specifically civic aims. We want children to become good citizens, concerned for the public interest as well as more private concerns, willing to collaborate with others in civic matters; disposed not to take at their face value the pronouncements of politicians and the pressure groups behind them, but subject them to critical scrutiny; standing up against corruption in public life.

And thirdly, within this civic aim is the more specific aim of equipping young people to contribute to the common good through the work they do, both paid and unpaid. This is where education for employment comes into the picture.

None of these aims and sub-aims is discrete from the others. Importantly, those to do with the pupil's own good are not discrete from the altruistic ones. Think of intimate friendships, of taking up teaching or nursing as a career, of

other collaborative pursuits of all sorts. What is good for one person can be good for others, too.

The two major aims mentioned would not make sense without bringing in a third aim that they presuppose. We call this the area of ‘background understanding’ – the understanding, in broad strokes, of human nature, of our social life and how it has developed as it is, and of the natural world in which we live.

You may ask: what is the justification for these particular aims? Don’t they simply reflect my own personal preferences? I hope they go deeper than that. Their justification goes back to the basic values of a liberal democracy. If you take as given that you want an education system in line with those values, these are kind of aims you will favour.

We explore these three major aims in more detail later in the book, deriving more determinate aims as we go. I gave an example just now that proceeds from

- altruistic aims to
- education for citizenship to
- understanding society to
- understanding the economy to
- understanding the STEM areas that underpin this.

This is, of course, only one route into more detailed aims. There are further branchings at every point, here as elsewhere. Education for citizenship, for instance, is a matter of encouraging certain democratic dispositions as well as about various sorts of understanding.

As the example of science and maths shows, an aims-based curriculum can generate much of the familiar content

found in a curriculum that starts from discrete subjects. Abandoning a traditional, subject-based curriculum does not mean demoting scientific, mathematical, historical, geographical, linguistic knowledge in education. What it means is that the knowledge selected is more obviously relevant to wider purposes. Take quadratic equations in algebra. In a subject-based approach, for a proper induction into mathematics as a specialism, you have to master them. No question. In an aims-based approach, we begin more agnostically. We have yet to see whether the aims point us in their direction. In my civic example just given, where the ordinary citizen needs some understanding of the economy and its scientific/mathematical underpinning, how essential is it for him or her to grasp quadratic equations? How would they rate against, say, elementary statistics?

Although an aims-based approach will put due weight on mathematical, scientific, historical and geographical knowledge, it does not follow that this will be acquired within the discrete school subjects of these names. This is a matter of what *vehicles* are selected in which to deliver these aims, not a matter of the aims themselves. While it will be a matter for the political realm to lay down a broad framework of aims in some detail, it will be the schools' job to decide how best these aims can be pursued – whether by subjects as discrete entities, by projects, themes, interdisciplinary activities, whole school processes, or whatever.

An aims-based approach does not put all the weight on knowledge acquisition. Far from it. Aims to do with possessing knowledge are always subordinate to wider aims about the kind of person one is, about the personal qualities one needs to lead a fulfilling life, act morally, be a good citizen and worker. Students can have as much knowledge as you like about what the world is like, about

human history, or about higher mathematics, but if they finish their education hopelessly inhibited about personal relationships, totally lacking in confidence, or, even worse, in a concern for other people, what avails them their academic learning?

The aims-based approach is a huge improvement on a subject-based one. If we were not so attached to subjects as our one type of building block, or to the legacy from encyclopaedism that school education must be as comprehensive as possible, we could get so much further. Religious origins of the curriculum aside, there is an obvious reason why, until very recently, people felt that school education, topped for a few by university, should be packed tight with what was held to be essential intellectual provisioning for life's journey. For most, that journey was likely to be short. If they did not get when young everything they might need for life, when would they get it? Today, with centenarians becoming two a penny, we have space to loosen up.

We can shift the priority from a comprehensive grounding by 16 or 18 to something better fitting our age. Children will still need a good foundation, of course, but there is no need for this to try to cover all bases. More important is that the grounding spring from appropriate aims, rather than paying homage to tradition. Salient among these aims is that students enjoy learning and remain eager to continue learning once they have left school and throughout their lives.

This is not a priority in a culture like our own in Britain, and perhaps in India, too, that leaves too many young people either switched off or glad to have exam cramming behind them. We need, badly, to rethink things from fundamentals.

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Education, Human Development and Teaching

On a Complex Interrelation

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The English term “education” entails two very different meanings. On one hand this term denotes the formation of personality or human development in general. On the other hand “education” designates also the broad realm of pedagogical action including teaching. Of course, education in the first sense of that term does not preclude pedagogical efforts and interactions. On the contrary, the development of human individuals normally requires such efforts and interactions. However, human development is not limited to the pedagogical activities, for it also takes place outside pedagogical settings, outside practices of teaching and training. Besides, we should not exclude the probability that there could be certain pedagogical actions, certain methods of teaching and training that do not support education in the first sense of personality formation and human agency development.

The exact question then is, how can we distinguish between pedagogical activities and arrangements that are educationally supportive, from those which are not. This requires a precise analytical clarification of the interrelation

between the terms “education” and “pedagogical action”. For it is obvious that we can only answer that question, if we first clarify what is education in itself and for itself. Only after that we can reasonably discuss the question how education can be supported by (certain kinds) of pedagogical action.

In the following considerations I shall first show how “education” in the first and in the second sense of that term has been spelled out in the educational philosophy of John Dewey⁽¹⁾. While Dewey seems to assume a – indeed vague and somewhat self-contradictory – distinction between the both different meanings of “education”, those meanings became to some extent synthesized in the work of R. S. Peters which should be seen as a milestone in contemporary educational philosophy⁽²⁾. In the next section of my paper I shall show why this synthesis is problematic, not only for logical but also for pedagogical reasons and why it is important to develop a clear analytic distinction between education as a particular kind of human development on one hand, and pedagogical action as a particular form of social relations on the other. In order to achieve this distinction I shall introduce the concept of *Bildung* as an understanding of “education” as a particular form of human development. This is an understanding that is clearly different from “education” in terms of teaching⁽³⁾. On the ground of my explorations on the concept of education as *Bildung*, I shall finally be able to formulate some central norms of educative teaching, that is, to discriminate between educative and non-educative forms of teaching⁽⁴⁾.

1. Education as Growth and Education as Schooling in John Dewey’s Educational Theory

It is well known that John Dewey understands education mainly as a life-long process of growth. However, Dewey often uses “education” also as a synonym of “school education”, or of “schooling”, which, of course, terminates at

a certain age of the individual. The following quotation from “Democracy and Education” makes clear how he traces the relation between these two quite different meanings of the term in question:

...Since in reality there is nothing to which growth is relative save more growth, there is nothing to which education is subordinate save more education. It is common-place to say that education should not cease when one leaves school. The point of this commonplace is that the purpose of school education is to ensure the continuance of education by organizing the powers that insure growth.“ (Dewey 1916, p.51)

Now, one can put the question whether education in the first sense of life-long growth (which I shall call from now “education in itself”) and education in the second sense of school education really refer to the same class of things, and whether both the mentioned meanings of the word “education” do have any strong family resemblances. For while the “education in itself” that is “...all one with growing” (ibid, p. 53) does not have any purposes beyond itself, beyond the growth which it is, school education on the contrary does have an instrumental purpose to organize the powers that insure growth. That is to say that while the “education in itself” has an intrinsic value, the school education has merely an extrinsic one.

Certainly, school education also entails the essential moment of personal growing. By learning different subjects, by being included in peer-groups and by interacting with teachers, by adapting to the institutional regulations of schools the students are widening up their life horizons and options for actions, they are making new social experiences, they are developing new attitudes and dispositions. However, “organizing the powers that insure growth”, which is

according to Dewey the main task of school education, is quite different from “being growth”, which is the case of the “education in itself”. At schools, organizing the powers that enable growth is normally not an activity which is carried out by the growing children themselves, but by their teachers who have to create a desire for continued growth in their students and to supply the means to realize that desire (see *ibid.*, p. 53.) Thus, this activity cannot be seen as an internal part of the “education in itself”. Rather, it is an external condition.

This becomes very clear when we look at the “powers” which according to Dewey are crucial for enabling growth. These are social responsiveness and plasticity (see *ibid.*, pp. 42-46). It is obvious that children cannot “organize” these powers by themselves, even if they are capable of some kind of “self-organized learning”. Rather, plasticity and social responsiveness of the children should be kept alive and furthered by the adults who work with children, that is, by the teachers. The latter could do this, only if they respect the “sympathetic curiosity”, “unbiased responsiveness, and openness of mind” (*ibid.*, p. 50, p. 52) of the children, instead of “...thinking of instruction as a method of supplying this lack [of desired traits – K.S.] by pouring knowledge into a mental and moral hole which awaits filling.” (*ibid.*, p. 51). The respect for children’s curiosity, openness of mind, and responsiveness requires teachers to design and perform teaching and instruction in a way that gives broad space for the articulation of the actual questions and aims of the children, and to try to link this articulation to “objective” scientific knowledge, instead of just lecturing this knowledge by neglecting children’s own directions of thinking and growing.

To sum up: According to Dewey “education in itself” is a process of personal growth while school education is to be

understood as a certain course of pedagogical action that enables the education-in-itself. Modes of pedagogical action that work against plasticity and social responsiveness as preconditions for growth are not educative. The common ground of “education in itself” and “school education” is that both terms has an inherent relation to growth – either in the sense that education is itself growth, or in the sense that (school) education is about enabling growth.

Now, one can ask the further question whether the terms “human growth” and “education” are in fact fully equivalent. That is to ask, whether there might be some features and intrinsic goals of education, which cannot be subsumed under the growth of the human individual; features and goals that are not primarily linked to the individual and her development, but rather to collective values and interests of the society. So, for example, is the transmission of cultural objects like worldviews and values that traditionally have been seen as important ones within a given society, not an intrinsic goal of education – a goal that is quite independent of the one of individual growth?

On the other hand, we could ask ourselves whether “education” really covers all aspects of human growth, or whether this term does not rather specify some particular aspects of it. For “growth” appears to be a concept that is much too broad and too unspecific one – there are surely many aspects of human growth as for example biological maturation or as making “unplanned” experiences that are beyond the scope of education in the sense of teaching and pedagogical action in general. Thus, one may say that it is not the concept of human growth, or human development in general that can serve as a common ground for the two different meanings of education mentioned above, but rather some specific features of that concept.

Indeed, in the historic development of the concept of education after Dewey there is such a tendency of differentiation between the terms “human development” and “education”. We can observe this tendency very clearly in the work of R.S. Peters who drew a twofold distinction between those terms: First, “education-in-itself” according to him also entails significances that go beyond the scope of “human development”, and second, “education” denotes only some particular dimensions of human development.

2. Education as Transmission of worth-while Contents and Education as Development of Reason – R. S. Peters

In his programmatic book “Ethics and Education” R.S. Peters asserts three criteria for proper usage of the concept of education. According to him we should name only these processes and interactions “education” which

- (1) imply the transmission of what is worth-while to those who become committed to it
- (2) entail the development of a cognitive perspective at the learner
- (3) respect the addressees of the transmission of educational contents by ruling out procedures of that transmission which lack voluntariness on the part of the addressees (see Peters 1965, p 45).

Now, it is not that difficult to see that these criteria represent a kind of “mixture” between the Deweyan “education-in-itself” and “education as pedagogical action”. For it is clear that while the criterion (2) emphasizes a kind of individual development, the criteria (1) and (3) address “education” as “transmission”, that is, as a form of social relation. Should this “mixture” of apparently different meanings of education

be seen as a regress from the level of analytic elaboration of the concept of education reached by Dewey?

I don't think so. Rather, by proposing his criteria for education Peters seems to be trying to avoid a simple equalization of education to individual growth or individual development, and to assert the transmission of worth-while contents as an intrinsic goal of education; a goal that could not be easily reduced to the notion of individual growth. According to Peters' first criterion, education is about transmission of contents that are worth-while not primarily with regard to individual's self-realization, or with regard to "fixing the environment so that an individual "grows"" (ibid, p. 52), but with regard to "public traditions" (ibid, p. 53), or to a "heritage" that accumulates certain bodies of (collective) knowledge (ibid, p. 54). Turning the eyes outwards to what is essentially independent of persons is for Peters a crucial feature of education (ibid, P. 54).

One might interpret the mentioned claims of Peters on the trans-personal and trans-individual dimension of education in a way that education is not only about the interest of the individual in growing, but also about the interest of society in cultural self-reproduction. These are two different interests that are often conflicting.

Indeed, at a first glance, Peters seems to endorse this wide spread and trivial notion about a dichotomy and about a needed "balance" between an individual and a societal function of education, when he insists that at least in the later stages of secondary and adult education the emphasis should be more on disciplinary canons than on individual experiences and individual "avenues of initiation" into the public realm (see ibid, p. 56). One could understand that claim in a way that the academic disciplines should not be used only in an instrumental way as tools and as containers

of selective usable stuff for “fixing the environment so that the individual “grows”” (ibid, p. 52), but rather as cultural objects with rights on their own and with their own intrinsic value.

However, a more careful look at Peters’ conception shows that it does not really entail a dichotomy between an individual and a societal function of education and that “cultural reproduction” of a given society does not appear as a task of education at all within that conception. That is to say, that according to Peters, educational institutions should not be understood as guardians of cultural canons or of national traditions that are meant to guarantee the cohesion of a national state, or of a given society. Rather, in Peters’ theory of education, transmission of disciplinary structured scientific domains should only function to enable the development of individual mind.

Peters criticizes the empiricist notion of mind as an atomistic entity that develops itself by first receiving sensual data and then abstracting concepts from them . Rather, mind’s development is a genuine intersubjective process that is carried out by the initiation of the individual into “public traditions, enshrined in a public language” (Ibid, p. 49). So the point of teaching academic disciplines in educational institutions is to enable the development of an individual mind by initiating the student into activities of knowing and understanding (scientific) concepts that serve as grounds of public reasoning. This implies that not all new experiences, not all kinds of “growing” should be seen as “education”, but only those that link the developing individual to the sphere and the practice of public reason.

We can find a similar (though not identical) line of thought in Dewey’s famous essay “The Child and the Curriculum”. Here Dewey claims that education requires establishing

a link between the personal experience of the child and the universal experience of the human race. And the later experience is organized, systematized and reflectively formulated in academic subjects which have been normally taught at schools (see Dewey 1964, p. 344-345). However, unlike Peters, Dewey does not think that the disciplinary canons should have priority over personal experiences and individual lifeworlds of the students. Quite in the contrary, he insists that academic disciplines should be “psychologized”, that is, they should be de-canonized and re-constructed in a way that these disciplines can be made compatible with the personal experiences of the students in order to serve as extensions, systematizations and universalizations of those experiences (see *Ibid*, p. 351).

Also Israel Scheffler makes a strict distinction between growing of rationality that is for him the kernel of education, on one hand, and holding on disciplinary canons, on the other. According to Scheffler rationality is the ability to grasp principles, rules, and purposes and to evaluate all those “things” critically “in the light of reasons that might be put forward in public discussion”(Scheffler 1973, p. 62). This notion of rationality comes very close to Peters’ understanding of education as development of a “cognitive perspective”, of an attitude of grasping conceptual schemes and principles of the facts and of asking for their reasons (see Peters 1966, p. 30-31; p. 45). But unlike Peters, Scheffler claims that rationality goes far beyond “academic mastery of factual subject matter” (Scheffler 1971, p. 62). For him cultivation of rationality is a matter of initiation into “open rational discussion” (*Ibid*, p. 62) – and not into academic disciplinary canons. Moreover, he sees a great merit in Dewey’s emphasizing of the “free judgment of the child as against fixed adult curricula imposed from above” (*Ibid*, p. 63).

Peters' equalisation of the initiation into public reason or public discourse with the initiation into the canons of academic disciplines is indeed not convincing. To be sure, dealing with concepts elaborated in the domains of academic disciplines like math, history, philosophy, art etc. does a great deal for the cultivation of one's ability to participate in public reasoning. These concepts have a coherent structure being components of systematic chains of argumentation with explicit and justifiable premises, so that they can claim a trans-individual and inter-perspectival validity. This makes them capable to serve as central tools of public reasoning, for public reasoning requires the participants to aim at mutual understanding that overlaps their particular perspectives, worldviews, or cultural values.

However, the practice of public reasoning cannot (and should not) be understood as a sum of the disciplinary discourses of various sciences and arts like math, philosophy, history etc. Subjects of public reasoning are normally moral, political and societal issues (like for example: Is it just to have private schools?, which kind of art is a good one and should be subsidized by the state? What is the relevance of my professional choice for society, and what rewards should I expect (and why) for the job which I am going to choose?) that crosscut disciplinary boundaries and that are rooted in the personal experience of the participants in discourses on these issues. Thus, in order to become fluent in public practical reasoning the student does not need to internalize the academic canons of various disciplines as they have been developed by generations of professional scientists and scholars in the particular fields of knowledge. Rather, she should become capable of conceptual and argumentative articulation of facts and experiences by dealing with *examples* from different ways of thinking and interpreting

the world (science, art, literature) and by applying those examples to the interests and worldviews of one's own.

I think that these differences between education and transmission of disciplinary canons are quite obvious and even trivial. So the question arises, why did such a brilliant philosopher of education like Peters neglect those differences by identifying education as becoming fluent in public reasoning with initiation into the canons of various academic disciplines?

It seems to me that the answer to that question lies in Peters' confusing education with teaching. His talk about education is almost always at the same time a talk about the transmission of the contents of knowledge in schools. The later talk is usually dedicated to a defence of personal-independent bodies of knowledge that are structured in "objective ways" in the different academic domains against the progressivist notion of "child centred" teaching. Peters obviously interprets that notion as a threat for the cognitive dimension of education, understood as the ability to identify and understand contents that are objectively valuable, and to order these contents in conceptual schemes (see Peters 1966, p. 74-75).

However, one can put the question whether teachers really have only the choice between a "child-centred" pedagogy, a teaching of academic disciplines for their own sake, or a "balance" between the both. Couldn't it be the case that the greatest educational effect can be achieved by teaching a selection of themes and concepts drawn from different disciplines and treated independently of the academic canons of these disciplines? If this is a possible alternative however, then the following questions arise: Under which criteria should this selection be made and how should the term "educational effect" be defined?

In order to answer these questions, and in order to also answer the general question about the educational purpose and mechanisms of teaching, we have to disconnect the concept of education from the concept of teaching and put the former concept at a deeper level than the latter: In order to determine kinds of teaching that are educative, we have first to answer the question, what is education in itself and for itself.

3. Education as *Bildung*

In the previous chapter we have seen that there is a large consensus between three most influential authors in the Anglo-Saxon Philosophy of Education – Dewey, Peters and Scheffler – that the term “education” indicates a particular form of human development that leads to a profound ability to participate – actually or virtually – in discourses of public reasoning. The great merit especially of Peters’ work is that he builds a strong and systematic argument that this form of human development regards a disciplined dealing with objective, conceptually structured entities that transcend the sphere of immediate personal experience. The weakness of Peters’ theory is, however, that he wrongly identifies this educative confrontation with trans-personal, conceptually structured objects of the teaching of disciplinary canonized bodies of knowledge as they are represented in the various academic subjects that traditionally have been taught at schools.

In order to avoid this fallacy we need to make a strict distinction between education and teaching – preserving at the same time the notion of education as a form of human development which presupposes an individual’s encountering a conceptually structured objectivity. This distinction and this notion are central to the concept of *Bildung* as this concept has been developed in the framework

of German idealism. Unlike the English term “education”, *Bildung* is clearly distinct from the terms “teaching” and “pedagogical action”. At the same time, *Bildung* shares most of the central semantic features of education as human development towards public reasoning elaborated by Dewey, Peters and Scheffler. That is why I shall now briefly sketch out the concept of *Bildung* as it has been developed by Humboldt and Hegel.

Wilhelm von Humboldt defines *Bildung* as the “most general, most intensive and most free” interaction between the individual and the world (Humboldt 1980, 235-236). According to Humboldt, a successful process of *Bildung* is characterized by a permanent enrichment of the individual through her continuous efforts to acquire as much as possible of the world (see *Ibid*, 235). Humboldt even claims that not individual things, but the world as the unity and the “all-ness” (“Allheit”) of all things is the only subject towards which the process of *Bildung* must be directed (*Ibid*, p. 237.)

These well-known claims of Humboldt have two implications, which have often been overlooked. First, we shall be aware of what exactly Humboldt understands by “world”. According to him world is the “indefinable centre” towards which all particular languages and cultures are directed (see Humboldt 1905, pp.27-33). The world cannot ever be completely grasped by any particular language game. Rather, human beings can only approach the world by bringing as many alternative perspectives to it as possible, and by translating different vocabularies that articulate the reality in different ways. In other words, here “world” is a name for universality that cannot be objectified. Hence, to refer to the world does not simply mean to deal with any kind of objects that are just given outside of the subject, but to grasp universal meanings by transcending any particular and

contextual horizons of reality perception and interpretation. In the paradigmatical case of Humboldt's theory it means to transcend the limitations of any particular language by comparative linguistics and by intercultural translations (see Humboldt 1905, 27-33). It is precisely the world-relatedness of *Bildung* that grounds its difference from the concept of learning, which focuses on the individual's interactions with her particular environments only – and not with the world as such.

Second, the world-reference as an indispensable part of the semantic structure of *Bildung* marks the difference between that concept and certain “person-centered” terms regarding the constituting and growing of subjectivity, such as “identity”, or “identity-development”. Again, *Bildung* does not simply mean a constitution and development of a self, or of a personality, but rather it displays this constitution and development as inherently interwoven with the opening of a world-horizon of meanings by and for the self. The inherent link between self-development and encountering the world, thought as a universal, trans-cultural and trans-contextual entity, is what shapes the uniqueness of *Bildung*.

However, Humboldt's short remarks on the relation between I and world, between Self-Development and World-Encountering do need further clarification. What does it precisely mean to get in touch with ideal, “wordly” contents that claim universal validity? In which sense are these contents not immediately given objects? In which sense does the interaction with such ideal contents lead to a process of *Bildung*?

We can rather find possible answers to these questions in Hegel's powerful Philosophy of Spirit, than in Humboldt's fragmentary theory of *Bildung*.

According to Hegel, *Bildung* in the narrow sense denotes a particular phase in the development of the Spirit. This is the phase where the subjective spirit does not interact any more with fragmented things, or single persons, but with the immediate generality of a system of beliefs and norms of a particular community. These beliefs and norms occur now as ideal and yet external entities (see Hegel 1821/2009, p. 163). Here the process of *Bildung* consists of overcoming the perception of these beliefs and norms as unquestionable truths that ground external rules for individual's behaviour. At that stage the subjective spirit recognizes these collective beliefs and norms as expressions of the objective spirit in its development, thus negating the immediateness and the externality of those beliefs and norms (see Hegel 1807/ 1980, p. 264-266). That is to say that the subject now understands collective, ethical beliefs and norms as objective concepts. The subject's interaction with them is her being-for-herself that is the precondition for her being-in-herself, being as a subject who has a concept of herself as a subject, that is, as somebody, who is capable of understanding, of interpreting, of justifying or of criticizing collective beliefs and norms – shortly to grasp the conceptual structure of these beliefs and norms (see Hegel 1807/1980, p. 266; Hegel 1821/ 2009, p. 162-163).

The crucial question here is: What does it mean to deal with concepts, and to conceptualize external and internal entities? Roughly speaking it does mean first to group these entities on the ground of identical features, and second, to discriminate between general features that build up different concepts. This grouping and discriminating means to assert inferences between entities, inferences which are true, that is, which have objective validity that comes into being in correct judgments. And judgments are correct, only if they can be justified by arguments that are acceptable for every

reasonable being. That is to say that true judgments display inferences between conceptual contents that constitute a universal logical space which transcends every particular environment, every particular social and cultural context. That is why we could use this universal logical space as a synonym to the classic term “world”.

To sum up: For Hegel being an educated person means to participate in the universal logical space of the world that consists of concepts and of inferences between concepts, that is, of arguments. This participation does not require an internalization of the canons of the existing academic disciplines. By the way, this internalization is obviously not possible, for there is nobody who could overlook the entire logical space, the entire world. Rather, to inhabit this space means basically to transform one’s own beliefs to conceptual contents, and to assess the validity of these beliefs by articulating them in argumentative discourses. This implies the ability of playing the social game of giving and asking for reasons (see Brandom 1994, p. 496-497).

4. Education as *Bildung*, and Teaching

I have argued so far that in order to determine which kinds of pedagogical action are educative and which are not, we need first to draw a clear distinction between the terms “education” and “teaching”. We can achieve this distinction at best by spelling out “education” in Hegelian terms, that is, by re-constructing “education” as “*Bildung*.” A process of *Bildung* is to be understood basically as the development of one’s ability of conceptual (self-) articulation by one’s participation in practices of public reasoning, in the game of giving and asking for reasons.

The first obvious prerequisite to become a fluent player of that game is to gain access to it, to be included in it. Although this

seems to be quite a trivial claim, that access is often enough denied to children and young people all around the world. This is for example the case, when schooling takes the form of indoctrination. In that case the students are obviously not encouraged to ask for reasons for assertions that the textbooks make, and for doctrines which the students have to internalize. Nor are they encouraged to examine the validity and the justifications of those assertions and doctrines.

Furthermore, we should be aware that playing the game of giving and asking for reasons is basically an activity of conceptual articulation of one's own beliefs and notions. Before their conceptual articulation these beliefs and notions exist merely as intuitions that mirror the social experience of the individual as well as her desires and fears. So the first and foremost prerequisite of the student's process of *Bildung* is the emphatic acknowledgment of her pre-conceptual beliefs and notions, and of her desires and fears that stand behind them. These beliefs and notions should be brought to expression in the classroom and this expression should be seen as the departing point of teaching and learning.

A further form of intersubjective recognition apart from empathy is needed for the process of *Bildung*, namely the form of respect. This form is needed for the cognitive "jump" from a merely narrative expression of one's own beliefs and opinions to their conceptual articulation. For respect means – to speak with Peters again – to regard a person as a "distinctive centre of consciousness" (Peters 1966, p. 59), as someone who has his own "assertive point of view" (Ibid, p. 210), and who is capable of valuation, choice and judgment (Ibid, p. 210). To be capable of judgment implies to reflect upon one's own beliefs and notions, to evaluate them

critically, to provide them with reasons. Thus, to respect someone means to recognize her as *having the potential* of reasoning.

So the moral of the whole story I tried to present in this paper is that empathy and cognitive respect for the students – and *not* the reproduction and the transmission of the canons of academic disciplines – should be identified as leading norms of educative teaching. These norms are not incorporated in an anti-intellectual “child-centred” pedagogy, but rather in a Socratic teaching and learning.

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The Space of Reasons: The Role of Academic Judgement in Assessment

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The Metaphor of the Cave

The Cave in Plato's *Republic* gives a powerful, even uncompromising metaphor of life without education, without knowledge. It portrays what I call 'epistemic dependency', in which the mental horizons are limited, cramped and worthless. The contrast with the cave in Plato lies in the sunlit uplands of knowledge and philosophy. But how are we to conceive this if we are reluctant to embrace the Platonic forms? Paul Hirst, in his *Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge* gives us one celebrated version of how to conceive knowledge. But in this paper I also want to explore the idea of the 'space of reasons', elaborated by John McDowell in his *Mind and World*. If we situate knowledge in the space of reasons it becomes something that is contestable and dynamic. Moreover, our knowledge is demonstrated not only by understanding but also through *judgement*. I want to suggest that, this is what we wish to encourage our students to do: to make judgements and to provide backing for those judgements. Thus the student learns that judgements are rarely completely 'futureproof' and they are rarely definitive. When it comes to assessment we as teachers also have to learn to judge ideas and evaluate our students' judgements. This is all part of working and living in the 'space of reasons'

so that our students become partners as they learn to throw off epistemic dependency.

The broad features of Plato's account are well known but one or two details are worth noticing as well. Plato supposes that the cave dwellers are so constrained that all they see are flickers on a wall opposite, caused by the light of a fire behind them throwing shadows through a curtain. Behind the curtain is a road on which there are comings and goings of people which cannot be directly seen. All the cave dwellers can do is observe the flickers and infer from them what are the point and purpose of the people, animals and other implements. To help them in this task the cave dwellers can hear noises from the road behind which they can associate with the shady figures in front of them. Plato speculates that they may get quite good at recognising these shadows and we can even suppose that they may award each other prizes for spotting the most interesting combinations of sound and image, not to mention prizes for being able to make correct predictions (Plato, 1987: 258). He further speculates that if someone had managed to escape from the cave and spent time above ground (so that they experienced sunlight and could see things correctly) on their return they would be somewhat less interested in the prizes that the cave dwellers so eagerly valued. What is more, the returnee may not be very good at discriminating the flickers for he may have let all his old skills go rusty. He may well make a complete fool of himself and the cave dwellers "would say that his visit to the upper world had ruined his sight" (p. 259). With his new knowledge the returnee could certainly explain the causes of what the cave dwellers took to be reality but he would no longer be able to play an interpretative part in their world.

The Cave is a powerful metaphor because it is utterly uncompromising. What the returnee knows is now entirely

incommensurate with what he used to know, to the extent that what he used to know is now quite valueless. The incommensurability between the cave dwellers and those who have escaped has nothing to do with social position or social recognition. The incommensurability is not positional but epistemic. The uncompromising nature of the metaphor is driven home when one sees that the cave dwellers cannot even use the flickers on the wall as a basis for knowing because such knowing is based on error given that they can only see the flickers and not their source. The fact that they believe otherwise merely serves to emphasise the utterly hopeless position which they are in. The only way to shift their perspective is to give them entirely different experiences on which to build an interpretative and explanatory structure.

The cave dwellers are in a position of what might be called *epistemic dependency*. We do not, of course, know why they are in the cave in the first place and the power of the metaphor could be lost once questions like that are pressed. All we need to note is that this dependency is structural and intended by no-one. This dependency arises in a twofold way. First, they do not know and have no way of knowing anything about the source of the sights and sounds they experience. All the inferences they might make could be wrong and if they are not that would only be by chance. Second, they are unaware of the sunlit world and are unable to conceive of such a world. (Perhaps they accuse those few who come back down to the cave of being ‘elitists’.) Interestingly too, no-one benefits by this dependency. The only persons who might be said to ‘benefit’ are the cave dwellers themselves because, it may be supposed, their constraints are not especially irksome especially when they have the distractions of the flickers on the wall to look at. Their life could be considered as one which is comfortable and undemanding. After all, if one knows nothing else why would one ever complain? We

might even speculate (although Plato does not go this far) that an escapee, whilst glad he has escaped and fully cognisant of the fact that there is no going back, might nevertheless occasionally feel pangs of regret at leaving behind a trouble-free existence even if he were to concede, if pressed, that he had no desire at all to go back to that kind of life.

We can see straightaway how the metaphor can work for education: the journey from the Cave to the sunlit world is a journey of enlightenment, from ignorance to knowledge. One of the key points is that in the process of that journey many things have to be *unlearned*. The metaphor has relevance for education not because children and students are in the exact position of the cave dwellers but because some contemporary experiences may mirror the Cave in a way that might be found uncomfortable if dwelt upon for too long (for example, Plato's remarks about prizes they award each other and how the perceived prestige of such prizes no longer have any value for the returnee: the parallel with today would be celebrity culture). An important aim of education, then, is to liberate children from the perils of epistemic dependency or to ensure as far as possible that children can avoid this when they are adults. This requires some purposeful endeavour: mere socialisation is not enough, and neither is learning of an informal kind: after all, the dwellers in the cave are thoroughly socialised and they learn (or think they learn) all sorts of interesting facts and tips from each other. It would therefore be misguided for an educator to suppose that she could take just any of the everyday experiences of the child as a starting point in the process of learning. Judgement has to be exercised as to which experiences are of value; not to do so would be to risk trying to build learning on the basis of the experience of the flickers in the cave. Experiential learning may well provide a good starting point for building up understanding; but not every experience that a child brings

with them into school may be of value. Some of the lessons learnt outside school may have to be unlearnt (for example, placing too much value on what celebrities have to say for themselves).

The kind of assumptions behind the Cave metaphor have been investigated by a range of educational theorists in recent times. For example, Elizabeth Rata has spoken of working class children being incarcerated in a 'never ending present' as a result of the failure to equip them with the intellectual tools needed to transcend epistemic dependency. For Rata, this failure takes a particular form of a celebration of localised, social knowledge often undertaken as a way of protecting local cultures and ways of life (Rata, 2012: 106). The danger is that children and students are not exposed to deeper structures of meaning associated with subject disciplinary understanding (Rata, 113). It is not that local perspectives need to be given up (and here, the analogy with the Cave metaphor gives out) but rather they need to be supplemented by a cognitive perspective that is both explanatory (by drawing on causes the nature of which is unavailable to the local gaze) and interpretative (by drawing on perspectives that are outside the immediacy of the local). The point about introducing a knowledge perspective in this way is to acknowledge, as Suellen Shay has suggested that "knowledge matters" and that ".....a knowledge claim cannot simply be reduced to who is making that claim." (Shay, 2012: 7) The notion that we are, each of us, locked into a subjective world, exemplifies epistemic dependency because we are unable to make a judgement that can be contested in such a way that I might reasonably be expected to modify my claim. For if there is no standard that I am prepared to acknowledge other than one set by myself then my dependency ends up self-referring because there is nothing that I can recognise that will enable me to break out of that circle of dependency.

It makes no difference if this circle is inhabited by one individual or a group.

Hirst's Conception of Knowledge

The question arises as to how we are to conceptualise the knowledge and understanding that is needed to escape epistemic dependency. We are familiar with Plato's own conception of knowledge which took the form of a contemplative ideal in which forms of experience needed to be transcended through knowledge of the Forms – abstract entities whose relation to experience was problematic (Aristotle being one of Plato's early critics along these lines). The conception of knowledge needed for educational purposes must (at the very least) reflect the scientific revolution of the 17th century in Europe. The seminal essay on the relation between knowledge and education by Paul Hirst, *Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge*, written in the 1970's, is still, in my view, very instructive. The essay is in four parts. The first part treats the role of knowledge drawn from a reading of ancient philosophy which envisages the development of mind through knowledge which both furnishes a knowing of reality in terms of truth and, through this process, also plays a central role in the development of the good life. Knowledge therefore plays, on this reading, both an epistemological and an ethical role. In the second part, Hirst considers certain modern (in fact, mid-twentieth century) proponents of the idea that the purpose of education is to cultivate certain attributes of mind (effective thinking, communication, ethical judgement). He makes quick work of showing that such attributes cannot be developed without disciplinary (subject) engagement in which is embedded what counts as effective thinking, good communication, etc (Hirst, 1972: 90-95). In the fourth section, Hirst elaborates in more detail what he envisages to be a knowledge-led curriculum, of which the details need not concern us since

over the passage of time new disciplines and sub-disciplines have emerged whilst others have receded. It is the third part of the essay that is of most interest.

Hirst begins by disavowing the suggestion in the first part of the essay, namely that the relation between knowledge, mind and reality has a 'metaphysical' basis and initially goes on to suggest that the relation between mind and knowledge is rather 'logical', such that the achievement of knowledge 'necessitates' the development of mind (Hirst, 1972, p. 97). This thought, however, is not developed and Hirst then goes on to suggest that the focus of knowledge is rather "experience, structured under some conceptual scheme" (Hirst, 1972, p. 97). 'Experience' is enumerated in terms of "sense perceptions, emotions or different elements of the understanding" which it is suggested "are intelligible only by virtue of the conceptual apparatus by which they are articulated." What emerges, I suggest, is that forms of knowledge become coextensive with forms of experience. For, firstly, experiences can only be articulated through conceptual forms – they can only be recognised as experiences of such and such character because they are presented and articulated through a conceptual apparatus. Second, a system of concepts takes the form of publicly known and shared criteria for their application – it is this that allows experiences to be recognised, evaluated and compared. Third, this structuring of experience is not confined to traditional academic divisions of knowledge since "the forms of knowledge are the basic articulations whereby the *whole* of experience has become intelligible to man" (Hirst, 1972, p. 98, emphasis mine). The generation of knowledge – that conceptual apparatus through which experience becomes intelligible – pervades the whole of experience of human kind. The clear implication is that experience is constituted through the forms of knowledge: "it is by its terms that the life of man in every particular is structured and ordered.....without its structure all other

forms of consciousness, including for example, emotional experiences, or mental attitudes and beliefs would seem to be unintelligible” (ibid. p. 98). This thought is developed further under the fourth characteristic of Hirst’s conception, namely that the experiences we undergo must not be thought of as primary or foundational but are themselves in part the product of meditation, evaluation and validation of those publicly specified criteria which identify and articulate experiences themselves (97-98).

But for all that Hirst achieved one could argue that Hirst does seem to suggest that knowledge is essentially propositional, made up of inert theorems and informational sets . I don’t think for one moment that Hirst ever actually thought this but this criticism could be read into his account and often has been (see, e.g. Goodson, 2005). So we need some way of developing his ideas so that the dynamic, shifting character of knowledge is somehow built into his account. If we can do this then there is the promise of a lively, dynamic curriculum as well. Somehow, we need to think of knowledge in terms of discovery and justification, of argument and counter-argument. How should we do this ?

The Space of Reasons

In his book, *Mind and World*, the philosopher John McDowell has contrasted what he terms the ‘space of reasons’ with the ‘realm of natural law’. The realm of natural law is roughly the realm of propositional knowledge – for example, the laws of physics. The space of reasons relates to that human space in which we ask for and give reasons. We have to justify and give an account of our beliefs for whereas the realm of law is essentially causal and explanatory, the space of reasons is justificatory. Of course, if propositions in the realm of law become open to doubt then they themselves have to be justified in the space of reasons.

For MacDowell, it is important that the space of reasons has some grip on the world. Not anything can count as a reason and to think it can is to suppose our belief systems can operate independently of how the world is, ‘spinning in a void’ as he calls it. He thinks that we need to think of the world as constraining our beliefs – but it does not follow that they are outside what is *thinkable*. So ‘experience’ never comes as just raw sense data but as already conceptualised. Therefore an (conceptualised) experience does act as a constraint upon belief which *potentially* can answer to world’s being ‘thus and so’, even if in practice I treat my beliefs as provisional and open to review. Indeed, that I do treat my beliefs as open to review is just what one would expect the moment those beliefs become part of the space of reasons.

MacDowell thinks that we can become attuned to living in the space of reasons through the development of a second nature. This nature is not biological but cognitive and is exemplified by the way in which we conceptualise experience and justify our beliefs. It is a form of acculturation and in this connection he mentions the role of *Bildung* – the German concept of self-formation through learning. So education has a role to play which is not only cultural and moral but is also epistemological: through learning we conceptualise the world – and therefore experience the world differently from what we would do if we did not have this ‘second nature’. But how does knowledge relate to the space of reasons ?

What I suggest is that we can think of knowledge as existing in the space of reasons. From an educational point of view, what we want is for our students to learn to live in the space of reasons. For it is here that experience is articulated in the form of beliefs that are tested, contested and justified. ‘Experience’ does not simply consist of pre-conceptual ‘givens’; for MacDowell, experience comes as already conceptualised. If knowledge is treated as if it were solely propositional, along

the lines of the realm of law, then from the standpoint of those who are learning it can indeed come to seem as something dry and inert. But this rests on a misunderstanding of knowledge and its relation to experience whereby our knowledge is seen somehow as something separate from experience. When we take the ideas of Hirst and MacDowell together we can see that this separation is misconceived, a misconception that treats 'knowledge' as characteristic of the realm of law outside the space of reasons.

However, apart from the space of reasons/realm of law distinction there is another feature which plays an increasingly major role as McDowell's analysis has developed and which is also a crucial feature of the forms of knowledge, once viewed through the perspective of the space of reasons. This is the role played by judgement, namely the ability to constitute a state of affairs as having certain features and to evaluate their relative importance. Judgement is usually contextual so that the discrimination of a state of affairs (which, it should be noted can be mental or non mental or a combination of these) is situated within a wider understanding. When we refer to the forms of knowledge as underpinning educational purposes then the ability to make judgements occupies a central place. Learning does not merely consist of the mastery of concepts and information: what we are looking for is the ability to make judgements. Understood in this way, learning becomes an active process that engages and challenges the learner in two distinct ways.

The first links judgement and responsibility and it is described by McDowell in these terms:

“.....judging can be singled out as the paradigmatic mode of actualisation of conceptual capacities, the one in terms of which we should understand the very idea of conceptual capacities in the relevant sense. And judging,

making up our minds what to think, is something for which we are in principle responsible - something we freely do, as opposed to something that merely happens in our lives.....and this freedom, exemplified in responsible acts of judging, is essentially a matter of being answerable to criticism in the light of rationally relevant considerations. So the realm of freedom, at least the freedom of judging, can be identified with the space of reasons.” (McDowell, 2009a: 5-6; see also Backhurst, 2011: 75)

Roughly speaking there will be at least some of our beliefs for which we are not responsible in the sense that they are formed through the world’s being ‘thus and so’. But supervening on such beliefs are a complex of beliefs – judgements – for which we are responsible. Engagement with forms of knowledge is therefore a risky endeavour since we are accountable for our judgements and being able to account for them is also what one has to do if one lives within a space of reasons. The kinds of judgements one makes, as far as learning is concerned, will range from the theoretical and the interpretative down to the severely practical. For example, the deliverance of a judgement may be a decision on which form of clinical treatment is most appropriate on the one hand, to a judgement that assesses the weight of responsibility accruing to Germany in terms of the causes of the World War I. The learner, in acting and making judgements thereby becomes accountable. Viewing the forms of knowledge through the perspective of the space of reasons brings this out.

The second feature is the way in which subjective or agent-centred considerations must be laid aside. When Hirst speaks of knowledge that is subject to publicly specified criteria we can see that coming to be acquainted with such criteria helps us extrude personal considerations in reaching a judgment. That one is held personally accountable

for making judgements in accordance with impersonal criteria takes some time – many years – in learning and if the beginnings of this are started in primary schooling it certainly takes the whole experience of education at all levels before the appropriate habituation is in place. But this also implies a willingness to challenge and revise public criteria in order to provide backing for controversial judgements. A good example of this is presented in a discussion of what constitutes good professional practice in teaching where it is suggested that the well-being of the teacher herself needs to be built into an understanding of practice; this presents a challenge to the view that practice can be evaluated in terms of technical competence alone (see Higgins, 2011).

As far as our students are concerned, the implication is that they need to be capable of justifying their beliefs and making judgements, because what we really want our students to do is to get used to defending and criticising judgements. In that way they learn that knowledge doesn't come in neatly packaged bundles but is something difficult, not clear cut. Making and defending judgements helps students to learn how to become *responsible for those judgements*.

We can think of school as a place where the space of reasons prevails: even for young children. Sometimes they may come from homes where reason's aren't given; they just have to learn to obey the arbitrary will of a parent or take the consequences. But in a school they learn (assuming the school is well-ordered) that there is always a reason for what they are being asked to do. Maybe that reason can't always be given straightaway but it can always be given later. This children grow up in an environment where reasons count – not just on account of who is giving those reasons but on account of their justificatory character. It is in this way they grow up in an environment where the making of judgements,

backed by reasons, is a key feature of their learning. The idea of making judgements in schools is important because we want children and student to *own* their beliefs. In a school environment the consequences of getting it wrong are normally benign (not always so out in the world outside of school and college, unfortunately).

The making of Judgements

If we think of learning and ask what do we want students to learn, in some ways the answer could be said to be fairly straightforward:

1. Basic theorems and information plus skills
2. Understanding of associated context
3. Judgements

Context is always important because understanding context tells us the extent to which students understand basic content. Judgements are related to context and content. But there are no 'skills in judging' that can be learnt apart from context. This implies that judgements are not easily transferable from one knowledge domain to another. But we can learn what it means to be responsible for our judgements and how they might be justified: we want our students to learn to become mature in their judgements.

The sequence of: basic theorems and information, context and judgements may seem to be a fairly linear pattern but things are not always so simple. In the UK there is much talk of *threshold concepts*. These are the concepts you need to know in a particular discipline if your understanding is going to 'take off'. Lack of understanding acts as a bottle neck; but once one does understand a particular concept then whole new vistas open up. The idea is that each

discipline has its threshold concepts. For example, in my experience in teaching educational theory nearly all students have immense difficulty in seeing the intrinsic link between *freedom* and *reason*. For philosophers it is the basic Kantian insight: the powers of reason enable self-directedness in respect of appraising values and determining one's purposes that provide the basic condition for freedom. But no amount of examples and case studies is ever enough for students to learn this. You just have to wait until the penny drops. Then they start to see the whole point of the Enlightenment and they start to see why the overused concept of 'freedom' is so powerful when used properly. It is at that point they can start to make judgements about the limits of reason and the limits of freedom. And having understood the Kantian insight maybe they come to question it.

So whilst a linear progression of learning is not without its merits it doesn't tell the whole story of the difficulty and pain in getting to make judgements that are interesting. Each discipline contains a series of dynamic concepts that open up understanding in such a way that justificatory reasons become interesting and deep. And of course, judgements can be turned towards context and content in a form of *internal* critique of those concepts that have been newly acquired.

Assessing Judgements

When we come to assessment we need to be clear in our minds what we are assessing. Are we assessing knowledge of content and context? Or, are we assessing judgements and how well-founded they are? When I listen to colleagues in Higher Education in the UK I worry sometimes that their assessment strategies only cover content and context. I worry that we don't really know how to assess judgements – or to judge judgements. It as if we are reluctant ourselves to let students enter the space of reasons in a full-blown way, by

our having assessment methods that play safe, that are risk-free. The first thing we have to do is to educate students into the art of making judgements, no matter what subject they are taking. We need students to understand that we don't just want to assess their knowledge of content and context: we have to educate them to take risks, even if sometimes that doesn't pay off. Because students have to learn – must learn – what a BAD judgement is.

As I understand it, an academic judgement falls short of being a statement (or assertion) of 'how things are'. Rather, it is an *estimate* of how things are, typically prefaced by an utterance of the kind: 'I believe that x, y, z...' where the belief contains a degree of uncertainty. But there are many kinds of judgement, of which a summary is contained in table 1 below.

Table 1: Types of Judgement

PRACTICAL	DISCURSIVE
EPISTEMIC/TECHNICO	NORMATIVE

- A practical judgement issues in a decision or recommendation
- A discursive judgement aims at a certain understanding – this phenomena should be understood or interpreted in this way rather than that way. In traditional academic disciplines most judgements tend to be discursive. It provides an estimate of 'how things are' which falls short of a *statement* (or assertion) as to how things are
- A practical judgement will often include norms to the extent that they give *point* to the judgement. So a doctor may make a judgement as to when to stop chemo-therapy for a cancer patient but the care of the patient gives the

judgement its normative point even though the content of the judgement is largely epistemic/technico.

- A discursive judgement may well precede a practical judgement (for example in practitioner discipline). But in non-practitioner disciplines one usually stops at the discursive.
- Discursive/epistemic judgements emerge out of disciplinary engagement – e.g. one judges that Hegel continued to influence Marx’s thinking throughout his life and that there was there was no ‘epistemological break’ – possibly leading to the conclusion that Marx is best seen as a thinker of the late enlightenment rather than a modern social scientist.
- Often discursive judgements are strongly normative in character – e.g. the judgement regarding what kind of framework should govern the behaviour of children and students in schools.
- Practical judgements may be made without appropriate discursive investigation (and judgement) – a good example could be (in the UK) the changes in teacher education in a technico/craft direction, minimising both the influence of universities and the consideration of wider pedagogical issues.

Given this (too brief) consideration of the nature of a judgement, we may come to understand the features of what constitutes a poor judgement in our students. First, there would be a lack of secure understanding of basic content and where understanding of associated context is thin or non-existent. In addition, we would expect to see a failure to make use of, or to understand, key threshold concepts – this is particularly manifest in weak *epistemic* judgements. Further considerations relating to poor judgements include:

Failure to make explicit the basis of normative grounds of a judgement

Practical judgements and recommendations are not attended by sufficient reasoning/evidence

Discursive judgements are likely to be weak if there is only a perfunctory engagement with epistemic/technico material

Given that judgements are usually shaped by readings of context an inadequate contextual understanding is bound to issue in poor judgement

Poor judgements usually wilt under a series of counterfactuals. By contrast, good judgements can withstand counterfactuals whether in the form of argumentation or evidence.

What is a good Judgement ?

First, we would expect the student herself to understand that a judgement falls short of being propositional. It is a best estimate of 'how things are'. But it is worth remarking that we would expect this understanding to be conveyed in the substance of a particular judgement and that an extensive connotation of *phrases* of estimation ('to some extent', 'may possibly be', 'could be seen as', much use of the word 'might', etc, etc) does not, in itself, amount to good judgement but merely conveys the appearance of judging. In addition, we could say:

- There is a rigour and internal robustness to good judgements so that they are not easy to knock down. They have some resilience.
- Good judgements don't necessarily need an overly-extensive and detailed support of academic scholarly analysis. By the same token, excessive notes/references/bibliography may serve to disguise a poor judgement.

- A good judgement says something interesting. So the test is not just ‘is it true?’ but also ‘Is it true but trivial?’ Judgements that just repeat at great length what we already know are of little use, no matter how sound. (I think that we, as practitioners of education, are sometimes we are prone to this).
- Consequently, good judgements take *risks*. The judgement has something about it that makes it stand out, whether in terms of the judgement itself or the reasons or evidence used to back it up.

Conclusion

The space of reasons is the modern philosopher’s answer to the Cave. For Plato, the Cave is a bad place to be and he favoured an escape to what was essentially a contemplative style of knowledge and wisdom. But for us moderns, I think the space of reasons is the place where we need to be. For us, this space is the alternative to living in the Cave. But it would, I think, be wrong to associate the Cave simply with the world of the mundane, the everyday, the world of practical problems and relations with our friends, family and colleagues. The world of the everyday has its dignity as well and there is no reason at all why we should think of this in terms of the Cave. The space of reasons, then, goes all the way from science and philosophy down to practical matters that affect us all whoever we are. In that sense, we all of us live in the space of reasons – a space where we all learn to make responsible judgements and where we expect and welcome our own judgements to be scrutinised.

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(Endnotes)

1. Originally, Hirst identified seven forms of knowledge were mathematics, the physical sciences, the human sciences, history, religion, literature and the fine arts, and philosophy and moral knowledge. In addition there were interdisciplinary 'fields' of knowledge.

Section II

On the Crisis of the University: Between Theory and History

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This paper addresses two fundamental areas of concern in the philosophy of higher education: 1) what kinds of reflections about universities do contemporary philosophers and commentators feel particularly compelled to address? and 2) what broader notions of the university should we identify as blocking meaningful discussion and, conversely, which ideas should be seen as fruitful for exploration? The first section of the paper argues that many discussions of the university are trapped in what Jeffrey J. Williams calls “ideas discourse,” which focuses on the history of ideas about the university as opposed to the variegated history of the institution itself. As a corrective to this the second section of the paper examines various ways in which higher education has moved from a public to a private good, focusing not only on ideas, but also the historical conditions which gave rise to the post-war university and inform the challenges it faces today. The paper concludes by arguing that such historically inflected or historicizing approaches move us towards a more expansive view of the contemporary university, especially in the language used to describe its purposes and its functional relationship with the state and the private sector.

Introduction:

Jacques Derrida opens his essay “The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils,”¹ with an odd question: “How not to speak, today, of the university?” Derrida phrases his question in the negative for two reasons. First, it has become a practical impossibility “to dissociate the work we do [in universities], within one discipline or several, from a reflection on the political and institutional conditions of that work.” Quite simply, despite ongoing changes in internal organization, the university has achieved a level of institutional solidity in political and educational discourses to impose a set of reflections not only on those who work in a university setting, but on the political community at large. How could one avoid coming back to basic questions about the nature and purpose of the university, academic freedom, or the shifting borders between the university, the private sector, and the public today? The second reason for putting the question in the negative is to initiate a discussion about the university that can steer clear of “bottomless pits” and other paths blocked by conceptual unclarity or adherence to dogmatic modes of thought. There is a prescriptive intent in naming what Derrida takes to be dead ends in the ongoing practice of academic self-reflection.

Derrida is clearly invoking the Kantian tradition of critical philosophy in phrasing the question as he does, and later in the essay he attaches the university’s mission to Kant’s principle of reason, which Derrida interprets as philosophy’s right to interrogate the conceptual foundations of all areas of knowledge, and Kant’s notion of the sublime, which avoids the determinative judgments of instrumental rationality. My goal in this paper is to follow Derrida’s animating question,

1. Jacques Derrida, *Eyes of the University* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 129-155.

not his conclusion, and address two fundamental areas of concern: 1) what kinds of reflections about universities do contemporary philosophers and commentators feel particularly compelled to address? and 2) what broader notions of the university should we identify as blocking meaningful discussion and, conversely, which ideas should be seen as fruitful for exploration?

I pose the latter question in an emphatically prescriptive tone because I believe many commentators on the university, especially its most vocal apologists, suffer from a damaging form of ahistorical thinking. In the west the university is an institution that carries with it a series of influential and inspiring touchstones that provide much of our current vocabulary—Immanuel Kant’s *Conflict of the Faculties* (1798), Thomas Jefferson’s mission of civic education in his Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia (1818), John Henry Newman’s treatise on liberal education *The Idea of a University* (1854), and more recently Clark Kerr’s vision of the modern research university *The Uses of the University* (1961). These works and many more provide powerful concepts that speak to present concerns, but when the primary rhetorical move in an argument about the university finds its ballast in a past ideal, we are in what Jeffrey J. Williams calls “ideas discourse.”² The features of this, which will be elaborated in the first part of the paper, include a tendency to resort to a “weak idealism,” to confuse the history of ideas about the university for the variegated history of the institution itself, and to primarily represent the interests of humanists as opposed to politicians, administrators, or scientists and educators in professional schools. Following Williams, I will argue that ideas discourse is not how we should speak of the university today. I will

2. Jeffrey J. Williams, “History As a Challenge to the Idea of the University” *jac* 25 (2005): 55-74.

focus primarily on the American case, but implications for the global should be apparent.

However, returning to the first sense of Derrida's question, how can we avoid speaking of the university today given all the challenges and changes facing academics, students, administrators, and concerned politicians and citizens? I will argue that there are discussions that we cannot avoid, and these concern the various ways in which higher education has moved from a public to a private good in current debates. As I will argue, this is a lamentable shift, but one that must be addressed head on if philosophers of education and other commentators are going to gain traction in these debates. I will focus on the decline of funding for state university systems in the United States to demonstrate which types of approaches are the most fruitful and consequential in thinking about the university today, highlighting the historically inflected or historicizing character of such approaches. Whilst no one can reasonably expect to have the final word on an ever-changing discourse, one can at least mark out the conceptual territory in ways that take into account the historical specificity of the present moment in relation to past ideals.

Ideas Discourse:

A contemporary classic in ideas discourse is *The University in Ruins*, a powerful and very influential work published in 1996, shortly after the tragic death of its author, Bill Readings.³ Readings' core argument is that the modern research university is essentially the outgrowth of two Enlightenment projects—the self-regulating movement of Reason (expressed eloquently in Kant's *Conflict of the Faculties*) and the development of national culture (expressed

3. Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

eloquently in John Henry Newman's *The Idea of a University*, but also very much present in Wilhelm Von Humboldt's founding vision for the University of Berlin). These united in the formation of the republican subject for Humboldt, the "gentleman" for Newman, and guaranteed universities a unique role in the development and maintenance of the modern nation-state. However, Readings claims that this model is no longer operative in an age dominated by global capitalism, and the stable references to national culture or reason have succumbed to "dereferentialization," exemplified most clearly, and to many most disturbingly, in the hollow linkage of research and learning to "excellence," a watchword in the neoliberal global economy.

For Williams, Readings' book, and its enduring presence in debates about the contemporary university, is a perfect example of the shortcomings of ideas discourse. Despite being intuitively appealing and useful in thinking through the radical changes that inevitably follow from the process of globalization, *The University in Ruins* exhibits three symptomatic features of a truncated discourse.

The first is a weak idealism, "weak because informed as much by rhetoric and narrative as explicit, logical means."⁴ As Williams notes, ideas discourse tends to adopt rhetorical forms like the elegy, the jeremiad, or the declension narrative (present for example in the image of a ruin), all of which neatly proffer an absent ideal by which current failings can be registered (for Readings this ideal comes from a Kant-Newman-Humboldt triumvirate). This relates to a second problem, which is that ideas discourse tends to treat the history of the university as a history of ideas *about* the university, not a history of actual institutions. Referring to

4. Jeffrey J. Williams, "History As a Challenge to the Idea of the University" *jac* 25 (2005): 56.

the American context, Williams cites the example that in 1890 roughly 2% of the US population attended university, whereas after 1970 it became a mass institution with well over half of the population attending higher educational institutions in some form. The complexities introduced by this new scale should call for creative interpretation, not strict promotion of past ideals.

The third problem is that ideas discourse tends to primarily represent the interests of humanists (philosophers and literary scholars in particular). One glaring deficiency in Readings' book is an underdeveloped appreciation of the research function of modern universities. This has a second order consequence, namely that the interests of legislators, parents, students, or other interested parties that Clark Kerr described as the "fuzzy edge" of the university⁵ get short shrift, and humanists are often playing catch up when the effects emanating from these other groups flow into their work conditions and radically alter the structure of universities.

As a corrective to ideas discourse Williams proposes that we talk of the shifting "expectations of the university."⁶ What he means by this is that universities have always been constituted by competing and sometimes conflicting interests, and what is important in contemporary debates is to lay out how these interests are aligned with one another. He names five expectations which are most often attached to contemporary American universities, though many correlates will be seen with other national university systems.

5. Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 14.

6. Jeffrey J. Williams, "The Post-Welfare State University" *American Literary History* 18 (2006): 190-216.

The first is the university as *refugium* or *humanistic enclave*⁷, which is most identifiable with the liberal arts tradition that stretches back to medieval European universities and extends through Newman, the Oxbridge model, and many of America's small liberal arts colleges. In general this expectation holds that universities should be insulated from predetermined ends (especially economic ends) and interested in the holistic development of students. However, in the United States this was quickly joined by a second expectation, which is that universities should be engaged in the *training of citizens*. Williams notes that this represented an interest in social goods (citizenship) rather than the individual cultivation of character or genius. After the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890⁸ a third expectation was added, namely that universities would be centers of *vocational training* ("to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life" in the phrasing of the 1862 Morrill Act), which added another layer of expectations, in this case economic, to higher education.

As can already be seen, ideas discourse helps explain the horizon of expectations for contemporary American universities (in the form of key books and statutes that supply the language and guiding assumptions of commentators and actors), but so does its instantiation in various forms. This can be seen clearly in the fourth expectation that Williams identifies, which is the university as home to *disciplinary research*. This idea certainly emerges from the German model for the research university established in Berlin, which was first adopted in the United States by Daniel Coit Gilman at

7. Jeffrey J. Williams, "History As a Challenge to the Idea of the University" *jac* 25 (2005): 59.

8. The Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, named after Vermont Senator Justin Morrill, set aside land for the establishment of public universities, as well as private universities meant to serve the children of farmers and laborers.

Johns Hopkins University.⁹ However, American universities did not attain the status of pre-eminent global centers of research until after WWII, when research funding became a federal concern, and here Vannevar Bush's *Science—The Endless Frontier*¹⁰ is far more important than the early German focus on *Wissenschaft* in Berlin. Equally present in this is the rise of scholarly societies, or the academic scholarly monograph as a norm for tenure. Thus the expectation solidifies as institutional forms and practices fill out an idea like disinterested scholarly research, or knowledge production within and between the disciplines.

The fifth expectation that Williams names is what he calls “corporatization,” which has become a term of slander in ideas discourse, but nonetheless names an expectation for how universities should operate in today's climate. As R.C. Lowontin, a prominent commentator on the 20th century university wrote, “The radically expanded, higher-educational infrastructure needed after World War II could only have been provided through the socialization of education costs...to assume the cost, unbearable even to the largest individual enterprises, of creating new technologies and the trained cadre required for both the implementation of technology that already exists and for creating further innovation.”¹¹ Think of the confluence of universities and private industry in Massachusetts' Route 128 innovation

9. Humboldt's original vision for the University of Berlin fused two aspects: *Bildung* (culture, self-cultivation) and *Wissenschaft* (organized inquiry). The latter, in the form of knowledge production (i.e. original scholarship and not just commentary) through organized disciplinary research and scholarly societies, made German universities the envy of the world in the 19th century.

10. Vannevar Bush, *Science—The Endless Frontier* (1945). Available at: <https://www.nsf.gov/od/lpa/nsf50/vbush1945.htm>.

11. Cited in Jeffrey J. Williams, “History As a Challenge to the Idea of the University” *jac* 25 (2005): 64.

corridor or California's Silicon Valley, to say nothing of the training of engineers and other highly skilled workers, and you will see how higher education is expected to have certain functional relationships with today's corporate climate.

What is the upshot of viewing universities as a site where competing expectations clamor for our allegiance, all justifiably drawing from the history and certain important features of the institution itself? First, it allows for a more expansive discussion than ideas discourse, for example taking into account not just ideals of personal and civic cultivation, but also the necessary research function of the modern university and ties with industry. But secondly it allows for a certain development within our thinking itself, which has immediate resonance when we turn to one of the most contentious topics in higher education—the declining support and changing character of public universities in the US, UK, and elsewhere. What I mean by this is that the tension between expectations, which may produce new terms and areas of concern, avoids reducing discourse to the inherited stock of ideals or proffering one specific absent ideal from which universities can be judged as deficient.

As mentioned above, for Bill Readings the university has become “dereferentialized” as a result of the eclipse of the nation-state, where contributions to national culture and republican citizenship are replaced by “excellence,” or training to meet the needs of the global economy. However, as Williams reminds us, the reference to the nation (or state) has not been removed from our horizon of expectations for higher education, it rather serves “a different construal of the nation.” Many American expectations about a flourishing public university system emerged during the “Golden Age of Higher Education,” the post-war influx of

students, resources, and talent (e.g. from European émigrés), and the nation at that point can best be characterized as a welfare state.¹² As will be described in more detail below, this particular state formation allowed for the university to develop in certain ways, for example as an institution that would help move people into the middle class and diversify the power structure, staff the workforce needs of expanded white collar positions, and produce scientific innovation.¹³ However, the reduction in state support, the attempt to disentangle the five expectations that are in many cases integrally related, shows that “the problem is not that the university has lost a ground in the state; rather, it is that the state has been reconfigured from a welfare state to a neoliberal state that offers few social services.”¹⁴ Hence defenders of public universities should feel it necessary to speak to these broader changes in the state, and what they might mean for updating or abandoning expectations that are more appropriate to prior state-university-industry constellations. It is to this issue that I now turn, again focusing on the American context, but global considerations should be apparent.

12. “The features of mass attendance, of federal and foundation funding, of technological development, and of faculty provenance directly articulate with the welfare state; and, in turn, they define our horizon of expectation of the university.” Jeffrey J. Williams, “The Post-Welfare State University.” *American Literary History*, 18 (2006), 194-5.

13. It also created the conditions for registering different forms of social discontent, seen for example in the rise of the New Left and the importance of universities in the civil rights movement.

14. Jeffrey J. Williams, “History As a Challenge to the Idea of the University” *jac* 25 (2005): 71.

The Decline of the State University System in the United States:

Christopher Newfield's *Unmaking the Public University*¹⁵ provides a compelling model for what this expanded argument would include. At first blush *Unmaking the Public University* may seem guilty of certain sins that Williams attributes to ideas discourse: it is written by an English professor and focuses heavily on the culture wars, the bulk of which concerned humanities departments; like Readings it has a broad thesis of historical decline; and finally it is focused primarily on the University of California system, perhaps complicating insights that can be imputed to more global higher education concerns. However, Newfield provides a sufficiently nuanced and provocative argument to skirt these charges, and what distinguishes his approach from ideas discourse is that he gives a compelling account of how horizons of expectations are developed for universities, how those strain or clash under changed conditions, and how these changes reflect political contestation. Moreover he focuses on two tectonic changes: the steady reduction of state support for public education since the 1970s, and the ascendancy of economic as opposed to cultural concerns as the framing assumption in university organization.

The subtitle of *Unmaking the Public University* is "The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class," a period which in this case roughly spans the late 1960s to the late 2000s. For Newfield "middle class" is shorthand for "college-educated," not students' class position prior to or when exiting university. The reason for conceiving the middle class as such is to draw out the pre-history of California's current higher education

15. Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

challenges. “I use ‘middle class,’” he writes, “to refer to the numerical majority of the population whose contact with colleges was interwoven with the mainstream and politically powerful ideal that this majority was to have interesting work, economic security, and the ability to lead satisfying and insightful lives in which personal and collective social development advanced side by side.”¹⁶

The signal document in this history is the California Master Plan (*CMP*), commissioned in 1959 and drafted in 1960. In a sense the *CMP* summarizes and formalizes a prior history, the massive expansion of higher education following WWII. In 1945 Vannevar Bush’s *Science—The Endless Frontier* proposed a mechanism through which basic (as opposed to applied) scientific research would be outsourced to the universities¹⁷ and funded through granting agencies that were federally financed, but independent in terms of how funds were allocated (initially the National Research Foundation, now the National Science Foundation and National Institute of Health). Bush felt universities were “uniquely qualified” to carry out this work because “they are charged with the responsibility of conserving the knowledge accumulated by the past, imparting that knowledge to students, and contributing new knowledge of all kinds.”¹⁸ Moreover, Bush was a firm believer in what some call a “downstream model” of research, where the goal was to build the fund of basic knowledge as opposed to pursuing predetermined research ends. This required a strong commitment to academic freedom and autonomy in setting research agendas. As he wrote, in universities “scientists may work in an atmosphere

16. Newfield, 3.

17. This marks a key difference with other countries, e.g. France, where most large-scale research is conducted within the state-managed *Centres Nationales de la Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS).

18. Vannevar Bush, *Science—The Endless Frontier* (1945), 19.

which is relatively free from the adverse pressure of convention, prejudice, or commercial necessity. At their best they provide the scientific worker with a strong sense of solidarity and security, as well as a substantial degree of personal intellectual freedom.”

Thus when the *CMP* was drafted universities were not only well funded, but had developed a culture in which some of Williams’ horizon of expectations had been internalized (especially *disciplinary research*, and a mixture of vocational training and corporatization, staffing the white collar and technical jobs of the post-war economy). To this the *CMP* added further organization (separating the system into three tiers to efficiently allocate resources for different educational functions within the broader UC mission) and most radically made higher education tuition free for all California residents. Universities were now placed at the center of long term social planning, investing in what sociologists would come to call “human capital,” understood here as developing the differential talents of a population. The vast expansion of higher education that necessitated the *CMP* made sure that this included vocational, professional, and scholarly talents. It is for this reason that many refer to this era as the “Golden Age” of American higher education, as the five expectations that Williams names were relatively balanced and co-present in higher education policy.

Newfield lays out three major principles that we can extract from the *CMP* and from the general direction of public higher education in the post-war period. The first is “a broad social egalitarianism,” by which he means an understanding that goods like education should not be denied to any group. The *CMP* addressed this first by removing the barrier of cost and expanding the system. Later, protesting students further developed this egalitarianism by pointing to cultural barriers that prevented minorities, women, and other groups

from receiving the full benefits of a college or university education. This included establishing ethnic studies, women's studies, and other departments to better reflect the interests and cultural backgrounds of what was becoming a far more diverse set of students and faculty.

The second principle was “a new kind of meritocracy,” which refers to the harnessing of talent, distributed widely across the population and not just concentrated in elite high schools, for those sectors where knowledge creation and application was to become most valuable. This type of meritocracy was to be lauded “only as long as it did not simply replicate existing inequalities.”¹⁹ The third principle was that “educational needs should dictate budgets...educational development should not be determined by the long series of economic crises that the state's leaders had managed to produce.”²⁰ Related to the first principle, this further solidified a post-war understanding that education is a public good with multiple benefits to society, and thus is worthy of commensurate long-term public investment.

These principles conspired to bring into being the broad “middle class” of the book's subtitle and broadly summarized the attitudes of its members. Describing the make-up of this class, Newfield writes, “The public university was the institution where blue- and white-collar workers and managers, citizens of every racial background were being invited into a unified majority.”²¹ Crucially, this unification brought along with it a far more diverse make-up in the emerging power structure, and this disturbed “conservative elites.” In turning to the “unmaking” portion of his account, Newfield's basic argument is that the social, political,

19. Newfield, 99.

20. Newfield, 2.

21. Newfield, 4.

economic, and educational gains achieved (even if only partially) in the rise of the post-war public university—“full social inclusion, general development, cultural equality, and majoritarian economics”²²—were deliberately targeted by these elites. However, their method was counter-intuitive, as such goods produced by the university, like technological discoveries or the wider distribution of skills and knowledge, could not be challenged head on. Instead the conservative elites, whom Newfield calls “culture warriors,” proceeded to undermine the authority of those within the university by attacking the foundations upon which partisans of the public university staked their claims.

As the nation underwent a significant economic downturn hastened by deindustrialization, and national confidence was shaken following the defeat in Vietnam, culture warriors were able to reframe the ways in which the university was meant to contribute to society, claiming that economic efficiency was not compatible with the social goods just mentioned at broad public cost. Thus an extended and deliberate campaign was launched by think tanks and other organizations attacking ethnic studies programs, policies to engender better race relations, and other new features of the public university system.

For Newfield the “crisis of the university” discourse initiated by culture warriors, which in his view is the “crisis of the mass middle class,” has three aspects —cultural, economic, and political.²³ The cultural crisis concerns “the eclipsing of qualitative knowledge about culture and human relations”²⁴ by productive, quantitative knowledge. “The humanities,” Newfield continues, “were often cast as the source of non-

22. Newfield, 13.

23. For a helpful table see Newfield, 23.

24. Newfield, 24.

knowledge or even a kind of *antiknowledge*, one that led to social division and economic costs.”²⁵ Whether the target was post-modern philosophical discourse, multiculturalism, or literary criticism, culture warriors made the case that academics propagated a form of obscurantism whose use was not readily apparent to wide swaths of society, and thus could not justify the kind of public investments that we saw in the immediate post-war period, as it was not building the basic fund of knowledge, developing human capital, nor fostering a collective sense of social belonging by contributing to the heritage of western civilization. Such criticisms were bolstered by calls for greater efficiency in resource allocation, which was on the mind of administrators as state funding for public universities was steadily cut.

The political crisis concerned the gradual undoing of what the university, in conjunction with the civil rights movement, had tirelessly attempted to build—namely a “multiracial mass democracy.” A key achievement of the resurgent conservative elite was delinking multiracial democracy from university study by affirming diversity as a good, but also affirming the right of universities to retain their decision-making authority absent evidence of ongoing racial discrimination. This meant that aggressive forms of affirmative action, for example attempting to alter the demographic base of professions such as law or medicine, were supererogatory when it came to universities making a contribution to advancing multiracial mass democracy. Moreover, culture warriors were successful in appealing to the middle class belief in meritocracy, altering its meaning to now argue that meritocracy is incompatible with affirmative action.

Finally, the economic crisis refers simply to the “decline of American economic preeminence on which its golden-

25. Newfield, 25.

age affluence hinged.”²⁶ As the country’s economic fortunes declined for the majority of middle and working class Americans, “economic and management discourse overwhelmed discussion of broader social and cultural matters.”²⁷ In universities this overturned the majoritarian focus of models like the *CMP* and led to the competition for scarcer resources amongst the various communities within the university, with a growing intolerance for non-economic rationales. Newfield sums up the confluence of these three crises in the following way: “The university-focused culture wars blocked genuine solutions to the first two challenges of multiracial democratic politics and majoritarian economics by undermining the requisite cultural capabilities on which these solutions hinged.”²⁸ The cumulative effect is something that is immediately apparent in current “crisis of the university” discourse: universities are now reproducing inequality and conserving the power structure as opposed to altering it; the cold market logic of efficiency and cost reductions continues to dominate public attention; and the failed integration of minorities into the power structure, via the public university, has factored into the perilous state of race relations in the United States in 2016.²⁹

My purpose in unpacking Newfield’s argument and the historical background that it assumes is to show how changes in the state, the economy, the law, and the cultural environment in which universities operate are crucial to understanding what kinds of theories are likely to meet challenges facing universities today. A persistent trope in Newfield’s book is that during the “Golden Age of Higher

26. Newfield, 24.

27. Newfield, 24.

28. Newfield, 26.

29. Andrew Delbanco, “Our Universities: The Outrageous Reality,” *The New York Review of Books*, July 9, 2015.

Education” competing expectations—for individual fulfillment, civic and economic benefit, growth within the disciplines—were co-present and became expressed in the attitudes of the emerging “middle class.” In order to drive a wedge between this middle class and the university cultural warriors had to chip away at several features of post-war society, or the welfare state in relation to which the post-war university developed. We can now see that this project was wildly successful. Thus Newfield goes into great detail exploring changes in management discourse, which after 1970 no longer reflected the post-war social compact between capital and labor, but now redefined workers as individual “knowledge-workers” who existed within flexible employment schemes, subject to constant reorganization to maximize efficiency. These changes are originating off-campus, but in finding a home in our discourse clearly mark out a way not to speak about the university today.

Conclusion:

To briefly summarize, what I hope to have achieved in synthesizing the arguments of Williams and Newfield is to draw attention to the form in which debates about the university unfold. Many current treatments of the university will claim that it is in “crisis,” and then go on to explain which expectation (to borrow Williams’ term) is being betrayed. As anthropologist Janet Roitman points out, this approach, which she calls a narrative of “failure,” brings with it certain conventions.³⁰ The crisis label generates a set of questions—e.g. what went wrong?—by imposing a narrative context on historical events. Such a narrative of ethical or epistemological failure produces an absent ideal from which this very judgment of failure can be made, and in the case of universities this often comes from ideas discourse.

30. Janet Roitman, *Anti-Crisis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

By flagging the limitations of ideas discourse, and unpacking the historical conditions under which ideas are generated (I focused on those emerging out of the “Golden Age” of American higher education), I hope to have marked out ways *not* to speak of the university today. Specifically, when lamenting the reduction in state funding for public universities, it is unhelpful to judge the current state formation in terms of the welfare state, in hopes of short-circuiting the intervening history and returning to the kinds of policies, and the goods they produced, that Newfield describes in the immediate post-war period. The intervening history matters tremendously, and it should indicate that those interested in current challenges faced by the university should engage changes in the nature of the state and the economy, and not simply condemn these current policies and insist on one of two aspects of ideas discourse.³¹

This may seem like a facile remark, but the subtext of my argument is that contemporary renderings of the crisis and the questions and responses they generate are not sufficiently attentive to transformations at the level of the state and the economy, seen for example in the rise of New Public Management in the UK, which disciplines knowledge production through different schemas of valuation. Changes such as these have caused a great deal of discomfort and discord within the university for reasons that I share and hope to have conveyed, but they also reveal something important about the ways in which the public good is conceived today, when the power of the state is so

31. A very prominent example of this can be seen in Martha Nussbaum’s *Not For Profit*, which condemns economized and instrumental approaches to education and calls for a return to “education for democracy,” which is grounded in the humanities. This binary—education for profit vs. education for democracy—may be intuitively appealing, but does not yield a very expansive set questions that could shed light on the contemporary crisis of the university.

thoroughly reduced and the boundaries of communities are harder to locate.

As should be gleaned from the above discussion, it would be misguided for me to try to offer a definitive answer to Derrida's opening question of "how not to speak, today, of the university?" However, a few summary comments on two positive directions are in order. The first, seen in the work of several philosophers of education³² and subtending Newfield and Williams' approach, is a pressing need to critically reflect on the importance of the language used to describe both our own practice and larger goals and aspirations. If we accept Derrida's claim that there is an imperative to speak about the modern university, we should also take seriously his call to avoid dogmatic modes of expression, especially the same tired invocations of the intrinsic dignity of humanistic study. I take this critical attentiveness to language to be a guiding thread through the seemingly disparate landscape of reflections on the university that I have laid out above.

The second general remark concerns the setting of ends for what occurs in universities. The precarious condition of the humanities in universities could initiate interesting questions about the "public" status of universities, the relationship between philosophers of education and the multiple audiences that they are positioned to reach, and the disciplinary imperatives that they feel compelled to uphold. However, for such questions to find a solid footing they must be far more attentive to issues of political contestation and history in order to avoid a weak idealism.

32. Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons, "The Governmentalization of Learning and the Assemblage of a Learning Apparatus," *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 58, no. 4 (2008), 391-415.

Learning vs. Education: On the Conceptual Difference between Instrumental and Ethical Understandings of the Aims of Schooling

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The current global trend of “learnification” allows the thematising of educational aims in functionalist and instrumentalist terms only. This trend makes ultimately impossible to grasp the ethical character of the aims and the process of education. In order to overcome that deficit we should elaborate on a conceptual alternative to the category of “learning” as this category has been constructed by the so called “learning sciences” during the last decades.

My claim in this paper is that the Hegelian concept of *Bildung* could serve as such a conceptual alternative. Unlike learning, education in the sense of *Bildung* is a normative concept – and this in a twofold sense. First, *Bildung* provides an evaluative perspective on forms and practices of learning (and teaching) according to the criteria, to which extent these forms and practices address the core self-components of the human individual and serve to the rational articulation and modification of these self-components. Second, *Bildung* designates a form of human development, which is itself ethically founded, for this form is carried out by the mediation of individual’s values and ideals by universal, trans-individual ethical concepts. In order the individual

to become capable of this mediation, a sense for conceptual objectivity must be cultivated at her – and this is the main function of teaching academic subjects.

1. “Learnification” and its educational Shortcomings

Nowadays we are witnessing a global trend of analyzing and describing of educational issues exclusively in the terminology of the so called “learning sciences” – a trend for which Gerd Biesta recently invented the term “learnification”. “Learnification” manifests itself in the spelling out of all educational phenomena in the language of learning, where “learning” denotes a process “[t]hat is, itself, empty with regard to content and direction” (Biesta 2012, p. 38).

In fact, according to the predominant notion of learning in the new “learning science”¹, learning is to be understood simply as development of skills and change of habits and dispositions. Or, as a definition of learning in a standard “Introduction of Theories of Learning” reads, “[l]earning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour that results from experience and cannot be attributed to temporary body states such as those induced by illness, fatigue, or drugs” (Hergenhann and Olson 2005, p. 8). According to this understanding of learning, its concept has nothing to say about the content, the quality and the direction of the behavioural change in question (besides that it should not be induced by illness, fatigue, or drugs), as well as about the experiences or the activities which are likely to make it possible.

1. In a recent report the OECD proclaims with a great emphasis the „birth of a learning science” that produces research at the intersection between cognitive neuroscience and learning studies. Without any hesitation the authors of that report name their new “learning science” also “educational neuroscience” thus neglecting any possible differences between the terms “learning” and “education” (see OECD 2007, pp. 13-18). For a good critique on the OECD-report see Casale at al 2010, pp. 50-54.

So understood, the concept of learning exclusively focuses on the mechanisms and the conditions of the process of acquiring of knowledge and of development of skills, thus neglecting the question of the aims of that process. Hence, when we for example ask the question whether the learned knowledge and skills serve to the flourishing of the freedom and autonomy of the individual, or rather to her functioning as an effective working force for the sake of the reproduction of the economy and of the increase of its competitiveness; whether the learning activities of the individual should serve to the development of her personality, selfhood and moral character, or rather to her assimilation into an existing economic and political order, then we are well beyond the scope of the “learning science”. That is why such normative questions have been completely dismissed by the recent trend of “learnification” of educational policy and of pedagogy. So some EU-papers on educational policy that emphasize the slogans of “learning society” declare debates over principles (and norms) of education as having come to an end, that is, as being pointless. Those papers define “education” qua learning simply as “training for employment”, to which other “things” like “general knowledge”, or “personal development” are subsumed (see European Commission 1995, p. 23; p.3f.; see also Standish 2006, p. 221).

Thus, if we are to address the normative-ethical questions about the aims of schooling we should be searching for a conceptual alternative of “learning”. My suggestion in this paper is that the Hegelian concept of *Bildung* could serve as such an alternative. As I will argue in the following sections, this concept first opens up a selective and evaluative perspective on learning and on teaching activities. Not all kinds and forms of informal and formal learning as well as of teaching should be called “educative”, but only those of them which lead (or at least contribute) to the *Bildung* of

the person. Second, education in the sense of *Bildung* itself should be understood as an ethical enterprise. The process of developing an autonomous self, that is, of self-consciousness as the fundament of human mind, requires individual's elaborating on moral norms and ethically relevant beliefs and values, and this process takes place within an ethical form of life: within a form, which G. W. Hegel calls *Sittlichkeit*.

2. The Concept of Education and its evaluative Perspective on Learning and Teaching

One of the most important and valuable parts of Hegel's legacy is his claim that the development of human mind should be understood in first place as development of individual's self-consciousness. According to Hegel, self-consciousness is the capacity to understand and treat one's own relations to the things in the world as well as to other persons, and to social institutions, as activities of one's own self, that is, as expressions of one's own freedom. One's own self-treating as a free human being, as a subject, objectivates itself in the judgements of the individual, that is, in her *understanding* of the meanings of the things, of other people's actions and of social institutions, ultimately in her linking of these things, other people's actions and institutions to her own self, and in her expressing her own self in those things, (inter-) actions and institutions.

Now, one way to define learning is to describe it as process of acquiring of new references to entities in the world (see Marotzki 1990, p. 41; pp. 52-54). This process does not necessarily entail the development of self-consciousness in the Hegelian sense of that term. For this development presupposes the individual linking those references to one's own self and the individual experiencing his understanding of the meanings of these entities as expression of his selfhood, ultimately of his freedom. Exactly this is the point of Hegel's

sometimes quite obscure considerations about the necessary self-objectivation of self-consciousness into the “objective spirit”, that is, into conceptual, intelligible contents.²

There are for sure many forms of learning, at which the individual does not recognize and objectivate herself in the learned “stuff”, and at which she even does not link at all the learning activities to her own self. So for example my students frequently complain that after the implementation of the so called “Bologna-Reform” in the German academia a couple of years ago, they suffer under a particular disease, which they call “bulimia of learning”. By this these students of mine mean that they learn large bodies of knowledge for the only purpose to pass through the exams which in most cases take the form of multiple-choice-tests. After passing the exams the learned contents are immediately “thrown away” from the students without touching upon their selves, without letting any traces in their personalities, and without having any impact on their further activities and life projects.

Of course, there is a plenty of more sustainable and intelligent forms of learning than the ones that characterize

2. The chapter on “Self-Consciousness” in the “Phenomenology of Spirit” (see Hegel 2010/ 1807, pp. 134-174), the paragraphs 5 to 7 of the “Groundwork of Philosophy of Right” (see Hegel 1986/1821, pp. 49-57), as well as the Introduction of the “Philosophy of Right: Lectures from 1821/22” (see Hegel 2005/ 1822, pp. 39-57) should be seen as being probably the most instructive parts of Hegel’s work with regard to his conception of self-consciousness. Consider also the following statement by Robert Pippin about self-consciousness and freedom: “[f]or Hegel freedom consists in being in a certain reflective and deliberative relation to oneself (which he describes as being able to give my inclinations and incentives a “rational form”), which itself is possible, so it is argued, only if one is also already in certain (ultimately institutional, norm-governed) relations to others, if one is participant in certain practices” (Pippin 2008, p. 4).

the phenomenon of “learning bulimia”. In many cases the knowledge that one acquires by her learning activities remains for a long time in the mind of the learner and has significant impact on her behaviour and on her skills to master everyday situations and issues in her life. This is especially true when good teachers or trainers manage to establish learning-for-life arrangements, within which the learners could recognize the learned stuff as being “useful” for their life-goals. However, in many cases even those more sustainable forms of learning cannot be seen as in themselves inherently linked to the selves of the learners either. So in my young years I had to learn some card games and I am still able to recognize the cards and even to play card games if I am required to do so. But nevertheless playing cards always was for me a boring and stupid activity, and for me it was never a form of self-expression, or of self-development.

Consider also the following example which regards acquiring of more useful skills than the ones that are involved in playing card games: Like many other people that live in the modern Western world I used to learn how to complete my annual tax-declaration according to complex tax-regulations which I had first to comprehend. Since I have had the chance to be trained in that “discipline” by good formal and informal tax-consultants, I obviously learned successfully to master that issue – after all, I never have had any problems with tax-authorities so far. Yet completing the annual tax-declaration on the base of internalised information about the current tax-regulations is for me nothing but a useful technique, or an instrumental skill. By performing this activity I am not articulating neither my needs, nor my ideals or values. In other words, this activity has nothing to do with my self-identity; it does not have any intrinsic value for me.

However, this example would be a very different one, if it

would be not about me, but about a person who has a passion for the calculations which the completion of a tax-declaration involves. In this case the person in question would treat the completing of her tax-declaration not as an instrumental activity but as a form of self-realization. By learning to perform this activity she would probably not only *satisfy* her passion for “playing with numbers” in accordance with given juristic rules. Rather, it is likely that she would *articulate* this passion by this learning and she would also endeavour the distinctive needs her passion for completing tax-declarations consists of. Furthermore, particular ideals of that person would be brought into being by the process of learning to master tax-declarations. This could be for instance ideal to organize the human life alongside the principles and procedures of financial accounting and to pursue one’s own self-realization by becoming fluent in the mastering of these principles and procedures.

If all of that happens, the process of *learning* to perform the activity in question turns into a process of *education*. With regard to Hegel we can assert that a process of education occurs when one’s own values, needs and ideals become a rational form, that is, when they get transformed to rational, conceptual contents of one’s own self-consciousness (see Hegel 2005/ 1822, p. 180f.). In other words, education is a process which is distinguished by two essential features: (1) Linking of acquired references to and knowledge about matters in the world to the entities that builds up the self or the kernel of a person: her values, needs and ideals, and (2) Rational differentiation, articulation and justification of these self-building values, needs and ideals of the person.

Now, the crucial question here is in what exactly rational differentiation, articulation and justification of self-building phenomena consists. What does it mean to bring one’s own

values, needs and ideals into a rational form?

3. Education as Ethical Venture

According to Hegel, a process of education takes place, only if self-building components like values, needs, ideals are going to reach a status of “universality” (“Allgemeinheit”), that is, a status of concepts (see Hegel 2005/ 1821, pp. 180f.). Since these self-building components are obviously ethical entities, for they are conducting norms of individual’s life, education is not an ethically neutral activity, as learning is, insofar as learning is in itself indifferent to those entities.³ Rather, education is a process of forming and subsequent conceptual trans-forming of the components of the self.

It is rather a trivial statement that the core, or the “basic” self of every individual comes into being initially by a process of internalization of the norms and role-expectations of the community in which she was born. According to Hegel’s terminology, these communal norms and role-patterns appears at that early stage of the self-development as elements of a “unmediated natural Spirit” (“unmittelbar natürlicher Geist”) (Hegel 2005/ 1821, p. 159); a “Spirit” which exists not only in the institution of family, but also in the vital customs and rites of a people’s community (“Volk”) (Ibid, p. 155). Those communal, unmediated, quasi-natural customs and rites are, according to Hegel, like “mother milk” for the mind

3. This does not preclude that there might be learning about ethical issues. So for example pupils and students frequently are supposed to learn about the contents and the historical genesis of moral values in different ages and in different societies. But insofar as this learning happens only from an objectivist, third-person-perspective without regarding and transforming the values and the worldviews of the students themselves, this learning does not reach the threshold of education, and it is not an ethical enterprise in itself, that is, an activity of articulation, differentiation and justification of students’ own notions about good and just life.

of the individual (Ibid, p. 157). That is to say that the child first internalizes in his behaviour the common norms and rules of his social environment instinctively, that is, without yet making of them contents of his self-consciousness, without reflecting on them.

This pre-reflexive initiation in a communal form of life is a prerequisite for the process of education, but it is *not* already a part of it. For the process of education begins at the moment, at which the communal customs and rites get into the self-consciousness of the individual, or – to put it in Hegel’s terms – at the moment in which they get mediated (“vermittelt”) by her self-consciousness.

One way to describe this relation between “enculturation” and self-consciousness is to spell it out in terms of individual transcending the initially internalized by her role-expectations towards her that are derived from the given communal customs and rites, that is, in terms of taking distance to that dimension of her self that G. H. Mead calls “Me” by building up a complementary and yet opposite self-dimension that Mead describes as “I” (Mead 1959, p. 174f.). However, the Hegelian story of self-development is a slightly different one, for it is not a story about “Me” being transcended by “I”, nor it is story about a “balance” between “Me” and “I”. Rather, it is a story about a *mediation* of “Me” by “I” – and also about a simultaneous mediation of “I” by “Me”. How this mutual mediation should be understood?

Well, it would be probably easier, if we first try to comprehend the mediation of “I” by “Me”. We can imagine the “I” as a kind of “pure” subjectivity, or “pure” will to act in certain ways that are distinctively “my own” ways to act. However, this kind of “pure” subjectivity is nothing but fiction, for every will, every act of decision needs some “stuff”, some objects through which the will has to work, and which function as

the other of the subjectivity. Communal, trans-personal and pre-reflexive customs and rites are exactly this “other” of the “I” without which the “I” is not possible.

And in which sense the “Me” is mediated by the “I”? The first and most obvious answer to that question is, that the components of “Me”, that is, the internalized communal customs and habits, become a new, subjective being by the medium of self-consciousness; that they now exist within a relation to the self-consciousness. That implies that these customs and habits become now a *meaning* for the self-consciousness; a meaning that is liable to exploration and problematization. The first step to explore the meaning of collective norms for action is obviously to ask the question of “reason why” with regard to these norms. We are normally asking that question when we are deliberating on the genesis of certain communal norms and on their function for the particular community, within which they exist. However, a further step is required in order these norms to get mediated through the self-consciousness. This is the step at which the self explores the significance of them not only for the community, but also for herself, hereby interpreting them from her individual perspective. At that step I am asking myself what do these norms *mean* for *me*; whether or not I shall agree to them, or to which extent and in which sense I shall accept them. A further step in thus sketched mediation process is to justify my interpretation of and my attitude towards the communal norms and role-patterns which I was supposed to internalize in the course of my upbringing and socialization.

At least at that stage of justification the individual necessarily gets involved in the practice of public reasoning. For justification means to provide one’s own interpretations and evaluations of the norms in question with arguments,

and that requires one to defend these interpretations and evaluations against real and virtual critics, and to take into consideration real and possible counter-arguments against one's own arguments. To use a phrase that has been made prominent by Robert Brandom, to justify one's own beliefs requires one to play the discursive game of giving and asking for reasons (Brandom 1994, pp. 183, 188, 496-497).

According to Brandom, who is strongly relying on Hegel in his account on the development of the ability of conceptual (self-) articulation, justifying a belief discursively and articulating it conceptually is one and the same thing. This follows from Brandom's approach of inferential semantics, according to which to grasp a concept means to use it as consequence of other concepts and as premise for propositional claims, that is, to use it in the game of public reasoning. As Jan Derry puts it, "[i]nferentialism demonstrates that the grasping of a concept is an activity that involves commitment to the inferences implicit in its use in a social practice of giving and asking for reasons" (Derry 2013, p. 229).

To sum up: According to Hegel, the development of the human individual, of her consciousness and self-consciousness, is thinkable only within a social and ethical form of life, which he calls "Sittlichkeit". There are two different levels of the social dimension of "Sittlichkeit" – first, this is the stage of a group of people sharing common beliefs constituted by common traditions, and the second stage is the one of public deliberations on these beliefs, that is, of cooperative conceptualisations of them.

The process of critical transforming of one's initially pre-reflexively internalized beliefs about good and right life into concepts, that is, the process of bringing those beliefs into a rational form, into a form of assertions that can claim universal validity – a transforming that presupposes one's

participation at the social practice of inferential reasoning – is precisely what Hegel calls *Bildung*.

Now, if we try to link this Hegelian account of education to the domain of schooling, we realize that the ethical character of education, in the sense of *Bildung*, is not so much about contents of school curricula, but rather about the perspective, from which these contents are to be approached. Drawing on the paradigmatic ethical theory of Bernard Williams, which could be seen as Neo-Hegelian in its essence ⁴, we can assert that having an ethical relation to the world means to see it from the standpoint of the question “How one should live?” (Williams 2011, pp. 20-24; 146-172). In other words, the ethical relation to the world is not a relation of a neutral observation of facts; it is not a relation to bodies of information from a third-person-standpoint, but it is a relation from a generalized first-person-standpoint. It is not a relation of accumulating impersonal bodies of information, but of searching for orientation by (growing) individuals who deliberate with their co-fellows on what are right courses of action (and why) in life-situations that require weighing up of and choice between different options.

These deliberations could be linked not only to those parts

4. The Hegelian character of Williams’ ethical theory comes into being clearly in his emphasis on Hegel’s critics on the Kantian reduction of ethics to formal moral obligations. According to Williams, “[H]egel admirably criticized the “abstract” Kantian morality and contrasted it with the notion of *Sittlichkeit*, a concretely determined ethical existence that was expressed in the local folkways, a form of life that made particular sense to the people living in it” (Williams 2011, p. 115). Furthermore, Williams agree with Hegel, that one should ask the question how this “[c]oncretely experienced form of life can be extended, rather considering how a universal program is to be applied” (Ibid, p. 116). The question, how the individual can extend, modify, examine the concretely experienced ethical form of life, in which he has got socialized, is identical with the question of how is *Bildung* possible.

of school curricula, which are usually ascribed to the Liberal Arts (Philosophy, Literature, History, Religion etc.), but also to scientific subjects. Key features of sciences like logical correctness and precision as well as a sense for proportions can also be seen as ethical values and can be linked to ethical intuitions about how one should live. Interpreted as competences, these features are crucial for one's participation in ethical deliberations.

In other words, for schooling to be a *Bildung*-supportive activity it is not necessarily for schooling to be focused on moral issues; rather, broader scientific and art contents should be presented in a way at schools, in which these contents could be brought in touch with the ethical intuitions of the students, and in which they could facilitate the conceptual articulation of those intuitions. This articulation requires an extension of the “local folkways” (Williams 2011, p. 115), within which student's ethical intuitions initially arise, towards experiences of the entire humankind that are accumulated in sciences and arts. So for example, school teaching on the issue of justice could be seen only than as a *Bildung*-supportive one, when the intuitions of the students about justice and injustice are not only brought into expression in the classroom, but when these intuitions are, in addition, mediated by theories of justice that claims objective, that is, trans-personal and trans-contextual validity.⁵ This mediation is only possible, if an understanding of theoretical claims as well as of the mechanisms and standards of their inductive and/ or deductive justifications has been cultivated

5. This implies that neither a “canon-orientated” teacher who is focused exclusively at academic theories of justice, this neglecting the everyday intuitions and experiences of the students about and with justice and injustice, nor a “child-centered” teacher who is caring only about these experiences and intuitions, thus neglecting academic theories of justice, are capable of performing a *Bildung*-supportive teaching on the topic of justice.

at the students – and this is a task, which obviously all school subjects share.

Now, it is a well-known assertion that formal education should bridge between personal experiences and objective, trans-personal knowledge that has been systematically accumulated over many generations in the various academic disciplines. So, for example, Dewey claims in his famous essay “The Child and the Curriculum” that education requires establishing a link between the personal experience of the child and the universal experience of the human race. And the later experience is organized, systematized and reflectively formulated in academic subjects which have been normally taught at schools (see Dewey 1964, p. 344-345). According to Dewey these academic disciplines should be “psychologized”, that is, they should be de-canonized in re-constructed in the way that these disciplines can be made compatible with the personal experiences of the students in order to serve as extensions, systematizations and universalizations of those experiences (see *Ibid*, p. 351).

However, the Hegelian understanding of *Bildung* differs significantly from the pragmatist notion of education. According to that understanding education via *Bildung* is not simply about extension and universalization of personal experiences, but about the universalization of *ethically* relevant experiences, that is, about the conceptual articulation and modification of ethical beliefs that are embodied in those experiences. Thus, the Archimedean point of every process of education is the continuum of *lived* beliefs of the students about how one should conduct his life. However, the rational articulation and modification of ethical beliefs is only possible, if a sense for objectivity of conceptual concepts, of ideas, is growing at the students. Paradoxically, the individual-centred process of education,

understood as rational articulation and modification of normative, evaluative self-constituting entities like values and ideals, presupposes individual's endorsing of a doctrine of conceptual realism, which is inherent to the common academic disciplines, for these disciplines make sense only if their concepts can claim objective, trans-individual validity. To speak with R.S. Peters, the process of education necessarily entails a moment of turning the eyes outwards to what is essentially independent of persons (Peters 1966, p. 54). But unlike Peters, the (Neo-) Hegelian philosopher of education shall insist that this "turning the eyes outwards" to objective meanings is not for the sake of preservation, continuation and transmission of a cultural "heritage", or of public traditions (see Ibid, p. 54-56). Rather, it is for the sake of the development of a rational self-autonomy of the students by the conceptual articulation and modification of their ethical beliefs, that is, of their values and ideals through their participation in discursive forms of *Sittlichkeit*.

Conclusion

The development of the human mind should be understood – from a Hegelian perspective – as a process of progressive mediation of individual's needs, values and ideals by objective ethical concepts that entail claims (and their subsequent justifications) about how one should live. This process of *growing of rational self-autonomy* understood as simultaneous developments of the ability of self-articulation and of mastering of objective concepts and their inferences, including their arguments, is a process of education in the sense of *Bildung* – and not one of learning. Unlike learning, *Bildung* is a normative concept – and this in a twofold sense. First, *Bildung* provides an evaluative perspective on forms and practices of learning (and teaching) according to the criteria, to which extent these forms and practices address the core self-features of the human individual and serve to the

rational articulation and modification of these self-features. Second, *Bildung* designates a form of human development, which is itself ethically founded, for this form of human development is carried out by the mediation of individual's values and ideals by universal, trans-individual ethical concepts. In order to be capable to provide this mediation a sense for conceptual objectivity must be cultivated at the individual – and this is the main function of teaching academic subjects.

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Epistemology on the Firing-Line

A Guide to Popular Delusions, Myths, and Misapprehensions

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*It is a tale told by an idiot
Full of sound and fury. Signifying nothing.
Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act 5*

Introduction

At the beginning of my academic career, many decades ago, I found it futile to describe myself as an epistemologist when at conferences of educational researchers and other education professionals. No one seemed to understand, and certainly no one seemed to care. My strange little secret – that I was interested in the “theory of knowledge”, in issues concerning the grounds upon which we can claim to know something – could only be spoken about in the narrow confines of meetings of that small and exclusive breed – philosophers of education.

Nowadays much has changed. Epistemology is discussed (by non-philosophers, it is important to note) at a wide range of education conferences, and in a variety of education journals – judging by the frequency with which the term is used, epistemology is a topic that many educational researchers, policy people, trainers of teachers and designers of curriculum, have come to care about very deeply. What a

pity they still seem not to understand! Many of these recent discussions certainly are full of sound and fury, but signify little or nothing (nothing, that is, of epistemological interest). What a pity it is, too, that those philosophers of education who do understand something about epistemology, have by and large refused to be drawn into these fiery discussions.

In this paper I plan to describe (and illustrate) the most common misunderstandings about epistemology, and to discuss the criticisms of mainstream epistemology raised by those academics who believe that it is a tool used for the domination of minority groups. I will also point to, but not discuss, important epistemological issues in educational research and the field of policy. But in case you do not find the claim I made above to be credible – that a fairly technical branch of philosophy has generated a great deal of interest plus a great deal of heat and misunderstanding amongst non-philosophers working in the field of education – perhaps it is wise to start with a brief example to illustrate what I was referring to.

A preliminary example

About a decade ago the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) had a number of keynote lectures that each focused upon what was purported to be the epistemology of a particular ethnic/racial minority group; I attended as many of these events as I could manage, and found in each case that there was a large and enthusiastic audience. Most memorable of these was the lecture on “Native American epistemology” given by a prominent female researcher of Native American ancestry to a crowded hall with about two hundred academics and teachers apparently of the same ethnicity as the speaker making up the audience. The speaker began by saying that she had been invited to talk about Native American epistemology, but did not understand

what this meant. Loud applause and cheering from the audience! So, the speaker announced, “yesterday I looked up ‘epistemology’ in the dictionary.” (Note the discourtesy here – ‘yesterday’!) After a dramatic pause, she continued: “I still did not understand what it meant!” – a remark that was greeted by even louder applause, cheering and whistling! She then embarked on a talk, interesting enough, about Native American discourse and interaction practices, and how these needed to be recognized in Native American schooling – certainly an important topic but one that supported her claim not to have understood what epistemology is about!

I found all of this to be deeply disturbing: First and foremost, the organizers of the conference evidently thought it was beyond doubt that the different ethnic/cultural groups had their own epistemologies – a supposition I judged to be confronted by great difficulties; but this basic matter was not put forward for discussion anywhere at the conference. But turning to this specific session, why did the speaker accept the invitation to participate if she did not understand the topic? Why would hundreds turn up to hear a lecture advertised to be on a topic (epistemology) they evidently had such contempt for? Despite what the dictionary said about epistemology being the theory of the grounds of our knowledge-claims, did the lecturer really believe that the term referred to such things as social interaction patterns and learning styles? Did the lecturer and audience members believe that it was not worthwhile to discuss real epistemological issues because there was nothing of value in this subject? And finally, why did so many people bother to use the word at all, if they believed that it did not refer to anything of importance?

It is time to leave this preliminary example, and to turn to a more systematic discussion of the issues. I shall proceed by way of a series of points, and also shall introduce several vitally important distinctions.

Points about epistemology, and some important misconceptions

1. As a first step it is necessary to recognize that there is a distinction between (a) discovering or establishing that there is a new item that needs to be added to one or other of the existing publicly accepted bodies of knowledge that deal with such things as biology, physics, economics, the field of infant health, motor mechanics, history of recent US elections, the field of human nutrition, and hundreds more; and (b) an individual (perhaps a student, or a young child, or an adult learner) personally learning or mastering an item that is new to that individual. The first of these, (a), is of professional interest to epistemologists, but the second is not – rather, it is of great relevance to researchers in the field of learning theory, and also to teachers, curriculum developers, and educational psychologists; effective instruction must take into account that some learners do better if concrete examples are presented at the outset, while others can master material that is presented in an abstract way, while for yet others learning follows from their being involved in some real world activity or problem-solving. It is feasible that there are important group or socio-cultural differences here; girls may have different learning styles from boys, and Native Americans might profit from a different style of teaching than do members of the White majority population. But again, such phenomena are of great educational importance, but they are not what the discipline of epistemology concerns itself with!

A book-length example of this mistake about the nature of epistemology is *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky et al., 1986/1997). The introduction raises the expectation that the work will focus on central epistemological issues, for it lists “such difficult and profound questions” as: What is truth?

What is authority? What counts as evidence? How do I know what I know? (p.3) However the book does not deliver on this promise, but instead discusses the use of intuition, women's valuing of subjectivity and the role that childbirth plays in the development of this trait, and the rejection by women (by and large) of unduly abstract, logical, impersonal modes of thought. The book certainly throws light on "women's ways of knowing", and is an achievement in the field of social psychology; it is noteworthy that the tools used to gain evidence for the book all come from this discipline, and this is the authors' professional affiliation. The Stanford philosopher of science, Helen Longino, who is also an important figure in contemporary feminist philosophy, thought well of this book by Belenky et al., but concluded her review of it by stating: "But it is not yet epistemology."¹

2. There is nothing particularly mysterious about the nature of epistemology; the dictionary account is straightforward: Epistemology is that branch of philosophy that deals with *theory of knowledge*; its focus is upon the philosophical and logical issues involved in investigating the core questions: What features must an item possess to be counted as an item of *knowledge*? What tests or procedures or criteria are used within knowledge-producing communities to ground or establish the claim that something counts as knowledge, and do these withstand critical scrutiny? (Are these tests, procedures and criteria reliable?)

3. Clearly, the central epistemological concept is *knowledge*, and over centuries the so-called "justified true belief" analysis of it has become standard: In order for some item X to be accepted as being knowledge, three criteria must be satisfied: (a) the item or "knowledge claim" must be believed;

1. See the discussion in Ruitenberg and Phillips, *Education, Culture, and Epistemological Diversity*, 2012, p. 53

(b) there must be a justification or warrant for asserting this claim, that stands up to critical scrutiny; (c) the item or claim must actually be true.² That these three criteria are sensible can be shown quite easily; for example, we would not find it credible if you were to claim that you know that X is the case but that you didn't actually believe it; and if you cannot offer any evidence or convincing grounds for believing that X is true, you might believe it but you cannot validly assert that you know it to be true; and finally, even if you have some evidence, but it turns out that X is not the case, that it is false, then you cannot be said to have known it, for – as I show in more detail in a moment, you cannot know something that is not the case. (You cannot *know* that the Earth is flat, because it isn't!)

4. Another absolutely crucial distinction goes along with this standard analysis of the concept of knowledge – a distinction that many of the non-philosophers who these days write about what they regard as epistemology fail to understand, yet it is a distinction that is non-mysterious and easy to grasp. This is the distinction between *belief and knowledge*, that is, the distinction between items that are believed to be (or are accepted as being) knowledge and those that actually *are* knowledge. The central issue here is that we believe many things, and think they are true, and we are prepared to act upon these beliefs if the appropriate occasion arises – but nevertheless we realize that many of our beliefs actually will turn out to be false, and are not part of the repository of human knowledge.

This came home to me very forcefully during the year I was training to be a biology teacher (in Melbourne, Australia).

2. In recent years it has been suggested that this account needs to be strengthened by addition of at least one further criterion to deal with some complex examples formulated by Gettier.

On one very memorable day I was about to teach a lesson to an eleventh-grade biology class on cell division (the processes of meiosis and mitosis via which the chromosomes in a cell replicated and divided). The text book being used by the class discussed all of this, with human cells as the focus; they were stated to have 48 chromosomes. I believed this to be true, and accepted it as an item of genuine knowledge, as did my supervising teacher, the professors of biology at the University of Melbourne, and as did the authors of the text-book. But that very same morning it had been announced that researchers using new techniques and the most advanced microscopes had done a recount and had determined that the normal human cell contained not 48 but 46 chromosomes, a result that had been replicated in other laboratories. So, while I had *believed* that there were 48, I was wrong to think that I knew this; *I could not have known there were 48 because there were not 48, there were only 46! One cannot know something that is not the case.*

This distinction is familiar to all of us in our daily lives; here is an example from the recent experience of millions of American citizens who stayed up very late to watch the US presidential election results: On the night of the presidential election, as the votes were being counted, Mitt Romney knew that he had won; and because he knew this he prepared a victory speech but did not prepare a speech conceding his defeat by Barack Obama. But although he believed he had won, and acted on this belief, he could not have known this – because he had *not* won!

5. There are some social scientists – some anthropologists, for example – whose research involves them recording the beliefs that are held by different cultural groups (and because they are believed by members of these groups, these beliefs are regarded as things that are known). Collecting and studying and analyzing beliefs that are held, however valuable

this research may be, is sometimes called epistemology, but it is *not* – it is ethnography or some related empirical endeavor. An epistemologist is not professionally interested in cataloguing what *is* believed by various groups, but rather, is concerned to discover – and above all to assess – the criteria, tests, standards, or procedures by which cultural groups distinguish between beliefs that they judge to be true (and which, therefore, are categorized as being things that are known) and those that they judge to be faulty. (It seems that all cultural groups distinguish between – indeed, must distinguish between – true beliefs and false beliefs; it is difficult to imagine how a group could survive if it was not able to distinguish on a fairly regular basis between true and false beliefs).

In the process of making a list of the beliefs of a cultural group (the items that members of this group think they know), the researcher quite often finds items that this group thinks are knowledge but that we do not accept because we have evidence and arguments available that indicate that these items are not true. (For example, the belief that the Earth is flat.) Often the temptation is to treat cases of this sort by saying that the item is “true for them but not true for us”, or “it is known by them but is not knowledge for us” – thus, “it is true for members of cultural group Y that the Earth is flat, but it is not true for us.” This is an extremely misleading and relativistic way of describing the situation; it simply is not the case that the Earth is *both* flat and non-flat/spherical – this is an empirical and conceptual impossibility, and both alternatives cannot be true! It is much more straightforward, and accurate, to say “Members of this cultural group believe the Earth is flat, but they are wrong. They hold a false belief – for the Earth actually is spherical (and here is the evidence....).” Many contemporary scholars do not like formulations like this, on the grounds

that they denigrate the cultural group and its beliefs. But this is spurious; all groups, including our own, have held in the past (and hold now) some – probably very many – beliefs that have turned out, or will turn out, not to be true, and there is nothing disrespectful for anyone to be reminded of this! (It is an interesting exercise to look at an old edition of an encyclopedia; it is truly amazing how outdated – just how wrong – much of the so-called knowledge that is recorded in it actually is!)

6. The criteria, tests or standards that are used within a cultural group or knowledge-making community need to be assessed because although they might work on some occasions to produce genuine knowledge, they might on other occasions be unreliable and fail, and so it is important to discover their limitations as knowledge-generating procedures. (Note that I am speaking here not only of “exotic” cultural groups studied by anthropologists, but also of knowledge-making communities within advanced societies.) The great American philosopher John Dewey put the point well when he wrote:

We know that some methods of inquiry are better than others in just the same way in which we know that some methods of surgery, farming, road-making, navigating, or what-not are better than others.... We ascertain *how* and *why* certain means and agencies have provided warrantably assertible conclusions [i.e. knowledge] while others have not and *cannot* do so. (Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, 1966, p. 104)

Consider this example taken from the context of the international educational research community: Two techniques/procedures widely used to establish knowledge within this community are blind peer review of research reports, and the use of randomized controlled experiments.

Both of these often help in establishing that a finding is a genuine addition to our knowledge, but sometimes these techniques fail – and it is of great epistemological interest (and it is of great practical importance as well) to discover why. (Indeed, the virtues and deficiencies of the experimental method is a topic hotly debated at present within the educational research community.)

7. It is necessary to say a little more about the point made by Dewey – that the methods of justifying or warranting or supporting knowledge-claims must stand up to critical examination so that we can detect those methods and criteria that cannot possibly lead to justified knowledge-claims. This seems to have been seriously misunderstood by a number of well-cited educational writers in recent years, especially by some leaders in the multicultural education community and some postmodernist critics of educational research; unfortunately (as I will show in a moment) their standards of critical assessment are woefully low.

These authors (Scheurich and Young, Bernal, Collins, Banks, and Asante, among many others) believe that educational research is a form of domination, for it reflects the interests of the dominant white male group, in particular in the North American context; thus it overlooks the needs and life-experiences of cultural minority groups, women, individuals of non-heterosexual disposition, and members of the economic lower-classes. Even the research designs that are used, and the modes of justifying or warranting or testing of knowledge-claims, are biased³ in favor of the dominant cultural group.

Clearly these critics of the dominant (so-called white male) epistemology need to present a two pronged case: First, they

3. See the discussion (and supporting citations) of the well-known essay by Scheurich and Young, in Ruitenberg and Phillips, 2012, ch.2.

must show that it is credible to claim that there are full-blown epistemologies that are alternatives – not just that there are alternatives to some of the techniques, procedures and so on within traditional epistemology (for whoever doubted this?). Second, they need to establish that the traditional epistemological doctrines and approaches (the ones they claim are used as tools of domination) are indeed deficient and biased in favor of white males. I shall make some brief comments about each “prong” of their argument in turn.

First, in contrast to the procedures used by white, male, Western researchers, these critics put forward what they claim are alternative ways of establishing or warranting knowledge claims. Unfortunately it is far from clear what is meant by this, given that traditional epistemology asserts that experience and/or reason are central (empiricism and rationalism) – do the alternative epistemologies have no place for either of these, and how would such a thing be possible? The “alternative” procedures that are casually mentioned fail to stand up to scrutiny – they simply do not seem the kinds of procedures that could possibly show whether or not our knowledge claims are true (or “tenable”, as Catherine Elgin puts it⁴). For example, Molefi Kete Asante asserts that “the quest for truth” in Afrocentric cultures involves language, myth, ancestral memory, and dance-music-art; Delores Bernal makes a similar point about Chicana (female Hispanic) epistemology when she writes that “A unique characteristic of a Chicana feminist epistemology is that it also validates and addresses experiences that are intertwined with issues of immigration, migration, generational status, bilingualism, limited English proficiency, and the contradictions of Catholicism.”⁵ How any of the things listed by Asante and Bernal could be a part of an epistemology, especially a part

4. Catherine Elgin, *Considered Judgment*, pp. 116-8.

5. For documentation, see Ruitenberg and Phillips, ch.2.e,

concerned with the warranting or justification of the truth of knowledge claims, is never addressed by these authors (or by the numerous others who make similar claims). Particularly striking are the references to dance and music, and exposing “the contradictions of Catholicism”, as being epistemological tools; in the passage quoted earlier from John Dewey, he argued that we (we epistemologists) can ascertain “how and why certain means and agencies have provided warrantably assertible conclusions, while others have not and *cannot* do so”, and dance, music, and exposing the contradictions in Catholicism, have not and *cannot possibly be* means of establishing knowledge claims that are tenable or warranted. (How could a dance, for example, or an understanding of contradictions in Catholicism, establish the truth or falsity – the tenability – of Einstein’s theory of relativity, or of the theory that a virus is the cause of aids, or of the trickle-down theory in economics, or the theory that lack of pure water contributes to the spread of cholera?)

Second, the other prong of the argument that needs to be put forward by the critics of the dominant epistemology has to establish that traditional educational research methods and epistemological criteria are biased, and represent an attempt by white male researchers to assert domination and to achieve their socio-political goals. In her book *Black Feminist Thought* Patricia Hill Collins writes that “elite white men and their representatives control structures of knowledge validation”, and that as a result Black feminist scholars often encounter an epistemology “representing elite white male interests”⁶; and in a well-known paper in *Educational Researcher*, Scheurich and Young claim that “the ways of the dominant group (its epistemologies, its ontologies, its axiologies)” become the dominant ways of that civilization, thus “the dominant group creates or constructs “the world” or “the Real” and

6. See Ruitenberg and Phillips, pp. 19-24.

does so in its own image.”⁷ They write that “it is in this sense that...the dominant research epistemologies are racially biased.”⁸ White researchers, they add, “are unconsciously promulgating racism on an epistemological level” when they “teach and promote epistemologies like positivism and postmodernism....”

The standard of argument that these critics of mainstream epistemology put forward in support of their extremely strong position is astoundingly poor. What they need to do – but fail to do – is to present a detailed analysis of the elements that make up positivism, postpositivism, rationalism and other positions developed in traditional epistemology, and to show how some or all of these elements are supportive of white male social and economic and political interests and are harmful to the interests of minority or other subjugated groups; and indeed, they need to go further and show that the reason mainstream epistemology was developed was because it supported white male interests. Instead of offering such a detailed analysis, the argument that is put forward by the critics simply is this: “Traditional epistemology has been developed almost exclusively by white males, **THUS** it represents white male interests and is racially biased.” Clearly this is an argument that is a non-sequitur.

But there is more to be said; consider the following:

- a. The disciplines of physics, engineering, climatology, bacteriology, agricultural science, and many more, were developed in large part by white males, but would we want to argue that these are racially biased and need to be replaced by an alternative physics, engineering, climatology, agricultural science, bacteriology, and so

7. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

on? Precisely in what ways are physics, bacteriology, and the rest “biased”?

- b. Does it even make sense to speak of an “alternative” physics or bacteriology and so forth? There can be, and are, alternative theories, hypotheses and so forth *within* each of these disciplines, but this is different from claiming that there are *alternatives* to physics and the rest.
- c. The same point can be made about epistemology – no one believes that philosophers are all of one mind; disagreement is the essence of philosophical life! But the arguments about empiricism, rationalism, Popperian falsificationist epistemology, positivism, and many other positions are disagreements within the discipline of epistemology; and the notion of an alternative epistemology does not make sense. (What, for example, would be an epistemology that was an alternative to empiricism, rationalism and non-foundationalism? These three positions seem to cover all the bases.... Would an alternative epistemology be one that was based on a rejection of the justified true belief analysis of knowledge that I sketched earlier? Would a complete rejection of that analysis make any sense?)
- d. Given that Scheurich and Young recognize (although they never discuss this in detail) that traditional epistemology contains within it competing positions based on *incompatible assumptions* (such as positivism, empiricism, rationalism, postmodernism and so forth), it is strange indeed that they assert that the dominant group has constructed the world and the “Real” “in its own image”. *There is not one agreed-upon image*, and some positions even assert that the “Real” cannot be talked about at all! Neither is it clear how

rationalism or empiricism, or foundationalism and non-foundationalism, and so on, with their incompatible bases, further the interests of white males but do not further the interests of women or members of minority groups. (What is there about empiricism, or rationalism, that make them anti-feminist or anti-Black?)

Concluding remarks – What is going on here?

I have not had time to discuss several areas of scholarly activity that are of great epistemological interest. But they are worth putting on the record.

The first is the growing recognition of a theme developed in T.S. Kuhn's classic work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) – that knowledge is not usefully thought of as being produced by solitary researchers, for such a position overlooks the crucial role played by the research community (Kuhn would say, the role played by a “paradigm”). Even a researcher who appears to be working alone is part of an extended intellectual community and makes use of communally developed resources (cognitive as well as physical). The point is not the rather trite one that much research these days is undertaken by groups led by a “principal investigator” (although it must be pointed out that interesting studies of the workings of such scientific groups have been done by sociologists of science); the point is rather that the validity of the criteria, the dependability of the research procedures, the decisions about what work is of high or low quality, the selection of the theoretical framework, and other epistemologically relevant matters, are decisions made within the community of inquirers. Catherine Elgin put it well when she said that knowledge is like a medieval tapestry – it is the work of many hands; but crucially, the inquirers must be functioning within a “cognitive system”

that is “viable” or “maximally tenable” (in other words, it has withstood critical scrutiny).⁹

The second area worthy of mention is educational research – which, as an enterprise that aims to establish new knowledge, raises issues of great importance. For example, the explanation of human voluntary actions must take a form that is different from the form by which physical events in the natural world are accounted for. The first involves the discovering of reasons, motives, beliefs, and the like; the second involves discovery of lawlike generalizations. Does this limit the applicability of scientific research methods? Do educational researchers need more training in the use of interpretive or ethnographic methods and less in statistical manipulation of experimental data? In what sense are (or are not) these interpretive or ethnographical methods “scientific?

The final area of interest I can mention here is the policy area (broadly conceived) where courses of action, programs of instruction, interventions, and the like, are formulated and discussed. Empirical evidence of effectiveness of various alternative interventions seems clearly to be relevant, and this evidence must be epistemologically sound; but deciding upon what action to take is not determined by the so-called evidence alone but also must include premises incorporating values – and there are many issues here. Indeed, is it reasonable to assume that values should play a role in the design and execution of educational research itself, or would this undermine the objectivity of the research (another difficult epistemological issue).

But since most of my attention in this paper has focused upon the discomfort felt by multicultural educators and others – the scholars I have identified as critics of the dominant epistemology – I need to conclude by returning to

9. Catherine Elgin, *Considered Judgment* (1996), pp. 116-118

them. I have argued that, by and large, they misunderstand the nature of epistemology as a discipline, and confuse it with other empirical endeavors; and their criticisms of epistemology are extremely poorly developed and are wide of the mark. Nevertheless, I must admit to feeling a great deal of sympathy for their underlying concerns; in my view these educational scholars have made the mistake of trying to express these concerns in the language of epistemology when they themselves are not trained in epistemology nor are the basic concerns essentially epistemological! (This is not to say that contemporary discipline of epistemology is perfect; to paraphrase an expression used by my Stanford colleague Helen Longino, epistemologists cannot develop alternative epistemologies, but they can do – and need to do – their epistemological work with more multicultural and social sensitivity.)

The concerns harbored by the critics seem to me to be *political*, and to involve matters of *social justice*. Thus, issues of concern to minority groups of all persuasions, are not epistemological issues but are things such as the following: The socio-cultural achievements of minority groups and the contributions they have made to society are not adequately represented in the school curriculum; research on minority issues (health, for example, or workplace discrimination) have not been of high priority for receiving funding, and the national research agenda has been shaped by individuals with other priorities; group differences in learning and interaction styles (“ways of knowing”) have not, perhaps, received the attention they deserve; and so on.

This leaves unexplained why the term “epistemology” seems to have such high allure that colleagues from all over the broad domain of educational scholarship are driven to use it (or misuse it) when raising their legitimate but non-

epistemological concerns. My excuse for not addressing this conundrum is that, after all, explaining why a word has enormous fascination is not a task for an epistemologist!

Section III

Examining the Concept of Intelligence

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The concept of intelligence, as studied in the discipline of psychology, has been understood in terms of competencies, or aptitude for competencies. In this article, the philosophical underpinnings of such conceptions of intelligence are examined. Further, the relationship between intelligence, and two other characteristics of the human beings- agency and consciousness is examined. If one were to conceive of intelligence as an achievement attributable to the individual, it is arguable that intelligence and agency are closely related characteristics of human beings. Further, it is seen that there is a *prima facie* case for the proposition that phenomenal consciousness is necessary for intelligence as we currently understand, to exist. This article is only exploratory, and these aspects will have to be studied further in detail. Understanding the nature of the human mind and intelligence should be of prime concern to the uniquely human endeavor of education, for their development is among its central aims.

1. Introduction

The concept of human *intelligence* has been and is still of interest to scholars of many fields- psychology, sociology, computer science and philosophy, among others. To students of education, it is of central concern, for it influences

and affects our understanding of the human mind, the development of which is an important aim of education. At a more fundamental level, as far as we know, it is only human beings who we educate. Hence, a deep understanding of the intelligent nature of human beings is necessary, upon which we can build our understanding of education

What *is* intelligence? In daily as well as scholarly usage, one suspects we use it to mean different things- when I state that '*Humans are intelligent beings, while computers are not*', and '*Ram is more intelligent than Shyam*', am I using the word in the same sense? A conceptual analysis of intelligence should help us understand not only the term better, but also the assumptions and premises that underpin our understanding of the term.

In this paper, I seek to build a theoretical understanding of the concept of intelligence, from psychological and philosophical perspectives. The purpose is primarily exploratory - to compare and understand the essence of the concept as conceived in these disciplines, and explore if examining the philosophical underpinning of the concept can point us towards some aspects of intelligence that have not been accorded much significance in its psychological conception. More specifically, I would like to examine the relationship between three the following three concepts: intelligence, agency, and consciousness.

2. The Concept of Intelligence

2.1 Intelligence: A Psychological View

The concept of intelligence has been the topic of debate of scholars for a long time, giving rise to various understandings. Some, in despair it would seem, have even concluded that intelligence is what intelligence tests test. (Sternberg, R J.

2000). However, we now have a more nuanced psychological understanding of the concept.

Sternberg (2000) summarizes how the concept is understood differently across different cultures. For example, while western societies emphasized on speed of mental processing and depth of processing, other cultures tend to include different competencies, like the Chinese who include non-verbal reasoning ability, verbal reasoning ability and rote memory, and some African communities that tend to include those skills that help facilitate and maintain harmonious intergroup and intragroup relationships (Sternberg, R. J. 2000). Sternberg and Grigorenko (2004) opine that intelligence considered outside its cultural context would only be a myth, and propound a 'Theory of Successful Intelligence', which says that "*the conceptualization of intelligence is individually determined but always occurs within a socio-cultural context*" and that "*intelligence involves not only modifying oneself to suit the environment (adaptation), but also modifying the environment to suit oneself (shaping) and sometimes finding a new environment that is a better match to one's skills, values or desires*" (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2004). What they seem to be saying is that in accordance with the cultural and social setting in which an individual is, the parameters or the competencies that are needed to survive and flourish may differ, and hence what one may see as constituting intelligence. However, it is possible that these competencies that are seen as constituting intelligence may all be manifestation of a different, deeper faculty.

Such a deeper faculty is what Charles Edward Spearman, in 1904, conceptualized as the measure of general intelligence, 'g'. It may be defined as "*the common element present in a diverse set of intellectual measures that are positively related to each other*" (Brody N. 2000). Intelligence tests (or IQ

tests as they are known), measure the ‘g’ of an individual in comparison to others of the same age who take the test. Such a conception was based on observation that people who excel in one type of intellectual task excel in other types of intellectual tasks as well. (Brody N. 2000)

One notices that these conceptions of intelligence define it in terms of competencies that individuals display. Even if these competencies are manifestation of a deeper faculty of general intelligence, practically, it is observed and measured only in terms of these competencies. Hand (2007) points out problems with such a conception. Taking exception to the premise that a person found to be competent in one type of task will be competent in other kinds of tasks as well, he notes that such a conception would beg the question, ‘competent at what?’ Further, Hand opines that the relative ease or difficulty with which one acquires a competence would also indicate how intelligent (or not) an individual is, not just whether one possess the competence or not. Hence, Hand propounds that *“the quality of mind picked out by the term ‘intelligence’ is a species of aptitude. Aptitudes stand in an important logical relation to competences but are nevertheless sharply distinct from them. Grasping this relation and this distinction is the key to understanding the logic of everyday discourse about intelligence. [To] have an aptitude, on the other hand, is not necessarily to be capable of giving good or correct performances. A person may have an aptitude for something without yet being able to do it well. Ascriptions of aptitudes are not claims about the possession of competences, but claims about the ease with which competences are acquired”* (Hand M. 2007). Thus, such a conception would render IQ tests meaningless, for they only measure the current level of competency and not one’s ease of acquiring it (i.e. one’s aptitude). Next, Hand also argues that the faculty of the mind that intelligence picks out is the aptitude for theorizing. By theories, he refers to “*mean*

the wide variety of cognitive constructions by which human beings plan, govern and justify their actions and organize, narrate and explain their experiences" (Hand M. 2007). The kind of competencies that we usually describe as intelligent, usually intellectual, require a higher amount of theorizing than competencies in physical activities like sports, and hence the aptitude for the former would better indicate one's intelligence than the aptitude for the latter.

Hand makes one other point about such a conception of intelligence- that it renders irrelevant the question of whether it is a product of nature or nurture. He argues that *"Intelligence might be innate or fixed, but it is not innate or fixed by definition"*. This brings us to a deeper philosophical question on the nature of human intelligence- if what brings about the development of aptitude (or even competency) is irrelevant to its definition, then, there could hypothetically be, machines that could possess intelligence. A machine, sufficiently advances in hardware and software, could possess the aptitude to theorize (or acquire intellectual competencies). Hence, it would seem there is no qualitative difference between human and computer 'intelligence'.

2.2 Intelligence and Agency

The above idea, that there is no qualitative difference between human and computer intelligence is counter intuitive and in opposition to our daily experience. To begin with, every action of a computer, as we now know it, is explained and determined by its hardware and software. Even if based on the machine's interaction with the outside world, it were acquire the competence to theorize in relatively shorter time than humans (hence possessing an aptitude), every action of a computer would be fully determined by its hardware, software ('nature') and the history of interactions it has had ('nurture'). Theoretically, knowing the exact details of these

three elements, one would be able to determine and predict its action in any given situation. In short, a computer does not possess *agency*.

In our everyday life, one feels that our most actions are results of our conscious will, and that we are agents and not just the structure (biology and factors any other factor external to our mind, including the history of our social interactions) playing out. We have the conscious experience of being agent, causing actions. This faculty for action is what is referred to as agency (Fuchs S. 2007). Human actors are different, because there is nothing inevitable about most of our actions, i.e. an action is not the only way it could have been. Humans are conscious of the world, themselves and other actors. As Fuchs (2007) says, “*actions are contingent, behavior is necessary*”. Another way of putting it would be to say that there are no absolute causes for any of our actions, but only reasons that can partly explain them.

One can argue that it is in this sense of possessing agency that human beings are intelligent in a way digital computers are not. In other words, when I say that ‘*Human beings are intelligent beings, and computers are not*’, I say that human beings act as agents and have an experience of conscious will, while every action of a computer is fully caused by factors external to the computer itself. This raises the further question of whether agency would be possible without other facets of the human mind, like consciousness. By consciousness I refer to the property of the human mind by which it is ‘something it is like’ to have any experience (Lormand E. 1998) (to differentiate this from other usages of consciousness, this is sometimes referred to as ‘phenomenal consciousness’. I shall use the stand-alone term to refer to this. When I earlier referred to ‘conscious will’, I was referring to one’s subjective, phenomenal experience of willing something). Other facets

of our mind, like pleasure, emotions, desires etc. are all types of conscious experience. If one were not conscious, one would not have an experience of conscious will, and hence an experience of agency. Would one be able to possess agency, without having a phenomenal experience of it? Another way of asking the question is, without consciousness, would all our actions be determined and caused by our nature and nurture?

Intelligence, as I understand, is that attribute of an individual (or entity) for which only the individual is responsible. In some ways, intelligence is an achievement that is attributable only to the individual. One cannot be held responsible for one's biology or the social environment that one is exposed to, for as has been already noted, these are outside an individual's control. It is one's agency as it manifests in the structural setting of the individual that is only attributable to the individual. It is in the light of this understanding that I feel that intelligence and agency are closely related, and similar concepts. At this point, it is worth noting that all conscious human actions are *agentic*, even if they serve to reproduce the structures the individual is operating within. Hence, it may be meaningless to talk of one action being more agentic than another, or an individual not possessing agency. What such statements probably mean is that one's agency serves to reproduce the structure, it is an agentic act nevertheless. That all human actions, including those habits reproducing structural characteristics, are agentic has been noted by sociologists as well, for example, Emirbayer & Mische (1998), who say that "*... we claim that even habitual action is agentic, since it involves attention and effort, such activity is largely unreflective and taken for granted... We have settled upon the unfamiliar term iteration to describe such activity precisely because the dimension of agency to which it refers is the most difficult to conceive of in properly agentic terms*"

In light of such an understanding of agency, one wonders if it would at all be meaningful to talk of X being more intelligent than Y, or on evaluating the intelligence of a person in terms of his/her success in a purposeful action. All human beings, on account of being agents, are intelligent. Some may use their intelligence to develop certain competencies and/or aptitudes, and hence be termed 'smart' or 'competent', but if they do not, they would still be intelligent in a manner that is qualitatively different from the faculties of non-agents.

2.3 Consciousness and Intelligence

Phenomenal consciousness is an element that characterizes every moment of our waking life, and such an integral part of our every experience that it is often easy to ignore it. All human beings are conscious and intelligent. Does the latter presuppose the former? If it were indeed the case, this would be another feature that qualitatively differentiates human intelligence from that of a machine, unless one is able to produce artificial consciousness as well.

At the outset, I would like to differentiate between *decisions* and *judgments*. A decision is a conclusion arrived at following a set of discrete rules and criteria. Decision Sciences involves the study of tools like linear programming, wherein given a set of inputs and criteria, one can arrive at a unique output, and only that output. On the other hand, a judgment, while taking into consideration certain rules and criteria, but are not bound by them. Conclusions arrived at by human beings are often judgments. One might have a set of criteria that guide our thought process, but they do not bind one. One might, if one so chooses, flout one or many of these rules to arrive at a different judgment. A judgment is the result of an *agent*, while a decision is the output of an algorithm. As human beings, we arrive at judgments based on reflection and introspection- experiences that

presuppose phenomenal consciousness. However, while it is seen that human judgments, and hence human intelligence are dependent on our capacity for conscious experience, this still does not show that the latter is necessary for the former. Hence, I would like to present two short arguments that, if not proving conclusively, point us in the direction of such a relation between the two.

The first is what I call '*The Knowledge Argument*'. I would like to begin from the premise that any intelligent action is not possible without knowledge. In other words, the capacity for knowledge is a *necessary* condition for intelligence. While the jury is still out on what constitutes knowledge, a popular understanding being the tripartite analysis of knowledge as *justified true belief*, one can agree that knowledge is necessarily constituted by a belief. But, what is a belief? BonJour (2010) talks of two kinds of beliefs that could constitute knowledge, "*occurrent belief, which is what happens when the person has the proposition explicitly in mind and accepts or assents to it; and dispositional belief, where the person does not have the proposition explicitly in mind, but is disposed to accept or assent to it, that is, would accept or assent to it if the issue were raised*" (BonJour L. 2010). Further, he adds that with regard to dispositional beliefs, "*it should be specified instead as the dispositional state in which (a) one has previously explicitly considered and consciously accepted or assented to the proposition in question, and (b) as a direct result of this prior acceptance or assent, would accept or assent to it again if the question were explicitly raised*" (BonJour L, 2010). In occurrent beliefs, it is clear that any belief is ontologically a conscious state of the mind. In the case of a dispositional belief, while one may not consciously hold the proposition in one's mind, one should have held it consciously in the past. Hence, to hold a belief is to have a phenomenal experience of believing in a proposition, not merely being disposed to

assenting to the proposition when asked. It would hence seem that if knowledge were constituted by beliefs, knowledge, as we currently understand it would not be possible without phenomenal consciousness. If knowledge were necessary for intelligence, it would in turn imply that consciousness is necessary for intelligence as well.

The second argument derives from neurobiological research on the role of emotions and feelings in our ability to reason. Damasio A R (1995) in his book '*Descartes' Error*', argues against the popular notion that reasoning, in its purest form ought to be unaffected by emotions and feelings. In his study of individuals whose specific section of the brain had been damaged, Damasio found that the damage had two-pronged impact- first, it left the patients with flat emotions and feelings, and second, it had a debilitating affect on the ability of the patients to reason, make judgments and plan for the future. Talking about one of the patients, Damasio (1995) recounts, "*also had a strong suspicion that the defect in emotion and feeling was not an innocent bystander next to the defect in social behavior. Troubled emotions probably contributed to the problem. I began to think that the cold-bloodedness of Elliot's reasoning prevented him from assigning different values to different options, and made his decision-making landscape hopelessly flat*". It may seem like the ability for emotions and reason are only correlated, both resulting from a more fundamental cause, implying that emotions by themselves are not necessary for an individual to be able to reason. However, Damasio (1995) further argues, "*Emotion and feeling, along with the covert physiological machinery underlying them, assist us with the daunting task of predicting an uncertain future and planning our actions accordingly*". In other words, Damasio considers emotions and feelings necessary for the human ability to reason.

Here again, if one were to assume that the ability to reason and make judgments were a necessary manifestation of intelligence, it would seem that emotions and feelings are necessary for intelligence. When Damasio talks of feelings, he refers to the phenomenal experience that accompanies emotions. Hence, it would seem that if one were to accept Damasio's argument, phenomenal consciousness is a *necessary* condition for intelligence.

Both the above arguments for the necessity of consciousness for intelligence are not meant to be conclusive. Rather, they only seek to highlight an important aspect that has not been accorded much importance in the psychological conception of intelligence.

Conclusion

It is seen that psychology has sought to understand the concept of intelligence either in terms of competencies, or aptitude for competencies. The genealogy of either of these two, in terms of structure and agency has not been accorded much significance. However, in light of an understanding that it is our agency that is a key aspect of the qualitative difference between the intelligence of human beings and computers, a further closer examination of the relationship between intelligence and agency would be required. This would be especially relevant if one were to conceptualize intelligence as an achievement wholly attributable to the individual, not unlike moral responsibility. Further, the psychological discourse on intelligence that is based on competencies and/or aptitude does not consider that key characteristic of the human mind, consciousness. It is seen that both the disciplines of epistemology and neurobiology both provide us with *prima facie* reasons to believe that if our conception of intelligence considers the ability to possess knowledge, and to make reasoned judgments to be

its necessary manifestations, one will also have to concede that phenomenal *consciousness* is a necessary condition for intelligence to exist in an entity. Hence, along with agency, the conscious nature of the human mind would have to be further examined closely to understand the nature of the entity that we seek to develop in this unique endeavor called *education*.

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'Education, Attention and Technology'

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Introduction

This paper will examine the view that an increase in e-learning will result in a corrosion of attention across education. Popular ambivalence and scepticism around the distribution of e-learning could offer an important corrective to the clamour for the new. But such ambivalence should not be uncritical of its own prejudices and occlusions. Indeed critical voices will only have traction if they avoid polemics. Consequently, I will argue for a mediation between techno-pessimists and techno-optimists by drawing on philosophers who speak ambivalently about the place of technology in society and education, particularly that of Bernard Stiegler.

The Real vs. the Virtual

In one sense, the virtual university has existed far longer than the Internet. The Open University in the UK was established in 1965 and has served a wide group of learners ever since. The development of distance learning, as it is commonly called, has not replaced the bricks and mortar institution, sitting alongside 'traditional' campus-based institutions. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) among the most recent iterations of online learning, are extensions of the principles of 'night school' pioneered by institutions like

the Open University. Similarly, it is unlikely that MOOCs will supplant the existence of universities. Indeed within this variegated market, some universities make explicit reference to their 'traditional' structures as essential to their educational mission:

We seek to enhance a real not a virtual community where staff and students are engaged; where offices are turned into studies; and the library and other learning spaces turned into hubs of active learning. We are not a university where academic staff turn up only to deliver lectures or to perform timetabled duties; or where educational technology substitutes for actual and authentic personal engagement.¹

In a world where more and more higher education institutions are seeking opportunities to offer courses to a global market of 'online learners' this commitment to the physical habitat of education might seem somewhat obsolete or anachronistic. Yet many educators speak for the uncanny quality of physical presence; that being physically face to face with students has a singular, irreducible pedagogical power. This raises a question: is the interest in online education really pedagogical? I would argue that the impetus to develop online education is founded, first and foremost, on economic rather than pedagogic concerns, so my general orientation towards online education is critical. There are, no doubt, some intrinsic benefits to online education, to do with gaining confidence, overcoming social or practical restrictions, and the massive scalability of online learning. But where the resources of time and money are unrestricted, isn't the educational encounter best in person? The notion that time and money could be unrestricted is clearly utopian, and only disengaged speculations about some distant future world could seriously entertain such a scenario. And so perhaps we ought to accept that the prime interest of the

online education industry is, and needs to be, the efficiencies that can be harnessed through the reconfiguring, if not full overcoming, of space and time. The concerns about online education expressed here do not justify a wholesale rejection of online life. So despite this critical orientation, I want to explore some of the ways in which technologies and virtual worlds occupy a grey area in educational theory and practice. An ambiguity arises when we see that technologies are neither simply the neutral means to ends determined by human beings, nor, in opposition to this, artificial intrusions upon a pure state of nature.

Online Education and E-learning

Online education is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon and can hardly be defined in straightforward terms. We might first wonder whether *online education* is equivalent to *online learning* or *e-learning*, terms which *Wikipedia* presents as synonymous.² This is an important question for philosophers of education (and educationalists generally) because education as a substantive and multi-faceted phenomenon can be distinguished from learning in important ways, as Gert Biesta has shown in his critical analysis of the “learnification of education.”³ For Biesta the shift in our language from education to learning is related to the fact that we have lost sight of questions of educational purpose and values:⁴

...the point of education is never that children or students learn, but that they learn something, that they learn this for particular purposes, and that they learn this from someone. The problem with the language of learning and with the wider ‘learnification’ of educational discourse is that it makes it far more difficult, if not impossible, to ask the crucial educational questions about content, purpose and relationships.⁵

The present celebration of learning then, in which authority is distributed and knowledge is constructed, is in danger of losing the sight of the ontology of education: the priority of the thing being learnt. Discussions of e-learning might similarly focus attention on the medium of learning than the object of learning itself. Nevertheless, e-learning does have some of the characteristics that Biesta identifies with the shift towards the language of learning. E-learning is more consumer-driven in the sense that it tries more than ever before to adapt to the needs and context of learners. This can be observed in the spatio-temporal flexibility of online education: it can take place synchronously (in 'real time') or asynchronously (whenever suits the learner, i.e., self-paced), though the asynchronous component is more characteristic of learning online where learners engage in email, blogs, forums, wikis, audio, video etc. This flexibility can facilitate independence of mind and self-directed attitudes towards education but more negatively, plays into the 'student-as-consumer' attitude. Theorists like Sian Bayne and Norm Friesen have recognised that Biesta's critique of learnification could have particular relevance for technology-enhanced learning.⁶ Still, it could be argued that much of the asynchronous nature of e-learning can be observed in informal learning with or without the 'e', for example, the practice of reading, although linear, is characteristically asynchronous, self-paced and flexible. Many of our conventional learning practices can't be distinguished from e-learning in categorical terms. Rather like the philosophers of technology seeking a categorical definition of 'modern technology' (to meaningfully distinguish the modern iPad from early forms of wax tablet) our efforts towards categorisation of e-learning are frustrated. But this does not mean that there are no meaningful distinctions to be made here. Tendencies become pronounced, and practices entrenched. The drift to e-learning is, then, cumulative and evolutionary despite the

great pace of change that some philosophers of technology attest to.⁷ E-learning also tends to reinforce individualism, often replacing classroom experiences with structured activities that can be tutor led but are typically self-directed, emphasising learning as a process about (and only about) the learner who acquires knowledge, understanding, or skills.

Despite his critical analysis of the shift to a culture of learning, Biesta also acknowledges that these features of learning (and by implication e-learning) have some emancipatory potential. The shift reflects deeper historical currents that see a less centralised and less authoritarian view of education in which the student is understood as co-constructor of their own understanding of the world. However, Biesta argues that the language of 'learning' does not just reflect a more democratic or inclusive form of pedagogy in which the learner is placed centre-stage. On the contrary, the learnification culture is corrosive of democratic and inclusive ways of being because it reduces democratic processes to the aggregation of individual desires.⁸ To service aggregated desires does not bring into question the ground and context of those desires. Moreover, the learning culture does not foster reflection upon the purposes of education, but rather takes for granted that purposes basically equate to what individuals want them to be: in other words they are regarded as preferences. Of course this is thoroughly individualistic but Biesta is hinting here at a more fundamental problem: that education properly understood, points to a shared cultural enterprise which is lost in the culture of learnification. This point is really calling for a radical reorientation of our hollowed out culture of learning since it reintroduces ontology into education: that education has an orientation to something real and that individual desires must, in some sense, be in dialogue with that reality: both informing it and being informed by it.

An important question emerges from this: does education online reinforce and extend this transformation of education into learning? Or does it limit and reorganise our relationship to the purposes of education? Are we at liberty to define our own purposes as consumers? One answer implied in the foregoing discussion would be to say that online education contributes to a culture of individualised and consumerist learning that suppresses the examination of the purposes of education: online learning reinforces the impression that students are able to select a good product determined in advance. I believe there is some credibility to this analysis, but would not want to leave it there since it does not treat the nature of technology and being online in sufficiently ambivalent terms and might lead us to a sentimental and unrealistic rejection of our technological being. In other words, there needs to be a way in which online education can express and shape reflection on the purposes of education in a substantive and meaningful way, without polarising the virtual and the physical.

I now turn to the philosopher Bernard Stiegler who understands digital technology and modern media as *pharmacological*: both poison and cure. Stiegler rejects the assumption that the human could exist prior to the technical, arguing that the evolution of human reflective awareness was concurrent with what he calls ‘technics’. Indeed for Stiegler there is no human being without technics.⁹ Despite this, he is very critical of the impact of modern technology and media on education and the youth in particular.¹⁰ Yet Stiegler’s analysis is interestingly ambivalent, coming out of a reading of critical theories of technology (especially Heidegger), but radically departing from them by his view that technics is coeval with hominization. I will develop an account of his thinking on memory and attention that will bring us to examine some of the ideas of particular relevance

to education. The connection here is that writing, being both supportive and corrosive of memory, is also formative of attention. Moreover, as Jan Masschelein has argued,¹¹ literate culture goes hand in hand with the development of education, and the technologies that support pedagogy. In other words, the emergence of literate culture had a decisive influence on the formation and development of the modern concept of education and pedagogy and so it is crucial to explore the ways in which memory is tied to technologies writing as attention-forming activities.

Tertiary memory in education

Memory is the foundation of culture. The ancient Greeks mythologised this insight with the story of the goddess Mnemosyne, daughter of Gaia and Uranus, and mother, through union with Zeus, of the nine muses. Through Mnemosyne (memory), poetry, and the arts more generally, are made present. Without memory, then, culture could not exist. As Hannah Arendt put it, cultural understanding is gathered, shared, and transmitted through education.¹² For Stiegler, the shared mnemonic heritage that is culture is passed on through a process of what he calls “exteriorisation.”¹³ Exteriorisations rely upon forms of prosthesis which might take prehistoric forms such as flint tools and wax tablets, or can appear in the more modern guises of books, magazines or forms of digital media and databases. Such prostheses are forms of *tertiary* memory, since they are distinct from the primary and secondary forms, namely, genetic inheritance and individual awareness.

In tertiary memory, then, experience can be liberated from genetic determinism (primary memory) or individual loss (secondary memory) enabling humanity to pass on cultural inheritance. In prehistoric times cultural transmission would have been slow and fitful. Particularly from the 18th and

19th centuries this transmission is driven and appropriated by a more industrious and methodical spirit. Stiegler shows how the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment, with the perception of science as fundamentally progressive, inspired a new sense of the significance of history and the passage of time.¹⁴ The realisation of culture through memory is only possible through the development of technology as the material supports of tertiary memory. The ‘technics’ (aka technologies) that support tertiary memory constitute an awareness of time that entails the possibility of *retention* (looking backwards) and *protension* (looking forwards). In other words, the stitching together of temporality (of past and future) and the emergence of technics are one and the same event. Here Stiegler is drawing together his interest in the phenomenology of temporality that preoccupied so much of Heidegger’s thought, with a view that technics form that awareness of temporality: in other words, technology is a key aspect of hominization, an idea that Heidegger would certainly reject. Indeed for Stiegler, the history of philosophy (not just Heidegger) has suppressed the recognition of role of technics in the process hominization.

The pharmacology of technology

History, as the story of culture, is generally defined by its constitution through one particular technology: writing. Where written accounts exist we have entered ‘history’. But this birth of history is marked by ambiguity, an undecidable that Derrida calls the *pharmakon* of writing.¹⁵ For Derrida the dual (and undecidable) nature of the *pharmakon* undercuts the binary logic that structures Western thought: it is not a matter of deciding whether writing reveals or conceals because it does both simultaneously. But doesn’t this binary logic structure contemporary discussions about whether technology is an educational force good or a bad influence on the youth? We might want to avoid talking about

‘technology’ in a general and abstracted sense, a sense that is sometimes called ‘essentialist’, by arguing that each technical device has some educational potential and some dangers. For Derrida, though, this response would point to complexity but not ‘undecidability’ – an intrinsic and irreducible quality of ambiguity. Furthermore, I would argue that it is quite clear that technologies have something undecidable about them: technology is both what puts power in our hands while simultaneously threatening to erode that power by making us blind to the scope and significance of our own actions. As Günther Anders, speaking of atomic energy put it, “As engineers, at least as engineers of nuclear weapons, we have become omnipotent—an expression that is little more than a metaphor. But as intellectual beings we do not measure up to this omnipotence of ours...by way of our technology...we can no longer conceive what we can produce and do.”¹⁶

Technology both makes us smarter and more stupid; engaged and disengaged, more potent and more powerless. Online environments feel much the same: they simultaneously present the world and hide it. Drawing on Heidegger’s critique of technology, Albert Borgmann makes the point that the characteristic feature of technology – which he says is its ability to make things available to us in unprecedented ways – is marked by an erosion of the significance of things. In other words, the more things are made available to us, the less significance things have *for* us. The more film and music becomes ‘on demand’, for example, the less committed my listening and viewing becomes. We see with MOOC’s for example, the extraordinarily enthusiastic take up does not translate in quite as extraordinary completion rates.¹⁷ Borgmann defines technological availability as what is rendered “instantaneous, ubiquitous, safe, and easy.”¹⁸ There are problems with this definition: for example, the

digital divide between those who do and do not have access to digital technologies raises questions about ubiquity; the use of technology in abuse or issues of online privacy make 'safety' a questionable feature of availability. Despite these problems the definition does provide some insight into the way in which the world is made more available through digital devices. This definition of technical availability might well be applied to online environments and extended to online learning specifically (at least where they work well). But does this availability carry with it an uncanny disengagement with the substance of learning, as Borgmann might suggest? This is a question that we need to at least be able to ask. Do we not often mistake the content or process of education for education itself? In a similar sense, doesn't online education presuppose an educational model as little more than the transmission of knowledge, Freire's banking model? Is online learning not fundamentally reductive? Isn't education irreducibly founded on the contact and relation between teacher and student a relation that cannot fully exist in an online world? It might be tempting to argue this, but I want to resist the temptation to reintroduce the binary that assumes online means somehow existentially disconnected, in contrast to a norm that sees real education as entailing an unmediated presence of the other. It seems to rest upon the norm of a pre-technical human that has never existed. Nevertheless, I wish to take seriously the issue that Borgmann raises by acknowledging that there is both an uncanny disengagement in online environments, but equally a new profound possibility.

It would be convenient to reject technology as King Thamus rejected the offer of writing in order to remain in a natural state of immediacy with nature where our faculties can be employed in a fully human way.¹⁹ Even if we wanted to make such a rejection, we could not do so if technology is part of

who we are. As Stiegler argues, the history of technogenesis is the history of anthropogenesis. From this point of view, the problem of how to ‘humanise’ online education might seem predicated on a false assumption, namely that online is basically inhuman; unreal; absent; disconnected; disengaged. But the recognition that technology is central to human identity does not mean we uncritically embrace all that we call technology as the affirmation of human creativity. Technology – as the invention of writing or the splitting of the atom – is the pharmakon.

Critical consciousness

In his recent work, Stiegler has shifted his emphasis from technics to the related question of attention.²⁰ There is a clear connection to memory here since for Stielger the ways in which memories are retained through exteriorisation have an impact upon the kind of attention that characterises human being. In other words, the development of attention (which might itself be the essential component of our being-in-the-world) is related to the development of technologies. The rise of new media technologies and the changing ways in which learners engage in multiple streams of attention (for example, listening, reading, and texting simultaneously) belong together. The question then is how is attention being shaped by the new media technologies? Is attention being augmented to evolve into new forms, or is attention a fixed faculty that must find strategies to cope with the changing environment? In some respects Stiegler’s analysis is a rather hackneyed, neo-Frankfurtian attack on the dangers of a manipulative culture industry determined to commodify, colonise, and corrode the attention of the youth. New media technologies are increasingly effective at manipulating attention and so the emergence of the new science of attention economics is both inevitable and alarming.²¹ With the proliferation of each form of new media – newspapers,

pulp paperbacks, movies, television, the Internet and social media – emerges new worries about the creation of the next generation of ‘I-don’t-give-a-damners.’ In this vein, Stiegler draws on Katherine Hayles’ view that our media-rich environment is eroding our capacity for deep attention, especially in the youth. Deep attention is here being replaced by what Hayles calls hyper attention: “Hyper attention is characterized by switching focus rapidly among different tasks, preferring multiple information streams, seeking a high level of stimulation, and having a low tolerance for boredom.”²² Departing from Hayles’ more even-handed interpretation of the shift from deep to hyper attention, Stiegler worries that this shift corresponds with a wider infantilisation of culture since critical maturity becomes increasingly difficult in an age of hyper attention.²³ Stiegler argues that the very distinction between adults and the youth is becoming unhelpfully confused whereby the critical maturity of adulthood is stunted or even entirely arrested. Stiegler is also keen to acknowledge the insights from brain imaging which establish the shifting scene of the brain by exploring synaptogenesis.²⁴ This is alarming Stiegler since not only are we weakening our attentional capacity, but, though substantial neurological change, we are also in danger of irretrievably losing our intellectual maturity. Pointing to the contradictions at the centre of Stiegler’s project here, Richard Iveson says, “Proclaiming himself thus a prophet of and from potentially the last generation of mature adults, Stiegler seeks to hastily recall us to rational critique before the new media has its way and irretrievably restructures the connections which constitute intelligence so as to render such constitution impossible.”²⁵ For Stiegler the effect of new media is, in a nutshell, the destruction of that hard-won product of Kant’s *Aufklärung*, critical consciousness.

What is somewhat ironic in Stiegler's account of the erosion of our critical consciousness is that it acknowledges the pharmacological nature of technological development, but then appears to rely on a conventional, even banal, critique of modern technology and new media as the manipulation and erosion of attention and critical consciousness. This is important and illustrates some deeply held assumptions about attention itself, for example, that attention exists before culture engages it.

Common among psychologists is the view that attention is akin to a spotlight that the subject can point towards objects. This view of attention suggests that the spotlight itself does not alter what it points towards but only illuminates it - it is simply a faculty or tool. There are many problems with this view of attention as a neutral tool. For one, it disregards the historical constitution of attention, as if attention exists as an Archimedean point and that when we attend, we can see the world afresh, seeming to invite a form of naïve realism.²⁶ It also tends to ignore how attention is related to and affected by its object. If we consider with Stiegler that attention is affected by its object,²⁷ then the ways in which different media form and shape attention become significant. The question of online learning can then be seen in terms of the ways in which technologies form attention rather than supposing that attention is a fixed and natural faculty that is either enhanced or diminished by our ever-developing technological milieu. We do not, then, need to begin our debate with questions like 'how do we stop the Internet from destroying our attention span?' Susan Greenfield, professor of pharmacology at Oxford University has recently raised concerns (not dissimilar to Stiegler) about the dangers of the growth in online living for our changing intellectual and attentional capacities. She says: "Whilst of course it [Internet use] doesn't threaten the existence of the planet

like climate change, I think the quality of our existence is threatened – and the kind of people we might be in the future.”²⁸ Greenfield here is expressing a fairly conventional concern about the erosion of deep attention that Hayles says is needed for complex problem solving and sustained understanding. In the educational world in particular, deep attention is regarded as normative while hyper attention, useful though it may be in certain commercial contexts from air traffic control to currency trading, is connected to the loss of some essential aspect of human identity. But Hayles suggests that the two forms of attention can be brought together: “media stimulation, if structured appropriately, may actually contribute to a synergistic combination of hyper and deep attention, a finding with suggestive implications for pedagogy.”²⁹ Stiegler on the other hand, is less optimistic about such a synergy. As we move from what Stiegler characterises as the ‘republic of letters’ to an age of ‘numeric programming’ (a contrast that evokes the binary logic that cannot abide the undecidability of the pharmakon), we must, I think, be extremely alert to the dangers that Hayles, Stielger and others draw attention to. We can be sympathetic to Stiegler’s concerns about the threat to critical consciousness without seeing life online as heralding the destruction of the literate world. There is, furthermore, a strongly political dimension to Stiegler’s concerns. Indeed the formation of attention is never isolated but only takes place in dialogue with the social, a process that Stiegler calls individuation. This individuation can be seen in the formation of attention, but also in the formation of desire. However, Stiegler is concerned that modern media not only replace deep attention with hyper attention, but desire, which should shape and be shaped in dialogue with the community (at least in the sense of a deliberative democratic process), is decomposed to constituent and individualised drives.³⁰ Those drives become the individual preferences of the consumer that in

some conceptions of democracy, are a given commitment to be mediated by a politics of representation. Such drives are 'given': they are personal and inviolable. These consumer drives are to be met by a producer, in this case, the modern private education institution. We can see here a connection with Biesta's analysis of the consumerist attitude to learning in which the individual preferences are also inviolable, representing the start and end of the examination of purposes in education.

Overcoming Time and Space

When online vast educational resources are available to the student in a de-distanced availability. I have already suggested that Borgmann would understand this availability as an erosion of significance. But can we clarify the nature of what is lost? If e-learning overcomes spatio-temporal situatedness, does it also undo some essential qualitative dimension of spatio-temporality? Perhaps philosophy of religion can help us here. Mircea Eliade was one of the first philosophers of religion to develop a strongly comparative religious understanding that took seriously correspondences between traditions and religions without reduction or parochialism. Eliade distinguished between sacred and profane with particular reference to the nature of time and space.³¹ For Eliade, the significance of human life can be found through the structuring and delineating of space and time. Eliade speaks of the manifestation of the sacred as a *hierophany* an event in which space and time are consecrated by a transcendent interruption in the mundane.³² The capacity for *hierophany* (of a God who is Wholly Other) exists where space and time are consecrated through the paradigmatic rituals of religious traditions. Rituals allow for the world to be formed, from chaos to cosmos, as they bind us to certain times and places which are ordered and sanctified. From the Sabbath to the Mass, specific rituals

allow for a vertical interruption of the profane. In Eliade's view, myths and rituals provide structure and orientation to the world that would inhibit and disrupt the total availability of life online. Such inhibition and disruption of the normal patterns are where significance itself comes from since these interruptions are characterised by their 'otherness': they cannot be circumscribed within the projections of the subject. For example, attending the cathedral at evensong, oriented to the altar hearing the choristers that, theoretically, could be streamed direct to your mobile phone, opens a space for contingency: a place of encounter and otherness that is difficult, if not impossible to achieve online. But contingency does not happen by chance. It must be structured by the ritual encounter. In contrast to this affirmation of contingency, life online tends to be circumscribed by the determinations of the controlling subject (or the programme that runs on the device). This could have relevance to online education since it argues for the irreducible significance of the physical encounter. This encounter is significant because the subject must relinquish control. Eliade's ideas have been helpfully reworked by Jonathan Z Smith.

Smith takes up but also departs from Eliade where he says "Ritual is, first and foremost, a mode of paying attention. It is a process of marking interest... It is this characteristic, as well, that explains the role of place as a fundamental component of ritual: place directs attention."³³ In brief, Smith's innovation of Eliade is the priority he gives to attention as the key component of presence and significance. Attention is the core dimension of ritual, an attention that for Eliade entailed the specificity of sanctified time and space. For Eliade the singular times and places are 'given' (whether from God, or tradition) and so are not easily translated into the virtual. For Smith, on the other hand, space is sanctified by virtue of the act of attention and could therefore take place only in the

mind and conceivably online. This is conceivable because the real goal of the disruptive encounter with the other must be the attention to the other. The significance of being disrupted is to see again with attention so that the subjective projections are put to one side.

Nevertheless, one might find the account of the formation of attention through technology in Stiegler's analysis to be incompatible with this view of attention opening the subject up to contingency. I do not think these conceptions of attention need to be opposed since technologies themselves have a contingent dimension: they are not only what they are intended to be.

Conclusion

The path we have taken has sketched out some of the relations between technology, time, attention and life online. Smith's development of Eliade has given us a way of redirecting our attention from the physical to the attentional, thus avoiding a crude opposition between the physical and virtual. For Stiegler attention and temporality are fundamentally related since the formation of attention is coeval with tertiary retentions available to us through technological innovations and it is those tertiary retentions that constitute our experience of temporality. Thus authentic temporality and life online are not, in principle, mutually exclusive, though Stiegler does explore the risks to our critical attention of modern digital media. Elsewhere Stiegler has been keen to show the 'virtual' to be simply a new form of an ongoing process of hominisation:

Rather than talking about 'virtual space' one would have to refer to a new, digital, retentive system: a system which affects institutions of space and time, and which is no more and no less virtual than any other form of

tertiary retention equally involving space and time, calendarity and cardinality.³⁴

In principle then, online life is not fundamentally different from other forms of tertiary retention.

We also considered Biesta's concerns about the culture of learnification and asked whether online education would reinforce and extend the pervasive and corrosive language of learning. I argued that online education does reinforce some aspects of learnification, but suggested that it does not need to. That is why I paired a discussion of Biesta with an ambivalent reading of technology and modern media. It is within the disruptive draft of this ambivalence, that the questions of significance and purpose are more likely to have traction and could, therefore, resist learnification.

The times and places of face-to-face education can work to structure time and space in ways that are disruptive. Those who want to be educated should not assume that education can come to them, anytime, anyplace, anywhere. Like good parenting, the role of structuring space and time, of drawing lines and limits to when and where good education takes place, is an important part of the job of educational institutions. It is the role of the institution to offer the structure and support that is not infinitely flexible or able to meet the whimsical preferences of the student-as-consumer. This is pharmacological insofar as it both structures and inhibits us. The disruptive nature of specific times and places can enable attention that is significant. But, along with Smith and Stiegler, I suggest that it is not the specificity of the place or time that is the point. *It is the power to disrupt: to bring about a fresh attention.* And if Biesta is right that modern educational theory neglects reflection on the purposes of education, then this disruptive moment and the subsequent attention it provokes, might offer a challenge to

the view of education as conforming to the subjective will of the student as consumer. We miss the significance of this disruptive moment since the technological age encourages a focus on ends rather than means, of destinations rather than journeys.

Endnotes

1. Liverpool Hope University 'Our Approach to Higher Education', (2014).
2. At the time of writing (July 2015) Wikipedia redirects 'Online Education' and 'E-Learning' to 'Educational Technology'.
3. Gert Biesta, *Good Education in an Age of Management: Ethics, Politics, Democracy* (London: Paradigm, 2010).
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6. Friesen, N. (2013). Educational Technology and the 'new Language of Learning': lineage and limitations. In N. Selwyn and K. Facer (eds). *The Politics of Education and Technology: Conflicts, Controversies and Connections*. London: Palgrave, pp. 21-38; Bayne, S. (2015) What's the matter with 'technology-enhanced learning'? *Learning, Media, and Technology*, 40 (1), 5-20.
7. Philosophers of technology often speak of the extraordinary pace of technological change on society, from classic accounts like Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock*, to James Gleick's *Faster...*
8. Biesta, *Good Education in an Age of Management*.

9. Bernard Stieger, *Technics and Time I: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 134.
10. Bernard Stieger, *Taking Care of the Youth and the Generations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).
11. Masschelein, J. (2011). Experimentum Scholae: The world once more ...But not (yet) finished. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 30 (5), 529-535.
12. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking Press, 1981).
13. Stieger, *Taking Care of the Youth*, 127.
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15. Jacques Derrida. "Plato's Pharmacy," *Dissemination* (trans. Barbara Johnson. London: The Athlone Press, 1981), 61-172.
16. Günther Anders in Alfred Nordmann 'Noumenal Technology: Reflections on the Incredible Tininess of Nano', in *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology* 8: no. 3 (2005): 3–23.
17. Having said that, a 7% completion rate is still very impressive given the extraordinary sign up. Chris Parr, "Mooc completion rates 'below 7%'" *Times Higher Education* (May 2013) <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/mooc-completion-rates-below-7/2003710>. article.

18. Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 41.
19. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates recounts the story of the Egyptian King Thamus who is skeptical of the offer of the invention of writing. Thamus is concerned that his people will actually lose the power of memory through the reliance on an external form.
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22. Katherine Hayles, Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes, *Profession* 13, 2007, 187-199, 187.
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24. Stieger, *Taking Care of the Youth*, 18-19.
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26. For a critical discussion of the ways in which attention is conceived as a neutral, ahistorical 'foundational' faculty see Lewin, Behold: Silence and Attention in Education *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 48(3), 355-369.
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28. Ian Semple, "Oxford scientist calls for research on technology 'mind change'" *The Guardian* (September 2010) <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2010/sep/14/oxford-scientist-brain-change>.

29. Hayles, Hyper and Deep Attention.
30. Stiegler, Taking Care of the Youth, 12-13.
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The Practice of Learning and the necessity of a Sceptical Moment

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Theorising, Practising and Practising theorizing

This paper recurrently refers to a distinction between theorising and practising both implicitly and explicitly; so the worry that an artificial dichotomy between theory and practice is being created or that the distinction between them is exaggerated, looms large throughout the paper. Practices are necessarily influenced and even founded upon theories that are rendered invisible in the blinding light of visible behaviours and actions that practices manifest as. Employing theory and practice, theorising and practising, theorists and practitioners, as analytical categories and considering them distinct allows for a richer analysis of the intricacies of teaching-learning situations.

Reflective practice is valuable because reflection allows for clarification of concepts and principles associated with practice, lends rich meaning to practices. An act of reflection often leads to a reconsideration of theories and practices, in the form of acceptance, rejection of a new possibility or reaffirmation or modification of beliefs and its associated practices. Practitioners reflect in the throes of action (practical reasoning) and in quiet moments removed from the arena of practice (theoretical reasoning). Both forms of reasoning have normative aspects - practical reasoning

aims to regulate action, whereas theoretical reasoning aims to regulate beliefs. Practical reasoning ought to help judge specific situations, apply principles and theories to action and is usually driven by pre-formed beliefs and theories. Theoretical reasoning ought to allow an examination and either rejection, modification, realignment, reaffirmation or a richer understanding of our attitude towards a belief and hence associated practices.¹

Educational practitioners engage in different kinds of activities - teaching, developing curriculum and formulating policies. These practices are theory-laden, so a learner who aspires to be a practitioner in education, ought to theorize, examine her beliefs and anticipate and examine practices that the beliefs could influence. An important objective of Philosophy of Education (PoE) is to learn theoretical reasoning and critically examine educational theories that inform practice. Learning to philosophize helps one become aware of one's theoretical suppositions and thus informs and enriches practice. While theorising, practitioners then ought to maintain an attitude that allows for an examination of their beliefs. I argue that an attitude of scepticism and experiencing a sceptical moment is a necessary condition for learning theoretical reasoning in a way that it informs educational practice. This ought to inform teaching and learning philosophy of education.

This paper first establishes specific purposes of learning to philosophize and its value for practitioners of education.

1. *"It would thus be more accurate to characterize the issue of both theoretical and practical reason as attitudes; the difference is that theoretical reasoning leads to modifications of our beliefs, whereas practical reasoning leads to modifications of our intentions (Harman 1986, Bratman 1987)"* (Wallace Wallace, R. Jay, "Practical Reason", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/practical-reason/>>2

Subsequently, dissatisfaction with our beliefs is identified as the source of the impulse to examine and possibly revise or reaffirm our beliefs. Using Kant's definition of practice, learning is identified as a practice and in the process three normative aspects of learning are identified – the end of learning, the procedure of learning and a necessary attitude towards learning. Subsequently I argue that these normative demands lead to the conclusion that experiencing a sceptical moment, defined as suspension of judgement, is a necessary condition for learning philosophy of education.

This allows for a richer understanding of what ought not to be (and hence what ought to be) a learner's attitude when learning philosophy of education, which in turn informs pedagogy of philosophy of education.

Philosophy (of education)

Practitioners of education engage with theory at various levels. Since practices are theory-laden a first order engagement with theory occurs in educational practice. Practices are concrete instances of theories, in that they contain theories. For example, a mathematics teacher teaching teach arithmetic through concrete instances of the use of arithmetic operators in real life (distributing 10 marbles among 5 children, buying 5 kilograms of rice that costs Rs.50/- per kg) presumes the theory that it is possible or easy for children to construct abstractions like numbers and arithmetic operators through concrete instances when they are required to employ them.

A second order engagement with theory is when one is constructing theory (or receiving an already constructed theory) and employing judgement on when and how to employ it in practice. Theories either function as content of education (mathematics, history or any other discipline) or inform the practice of education (theories of learning

coming from developmental psychology that inform the practice of teaching, prescriptive theories of education like Gandhi or Tagore or Dewey's theories of education). This level of engagement involves using theories and employing judgement on whether to use them and if so how to use them in particular situations. This act of judgement has its source in practical situations when a practitioner has to deal with specific problems. For example, when a child is not as responsive as others to a pedagogical approach, the teacher would have to consider her psychological state, the source of this psychological state, her social context and then ascertain how she could elicit a response from the child, and determine an alternative teaching method.

Philosophising involves reflection and critical examination of both theories and of practices and includes the judgement if and how a theory ought to be implemented in practice. In that sense Philosophy of Education is a "*higher order activity that is parasitic on theory and practice*" (Moore, 1982, p. 3). This includes uncovering basic assumptions of theories, examining them for justification, assessing coherence and logical consistency in propositions that form a theory, critiquing concepts and establishing their limits, reasoning and establishing relationships between claims and arriving at sound theories that can inform practice.

When we do philosophize about education, we sometimes critically examine foundations of different disciplines, the methods, standards and requirements employed by the disciplines (we do Philosophy of Sociology, Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of History etc.). Philosophy of Education deals with the examination of requirements, standards and tools of reflection and the appropriateness and validity of methods, tools and criteria for assessment of claims in educational theories and practice.

Philosophy of education for a practitioner

Philosophizing in this sense, happens outside the immediate realm of practice. This theorizing demands a particular kind of reflection from a practitioner. Practitioners enter the realm of philosophy of education with an obligation to respond to a wide range of possible expectations from practice – pedagogical strategies that ensure learning, educational outcomes of students, management of the educational environment and engaging with demands from other stakeholders. Practitioner-learners perceive the need of theorizing for the sake of its implications on practice, as means to understand, inform and enrich practice. At a very basic level, this engagement with theory involves a pressing demand to be convinced of a theory, such that they influence practices and give a practitioner the confidence of doing things right.

This attitude differs from that of a theorist (a professional philosopher of education) who engages with theory for the sake of theory where the demand is that theorising be rigorous and conclusions be closer to truth.² Mandates on the method in work and motivation for reflection for philosophers of education come from the academic discourse within the realm of the discipline of philosophy. For example, a hint of logical inconsistency or a speculative question regarding an accepted theory is enough for a philosopher of education to be compelled to re-examine a theory and its foundational principles. The Gettier problem and the subsequent compulsions to respond and protect or give up on the JTB theory of knowledge is a case to the point. The

2. Truth is intentionally used here and I admit it does convey a particular stand. But what is being implied is that Truth serves as the criterion for judging differences in conclusions. And also to at the very least exclude extreme relativism, because if the possibility of extreme relativism is accepted the entire project of reflection or theorising falls apart.

discourse on education within the discipline of philosophy is dictated by concerns different from concerns of practitioners of education.

A practitioner is expected to be a theorist when she is learning philosophy of education. If this is so, what might impel a practitioner to care for and consider good theorising and philosophizing useful? Firstly, uncovering assumptions that were hitherto invisible sensitizes practitioners to the risk that something could go wrong in practice. Secondly, clarity about underlying assumptions in disciplines helps a practitioner understand the foundations on which disciplines rest on, and comprehend the extent and limits of disciplines that form the content of curricula. Thirdly, an understanding and continuous awareness of requirements, standards and methods of thinking, informs how a practitioner could deal with problems that raise normative questions during practice.

Knowing the intricate connections between theory and practice, being convinced of the need to philosophize because of its value for practice, is a first condition that ought to influence the attitude of a practitioner-learner.

Triggers for belief re-examination

Humans learn and are able to transform themselves through learning. If learning to theorize involves examining propositions and forming beliefs about them, the mind has to do this consciously. A conscious process of judging a belief is possible only if the mind can objectify and observe itself. Frankfurt describes this unique capacity of the human mind as the capability to self-objectify.

“[When we divide our consciousness in this way,] we objectify to ourselves the ingredient items of our ongoing mental life... We are unique (probably) in being able

simultaneously to be engaged in whatever is going on in our conscious minds, to detach ourselves from it, and to observe it - as it were - from a distance. We are then in a position to form reflexive or higher-order responses to it.” (Frankfurt. 2006. p. 171.)

He describes the ability of the human mind to observe thoughts inhabiting itself, detach itself from its content, and observe them as if from a distance. This ability makes it possible for us to form a response that is thought-through and “*developing higher-order attitudes and responses to oneself is fundamental to achieving the status of a responsible person.*” (Frankfurt. 2006. P. 172.)³

But what would make us desire to consider a thought that we see in our mind? Our mind is also inhabited by thoughts that we consider banal or inconsequential. Why do we actively consider some thoughts but ignore and discard others? Frankfurt says, “Facing ourselves, in the way that internal separation enables us to do, frequently leaves us chagrined and distressed by what we see, as well as bewildered and insecure concerning who we are. Self-objectification facilitates both an *inhibiting uncertainty or ambivalence and a nagging general dissatisfaction with ourselves.*” (*emphasis mine*) (Frankfurt. 2006. P. 171.)⁴

3. The assumption that we are referring not merely to basic skills which become embodied in the actions, rather one is referring to explicit actions that are reflected upon and then performed – which is a demand we have already established for reflective practitioners. One could say that having seriously thought through actions eventually could become habit and transform into skills.

4. Dissatisfaction implies the existence of some standards, both epistemic and moral, that might be unstated and not in the conscious mind. My argument in this paper also assumes the existence of some standards or the other as a necessary condition for learning.

In the context of theoretical reasoning (regulation of beliefs), this state of “*an inhibiting uncertainty and a nagging dissatisfaction with ourselves*” manifests as doubt in the grounds for justification of a belief. This doubt could impel us to re-examine beliefs, and then we intentionally initiate the process of learning.

The practice of learning

To term anything a practice, an intention is a necessary condition. While having an intention and conscious engagement with learning are necessary conditions to term learning as a practice, are they sufficient? Kant’s distinction between theory and practice is useful to identify some other aspects of practices and ascertain if it helps to conceive of learning as a practice. Kant defines theory and practice as,

“[Conversely,] not every doing is called practice, but only that *effecting of an end* which is thought as the *observance of certain principles of procedure represented in their generality.*” (*emphasis mine*) (Kant, trans. Nisbet, 1970, Page 61)

Kant says practices are different from mere doing, and the intention of practices is to “*effect an end*”. Effecting this end involves “*observance of certain principles of procedure*”, not merely following procedures. It is the desire to “*effect an end*” and an acceptance of “*certain principles of procedure*” that makes something a practice. We need to examine the “*end of learning*” and “*principles of the procedure of learning*” to consider learning a practice.

The end of learning

Kant clarifies further that a practice does not have to be grounded in an external end - something else that practice is aiming to achieve - but that practices presume an end within

themselves – that of doing the practice well, to the best of one’s ability.

“...this concept of duty does not have to be grounded on any particular end but rather introduces another end for the human being’s will, namely *to work to the best of one’s ability*;...”(Kant, trans. Nisbet, 1970, p. 61) (emphasis mine)

To explain this he distinguishes between acts of theorising that aim to provide explanations of experiences or applications in real situations (sciences, engineering - his examples) and theories that are purely rational (mathematics, objects of philosophy). He points out that if a theory is meant to explain experience or be applied in a practice, and if experience is contrary to the theory, we need to consider the possibility that we have not theorized sufficiently. This places a demand on the theoriser that (s)he ought to think some more.

We are considering philosophy of education as a higher-order activity that examines educational theory and practice, and these objects of philosophy have a clear direct bearing on educational practice. In this sense, we are placing philosophy of education in the category of theories that Kant places science and engineering in. The ones that provide explanations for experiences, inform practice and can be applied to practice. We are considering learners who are would-be practitioners (practitioner-learner) who are learning philosophy for the sake of practice. The learner’s duty then is to theorize as well as possible such that it informs her practice.

Learning then is a *duty concept* and there is an end to learning that is within learning itself, which implies that for a practitioner-learner, learning to philosophize ought to be an end in itself. What might be the “end” of the practice of learning philosophy of education?

Israel Scheffler, in “Philosophical models of teaching” says -

“The knower must indeed satisfy a further condition beyond the mere receiving and storing of a bit of information. ... it generally involves the *capacity for a principled assessment of reasons bearing on justification of the belief in question*. The knower, in short, *must typically earn the right to confidence in his belief by acquiring the capacity to make a reasonable case for the belief in question.*” (Peters. ed., 1967) (*emphasis mine*)

Scheffler further states that “Nor is it sufficient for this case to have been explicitly taught. What is generally expected of the knower is that *his autonomy be evidence in the ability to construct and evaluate fresh and alternative arguments*, the power to innovate, *rather than just the capacity to reproduce stale arguments earlier stored.*” (Peters. ed., 1967) (*emphasis mine*)

Scheffler defines the end of learning as ‘*earn[ing] the right to confidence in his belief*’ that comes from acquiring the capacity to make a ‘*principled assessment of reasons bearing on justification of the belief in question*’. The learner, he says, has to demonstrate her autonomy by constructing and evaluating fresh and alternative arguments.

The practice of learning is then founded on the learner experiencing “*uncertainty and ambivalence*” leading to “*dissatisfaction*” with one’s justification for beliefs, desiring to “*earn the right to confidence in his belief*” for which the learner has to make “*a principled assessment of reasons bearing on justification of the belief in question*”. Earning the right to confidence implies being confident of a belief and that has to be acquired by the learner, so it is essentially an autonomous act.

Principle of procedure of learning

Dissatisfaction with the grounds for justification for a belief marks the beginning of learning and earning right to confidence in a belief marks the end, what does the learner do in between? Kant says we observe “*principles of procedure represented in their generality*”.

Kant does not refer to the “*observance of certain principles of procedure*” as mere observance of a predetermined procedure. If learning philosophy demands that we theorize with the intention to examine our beliefs and learning demands that we earn justification for beliefs, then the practice of learning can not be just mechanically following prescribed (even self-prescribed) procedures. The procedure itself can not be static in the sense that one is convinced about in the beginning and then follows it without any deviation.

If a practice (learning to philosophize in our case) is an end in itself, it implies that we do not do it as an “empty ideal” (Kant, translated by Nisbet, 1970) to achieve. The learner is responsible for having determined whether she has philosophized and philosophized well enough. Kant says that theorising also involves experiencing the effect it has on our will – whether it is thought to be completed or as approaching completion. We ought to be constantly conscious of the practice of learning, not only in the sense that we are aware of what we are doing, but also conscious of whether we have achieved its end or not. This demands a “*principled assessment of reasons bearing on justification of the belief in question*” (Peters. ed., 1967) continuously through the process of practice. This assessment is a principle of the procedure of learning that one ought to be guided by.

Since the objective is to earn confidence in a belief and its justification, the process necessarily involves doing a

“principled assessment” of reasons that form justification. This places two more demands on the process of learning - being conscious of the method of arriving at justification (methodological self-consciousness) and confidence in the adequacy of the method. The self-conscious methodology and confidence in adequacy of the method are conditions for the learner to succeed in reflection. Reflection (examining grounds for beliefs) and Reflective success (having philosophized enough) ought to be the learner’s focus rather than mere agreement (or disagreement) with a belief. A judgement that one has acquired confidence in a belief and has philosophized enough marks the finishing line for the process of learning. This judgement, resulting in reflective success, also entails judging how the belief might manifest in practice. It is not adequacy of justification alone but also its practicality in real experience that determines the success of reflection.

Moral dimensions of learning to philosophize

What might encourage a practitioner-learner to engage in the practice of learning as a duty, when it only promises something as evanescent as reflective success and confidence which might eventually be useful to her practice and also demands that the practitioner herself owns the responsibility of assessing the procedure of practice? This seems possible only if a moral imperative compels this attitude for the learner. The need to do things right serves as a moral imperative that directs her attitude to learning.

“I ought to be a good practitioner who does my practice right. So I have to learn what I ought to do eventually in my role as a practitioner. If I have to do the right things as a practitioner, then, I ought to have theorised well in arriving at the beliefs that ‘my’ practice is founded upon. If that is the case, then I have to theorise myself (autonomously) and rigorously

enough that I have adequate grounds for justification of the belief. My practice has to maintain *integrity* with the theorising which is the source of my confidence in beliefs.”

The practice of learning acquires another necessary condition, that of moral integrity. Moral integrity in turn demands courage to challenge oneself and allow for the possibility that one might be wrong. The practice of learning places demands of moral integrity and courage to reflect on beliefs on the practitioner-learner.

Sceptical moment - a necessary condition for learning

These considerations mark the necessary normative aspects of learning – dissatisfaction with justification of our beliefs, the end of learning as gaining the right to confidence in justification, the procedure of learning being self-reflexive (judging whether one has gained confidence in justification for a belief), self-reflection being more important than agreement or disagreement, a need to maintain integrity between theorising and practising, and the courage to question oneself.

These necessary conditions together form an attitude that can be best described as “scepticism” directed towards oneself. “I don’t know.” and not “It is not possible to know.”.

This description of the state of the learner presumes that she does not have confidence in a belief or its justification, which implies that she ought to be in a state of suspended judgement with regard to a belief.

Epistemic qualities of the sceptical moment

Jonathan Barnes in his introduction to “*Sextus Empiricus – Outlines of scepticism*” describes a type of scepticism that he terms ‘local scepticism’. Local in the sense that this is scepticism in relation to the particular topic or subject

under consideration and a suspension of the judgement on a particular belief or set of beliefs. He describes a sceptical moment as follows - "*suspension of judgement is a standstill of the intellect, owing to which we neither posit nor reject anything.*"(I.10) (Barnes, 2000, Page xxiv). He describes the state as one of absence of an opinion. Rather than suspension of belief, he shifts our attention to suspension of judgement on the belief. If the point of focus is judgement rather than belief, some questions about the relationship between beliefs and judgements arise.

Do we believe only those things that we have judged to be true? To explain this Barnes distinguishes between acceptance and belief. We judge something and then accept it, but we may still not believe it. If I logically argue that there is no reason to believe you will be alive tomorrow, you might accept it but continue to believe that you will be alive tomorrow. (Barnes, 2000, Page xxv)

If we believe something, then does it follow that we have judged it? This is not necessarily true either. We have beliefs that we have never considered, we just happen to believe them. For example, most of us believe we will be alive tomorrow morning. That means we can suspend judgement and still continue to believe. This separation of beliefs from judgement helps us understand the sceptical moment better. (Barnes, 2000, Page xxv)

One, it is not complete suspension of belief, rather it is a suspension of judgement of the belief in question; and judgement brings focus on the justification rather than the belief itself. Two, this suspension of judgement necessitates a process of reflection that includes examination of our justification and various alternative beliefs and their justifications – with reflective success as the intended end.

A teaching-learning situation then has to achieve the following – the learner is made aware of a belief, she consciously considers and assembles arguments for and against the belief in question, she weighs different justifications against each other, and this pushes her to see that the reasons for and against are equipollent. The pedagogical objective is to cause this equipollence that leads to uncertainty and ambivalence and hence dissatisfaction with grounds for the belief and a suspension of judgement. And then the pedagogue has to provide tools and methods of reflection which the learner uses to achieve reflective success.

This sceptical state is necessary if she has to feel the need for the tools and methods of philosophy because common-sense does not provide a resolution of the sceptical state.

Since adequacy of the grounds for justification is a necessary condition for reflective success, the sceptical moment also brings the method of arriving at grounds for justification into question. Does the learner then have to completely suspend judgement on the philosophical method too? That would lead to an impasse.

But this is not necessary. Since we are discussing particular learning situations when the learner suspends judgement of a particular belief, this moment brings existing grounds for the learner's belief into question. This enables her to question the adequacy of the grounds and consider alternative justifications. Assessing them for adequacy implies some requirements and standards that the justification has to fulfil and examining to see if alternative justification meet those requirements and standards or not. This is a rather modest version of scepticism expected from a practitioner-learner.

Moral force of the sceptical moment

Impelled by the sceptical moment, the practitioner-learner ought to engage in theoretical reasoning to resolve the suspension of judgement. The source of this moment is an erosion of confidence in beliefs and the need for integrity between her role as a practitioner and practices that the belief in question might influence. Subsequent theorising ought to affect the belief such that her lived life is informed and her actions influenced by this change. This makes a series of demands on learner attitude towards the act of learning that demand serious consideration.

There ought to be a moral force to the theoretical reasoning – one ought to have to get it right. Epistemic doubt or intellectual discomfort does not entail moral commitment towards theoretical reasoning. What might provide moral force to the practice of learning?

Mikhail Bakhtin provides deep insight into the moral nature of theoretical reasoning. Bakhtin says that an individual's relation to the world is essential for the world if (s)he engages in *participative (unindifferent) thinking*. An individual's thinking is unindifferent, if her thinking is "*act-performing thinking*". "Act performing thinking" is that which one considers oneself answerable for and hence it has a moral force. If we consider ourselves answerable for the deed we perform, our will is emotionally directed - it matters to us that the act be morally right - since we are conscious that it would have an effect on the world. He calls this attitude towards the act of thinking *emotional-volitional*. (Bakhtin ed. 1993. p. 44-45)

In our case of the practitioner-learner, the act of learning is essential for the world because the educational practitioner is expected to eventually function in the world, hence her

thinking ought to be unindifferent if she considers herself morally answerable for the practices she engages in. If this obligation occupies her during the practice of learning, she would have what Bakhtin terms an emotional-volitional tone because her action (learning at that moment) entails revision of a belief in a way that is *inescapable, irremediable and irrevocable*. (Bakhtin ed. 1993. p. 44-45) At least the learner would want it to be so.

He describes the emotional-volitional tone as a “certain ought-to-be attitude of consciousness, an attitude that is morally valid and answerably active. We use the term ‘emotional-volitional tone’ to designate precisely the moment constituted by my self-activity in a lived-experience – the experiencing of an experience as mine: I think – perform a deed by thinking.” (Page 36-37; Bakhtin; Towards a philosophy of the act)

If our learner has suspended judgement she would want to resolve this suspension by deciding what she ought to believe. Since the belief in question entails practices that she is answerable for, it is a morality informed attitude and an active consciousness that has to find a resolution to the situation. “What ought I believe? It is important because I want it to influence what I ought to do.”

Suspending judgement in justification for a belief brings part of our Self into question. This is a moral problem because we also realize that we are answerable for the act of accepting a justification through this practice of learning. I am answerable to my actions, and by deciding to act in a certain way, I am undertaking an obligation to act in that manner. This obligation is irrevocable since it stems from my own self, not imposed from without. The need to be answerable propels me to ‘earn the right to justification’ in the principle arrived at from theorising.

It is evident how practical situations could carry a moral force. Would that be possible in antiseptic environments where theoretical reason is conducted and the engagement is with abstractions and universalities?

Bakhtin says that any universally valid value becomes *actually* valid only in an individual context. If learning is considered an answerable act by the learner, her emotional-volitional tone translates generalities realized through theoretical cognition into her particular context. The emotional-volitional tone, he says, seeks to express the truth of the given moment and that relates it to the universal theory. The individual's understanding of a universal theory is not a prototype of the universal theory. It is not "*contentual constancy*" that describes how an individual receives universal theories, rather it is a unique, unrepeatable, particular instance of the universal theory that forms itself in the mind of the actor. "The word that would characterize this more accurately is *faithfulness* [being-true-to]" (Bakhtin ed. 1993. p. 38) rather than accurate representation or accepting a prototype of the universal truth.

What about the environment in which theoretical reasoning is done - in quiet moments of contemplation or artificially created spaces like classrooms. Such theorising has *only a* sense-validity that "are themselves afloat in a peculiarly airless space, and are not rooted in anything, neither in something unitary nor in something unique." (Bakhtin ed. 1993. p. 21). The metaphor of an airless space insinuates that I don't have to live there, I hold my breath and deal with it, until after which I can continue to live the way I already do. Doubt in this antiseptic space is hypothetical not real.

According to Bakhtin, only answerability attached to the act of reasoning surmounts this gap between individual living ridden with particularities and the world of theoretical

reasoning. He says, “The answerable act or deed alone surmounts anything hypothetical, for the answerable act is, after all, the *actualization* of a decision – *inescapably, irremediably and irrevocably.*” (Bakhtin ed. 1993. p. 38).

The learner has to realize that while the environment in which theoretical reasoning is being performed is artificial, the implications of her actions have moral import, because they influence actions of hers that she is answerable for.

How does one exercise answerability?

Bakhtin separates the formal (how one convinces oneself of the need to act in a particular way) from the substantive aspects (the theory that is accepted) of actions in thought.

He says “...And what compelled me to sign at the moment of undersigning was not the content of the given performed act of deed. This content could not in isolation have prompted me to perform the act or deed - to undersign-acknowledge it, but only in correlation with my decision to undertake an obligation - by performing the act of undersigning-acknowledging.” (Bakhtin ed. 1993. p. 38).

It is not the irrefutable logic that reasoning offers, but it is the practitioner-learner’s acknowledging and undersigning both the process of learning (reflection) and end of learning (reflective success) that impels her to practice learning. The need for undersigning in turn would exist only if there is doubt and an emotional-volitional stance towards doubt. Doubt then is a necessary condition for learning.

Why would a learner think that universal generalities arrived at through theoretical reasoning would resolve doubts regarding her Self?

Bakhtin says in a moment of doubt with regard to an act we have to perform, theoretical cognition becomes necessary because “It is precisely *doubt* that forms the basis of our life as *effective deed-performing*, and it does so without coming into contradiction with theoretical cognition. This value of doubt does not contradict in any way *the unitary and the unique truth [pravda]*: it is precisely this unitary and unique truth of the world that demands doubt.”(Bakhtin ed. 1993. p. 36-37).

Our perception that a unitary, unique set of beliefs forms the truth of the world (*pravda*) is the source of doubt. At the same time, the Self has a unique history of experiences (*historicity and uniqueness*) and a particular combination of beliefs and principles integrated to form the Self (*unitary plane*). Our Self operates on this unitary plane. The doubt in our justification stems from our perception that there are universal truths. Hence engaging in theoretical cognition is the only way to resolve this doubt and this provides the moral force to theorising and makes it a moral endeavour.

Conclusion

The basic issue then seems to be that practitioners who engage in actions and philosophizing ought to inform these actions. Human beings are moral beings in the sense that we feel morally responsible for our actions. A practitioner-learner’s function in the domain of education is through actions and she ought to feel answerable for her actions. This moral imperative ought to affect the process of learning, rather it ought to be the reason why a practitioner-learner learns philosophy. Formal learning spaces where theoretical reasoning happens are by nature isolated from the world of action and this establishes a *fundamental split* between the content and the person’s past, her self and hence her life.

The end of philosophising is for the learner to “earn the right to confidence in her beliefs” through theoretical reasoning. The practice of learning ought to bridge this gap between theoretical reasoning and the multitude of the individual’s experiences, history and beliefs which are not an exact copy of the universal principles conceived in theories of learning.

A moment of scepticism about one’s own grounds for beliefs helps bridge this *fundamental split* by making learning both an epistemic and a moral imperative because the suspension of judgement of a belief leads to a state of doubt not merely about a particular belief. That a contrary belief or justifications are part of an integrated self, in turn brings the practitioner-learner’s own self into question. The learner needs to arrive at a resolution that resolves the erosion of confidence in a belief, through examining the grounds for various possible beliefs and earn her right to confidence in justification for a belief. The sceptical learner then adopts an emotional-volitional stance towards theorizing because it becomes a moral necessity to re-establish her justifications and beliefs from universal principles.

A sceptical learner can then truly engage in theoretical reasoning as a moral obligation, rather than a mere intellectual exercise. Signing over the dotted line of a practice comes from a need to resolve a belief and fulfil the condition of *answerability* that acts of moral beings demand.

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Authenticity of Teaching-Learning: Perspectives from Art Education

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Introduction

Models of learning have often focused on the cognitive aspects of learning.¹ The mainstream system of education also privileges cognitive and intellectual capacities as integral to the act of learning. Thus, there is an emphasis on disseminating and acquiring knowledge as the central aspect of teaching-learning. Given that the model of institutional knowledge is so deeply influenced by science and mathematics, it is not surprising that the focus on knowledge has led to over emphasis on science and mathematics teaching right from our schools. Moreover, even other disciplines are taught in ways that these scientific disciplines are taught and evaluated.

1. See McLaughlin(1976) and Lozano (2005) who treat learning essentially as a cognitive activity and look at neuroscience research and cognitive theories to illuminate our understanding of how learning happens.

Some might argue that education is not just about transmitting knowledge but it is also about imparting skills. Again, the question of training skills often reduces to the model of scientific learning. Problem solving is a skill that is taught in mathematics; laboratory skills are also important in physics, chemistry and biology. Although laboratory activities are many times placed lower in importance when compared to theoretical learning and theoretical knowledge, they are nonetheless essential parts of acquiring knowledge. This is primarily because these 'skills' in the mathematical and scientific disciplines are also integrally related to the nature of the knowledge in these systems. But education is also about acquiring broader skills such as reading and writing, thinking and analyzing. These skills are not directly co-relatable to elements which constitute what we understand as knowledge as such and thus there is always an ambiguity about the importance of these skills in mainstream school education today.

The emphasis on knowledge, which reflects a historical preoccupation with this idea, is based on certain views on the nature of knowledge. Firstly, knowledge is dominantly understood as a set of statements about various things. That is, knowledge is primarily presented as a finished product that is concretized in the texts and which is then communicated to the student. Knowledge as a product is in essence different from knowledge as a process. Knowledge always involves the process of knowing but most often the emphasis on the end product of knowledge occludes the importance of paying attention to this unique process of knowing that is essential to learning.²

2. In fact, even the theories of knowledge as in traditional epistemology emphasize truth, beliefs and propositional states rather than the explicit process of knowing that is involved in knowledge creation. There are exceptions such as the reliabilist theories of knowledge. See Audi

How does one engage with knowing in the classroom? Can one teach knowing in the classroom? The first way to engage with knowing is to attend to the experiences of a student. In other words, if education is not just about transmission of the objects of knowledge but also about the process of knowing, then it is necessary to begin with articulating the nature of this experience of knowing. The fact that experiences of students are often erased or not sufficiently thought about in classroom education is not surprising since the dominant western philosophical system which is at the basis of much of modern education has always had a problematic relationship with the category of experience.

Right from the early Greek philosophical tradition, the question of experience, which is intrinsically related to the human subject, has been a profound problem in the project of grander themes like the search for truth and knowledge in western thought.³ Experience was seen to be fundamentally subjective, located within individuals, not transparent to others, and open to deception and misinterpretation. The non-availability of any obvious measure of objectivity in relation to experience meant that it was easier to ignore it in the acts of gathering, producing or transmitting knowledge.⁴ The objectivity and public-ness of objects of knowledge were not available to the processes of knowing.

(2010/1998) for more on this.

3. While this statement is surely a gloss on a long history, it is nevertheless true that mainstream 'western' thought does encode a consistent suspicion towards experience, feeling and emotion in the domain of knowledge. See Williams (1998) for some historical notes on this theme, Rooney (1994) for a feminist critique and Rosen (2002) for an analysis of the ordinary experience.

4. Guru (2013) and Sarukkai (2013a, 2013b) in their influential work *The Cracked Mirror* have problematized the relation between experience and theory in detail and the need to substantively engage with the category of 'lived experience'.

Thus, for example, in the description of scientific knowledge the emphasis on knowledge, with particular emphasis on mathematical and scientific knowledge, and the overall increased scientization of education, meant that the experience of knowing had been effectively banished from understanding the process of learning.⁵ This paper attempts to recapture this lost ground by referring back to this process of knowing, not reducible to the cognitive domain alone. It does so by drawing on a paradigm example of learning in art and through that attempt to conceptualize an extremely important category of learning, namely, the possibility of authenticity in learning.

We can begin the discussion by focusing on the experience of the process of learning in a student. What does a student experience while in the classroom? A classroom has many structures that are part of the experience of the student. The first is the presence of the teacher in the role of a teacher as well as in the role of an adult, the second is the content of learning, third is the environment of learning such as the environment of the classroom, fourth is the human presence of other students, fifth is the 'mood' of the student at the moment of learning and so on. The experience of learning is obviously related to all these elements but one or other factors may dominate in a typical learning experience.

Learning has to happen as a combination of all these factors and has to happen through particular experiences of learning. Experiences of learning can range from the 'aha' moment of insight when listening to a teacher to extreme boredom and fatigue. It can range from extreme seriousness

5. One illustrates of this claim in the general absence of the importance of emotions in learning theories. For exceptions see Beatty (1969) and Ingleton (1995)

and focus to playfulness and being distracted. But whatever it is, the learning of a student is always and completely located in this experience. There is no content outside this experience of learning, even though we may tend to isolate learning in terms of the content that is grasped in a class.

However, is it worth focusing on the experience of learning?⁶ The contention of this paper is that there is a primordial and essential experience of learning that accompanies learning of different kinds. It is also not psychological but existential. And the model for it is not necessarily the common classroom experience which is ubiquitous in contemporary education but is from the domain of learning art.

We begin with the claim that there is something special to the act of learning, to the experience of learning and we locate this within the conceptual domain of ‘authenticity’, the implication being that there is indeed an essential experience of learning which is captured by the idea of ‘authentic learning’.⁷

Authentic is a difficult term since it has so many connotations, some of which are not really desirable.⁸ But there is also a

6. There are many accounts of both theoretical and experimental work on the experience of learning. In the context of art education, see Silverman (1997) and for an empirical approach to this problem see Marton et al (1984).

7. There have been few attempts to bring the concept of authenticity in teaching and learning by Schneider (1994), Nicaise, Gibney, & Craine (2000), Herrington & Oliver (2000) and Brown (2002-03)

8. Adorno (in *The Jargon of Authenticity* (1964)) and Bloom (in *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987)) have problematized the concept of authenticity. Adorno argues that Heidegger’s jargon of authenticity hides the Christian language in an existential ontology where “authority of the absolute is overthrown by absolutized authority” (5) which pave way for fascism. Bloom critiques the so-called “culture of authenticity” in the American youth which has become highly individualistic and relativistic in their moral positions.

primordial sense of authenticity in human action of various kinds, and this sense is primarily existential in nature. When we invoke the idea of authenticity here, we are attempting to articulate what it means to describe the act of learning. When does a student realize – experientially – that she is in the midst of the learning experience or has had a learning experience? Evaluation is a way to test what a student has learnt but it is not about the particular experience that accompanies the process of learning.

We find it useful to begin from the other side of learning, namely, teaching. If we ask for a similar description of teaching, we could be asking whether there is an experience of teaching. And whether there is an authenticity of teaching like authenticity of learning. While there are different ideas surrounding the concept of authenticity, we want to focus on one aspect which is its relation to limits. Authenticity in Heideggerian terms arises when we confront our finitude, when we confront the limits of our existence. In psychological terms, authentic action follows a recognition that action for other ends, such as functional or utilitarian ends, do not really matter when one is facing the end. We tend to act more ‘authentically’ when we are not merely passing ‘time’ but confront time itself.⁹

Analogously we can consider the argument that as a teacher, authentic teaching arises when the teacher comes to the limit of teaching. One way to phrase this is to say that the possibility of authentic teaching arises when the teacher knows the student is neither receptive nor even interested in learning but yet the teacher teaches with the same involvement. In other words, how do we teach when there is no functionality to teaching, when we teach not for getting a student to pass

9. Heidegger develops the concept of authenticity as confronting limitations in his celebrated work *Being and Time* (1962)

the exam, for example? What does a teacher experience when she is in those throes of the act of teaching, the experience of teaching which in itself is not related to teaching for a job, for a salary, to please somebody etc? Can we discover an authentic experience of teaching in these moments?

Similarly, when a student is learning – again not for purposes such as passing exam or exhibiting their ‘intelligence’ – what is the quality of that experience? Is there an authentic experience of learning that can capture those moments of learning qua learning? While these may seem to be questions that are perhaps only of philosophical interest, we want to point out that the discourse of art teaching routinely invokes the notion of authenticity. So instead of beginning with theoretical and philosophical understanding of the possibility of authentic learning, we want to begin with a fieldwork with dance students and dance teachers in order to explore the possibility of developing a framework of authentic learning.

Finally, the shift to authentic learning also allows us to bring the ethics of learning explicitly into the classroom. Authenticity is fundamentally related to ethics, as we argue in this paper, although naive readings of authenticity have been used in ethically problematical contexts. Moreover, the question of authenticity in art, for example, is intimately related to the notion of truth in art. The notion of a higher sense of truth seems to be integral to the idea of authenticity. This truth is not empirical or factual truth but truths about the human condition, because of which ethics becomes central to questions of authenticity.

The ethics of teaching necessarily involves certain experiential modes of teaching. Invoking authenticity in the experience of teaching may allow us to go beyond the ethics of duties of a teacher. Since it is experiential, such an ethical stance will

place the burden of ethical action on the teacher and not on any theoretical or universal principles.

At this point, we are not going to get into the question of whether there is an ethics of teaching and learning. In an increasingly commercial world of education, ethical questions have been deflected to the providers of education which also ends up viewing students as consumers. As consumers, they tend to believe that they, first and foremost, have rights as consumers. But the larger implication of this work is to finally illustrate how the ethics of teaching-learning is an important component of these processes, not just in the experiential sense but also in its project of acquiring and understanding knowledge.

Method in Art Education

One of the authors (A1) spent six months on a fieldwork in art education from April 2014 at Attakkalari Center for Movement Arts by observing and interviewing diploma students of Movement Arts, while also visiting schools where the repertory dancers teach. The one year diploma program of Attakkalari is one of its kinds in India as it gives intensive training in movement arts and mixed media. Apart from Attakkalari, several others artists in theatre, music, dance and visual arts were interviewed and engaged on questions of learning in arts.

The diploma curriculum of Attakkalari is quite diverse as everyday they have a mix of classes that range from traditional Indian forms of yoga, *kalari payyettu*¹⁰ and *bharatanatyam*¹¹ to classical western form of ballet as well as the contemporary dance techniques. Apart from this, they have visiting Masters of other different forms like

10. Famous martial art form of Kerala.

11. Classical dance form of Tamil Nadu.

thevarattam, *koodiyattam*, *kathak*,¹² and many others. The one year program accepts students from varied backgrounds like medicine, engineering, commerce, design, theatre and even reality dance shows, who may or may not have a previous experience in dance. Thus initially a lot of time is spent in de-conditioning and training of the body. Because even as non-dancers, we are habituated into certain everyday modes of movement and performance¹³ (maybe based on our gender/caste/class/religious/race identities and also our individual styles) which needs to be looked at as both advantageous and limitation of our movement vocabulary. So the initial preparation becomes imperative for the students to ready themselves for the more complex and diverse movements to be taught throughout the course. Also if some movements are done without enough preparation then they risk the chance of getting injured. Injury in movement arts is not merely something that one has to avoid but it plays a central role in learning of bodily techniques, as it becomes an internal check for the body to convey the incorrectness/unpreparedness of the movement.

A1 began his fieldwork primarily by observing all the classes to understand how the students are learning the movements and what is happening with the steps and sequences that they learn. Initially, as expected, the student observes the teacher and tries to imitate the movement that she is doing. Though the teacher shows the movement multiple times and expects the students to do it accurately, it is also constantly acknowledged that all bodies are different and the student has to find their own way of doing the movement sequence. Mere

12. Folk and classical dance forms from Tamil Nadu, Kerala and North India respectively.

13. For more details on everyday performativity of gender and other identity roles, see Butler (1990)

gesticulation¹⁴ i.e. just copying the teacher's movement is not enough and thus the students are constantly encouraged to go beyond gesticulation and find their own way of embodying it.

Now this “finding your own way to inhabit the movement” is quite central to the contemporary movement education and has multiple layers to it. First is at the level of body structure i.e. how the movement of teacher fits into different bodily structures of the students. It may have to be altered or changed a bit according to particular cases and it never seemed that the teachers are insistent on copying the movement exactly as they have shown although it is important to maintain the accuracy. After getting the initial structure of the step, the student then plays with the movement and see what all comes out in that engagement. They try to experience the movement from both outside and inside i.e. how it may look to the audience and also how it feels to them while moving in that particular way. It may trigger particular memories in the students which can vary from being pleasurable to being troubling. It can also trigger different imaginations in the students to relate it with stories and fantasies. Also every rehearsal of the sequence has the possibility of creating these different *movementscapes* for the students that can then help them when they choreograph their own pieces. The evaluation of the students is based on their class engagement and the movements that they create/perform both individually and with the group.

However, in learning these movement phrases from the teachers sometimes the students gets habituated in them

14. Gesticulation was a term used by dancer Rukmini Vijayakumar who has started the Lshva initiative in Bangalore. In a talk at Suchitra Film Society in Bangalore (17 August 2014), she problematized mere gesticulation of movement that tend to happen in Bharatanatyam and other dance forms.

through repeated rehearsals i.e. whenever they are asked to choreograph something, similar style of movements come out. Thus, apart from constant conditioning and de-conditioning, another important technique is used which is improvisation. During improvisation, students are encouraged to experiment with new movements which maybe from teachers, peers, or from anywhere they have seen in their homes or just walking on the road. The focus is not so much on where the movement is coming from, thus “creating a movement” is not as much emphasized as much as bringing different movements together and making them your own. This view of art ties back to the idea of art as an “imitation of reality” which as Taylor (1991) mentions was the understanding of art in the West till it undergoes a change in the 18th century.¹⁵ It gets transformed from imitation of reality to individual creativity to which we will return substantially in the later part of paper.

Continuing on the theme of making these movements your own (which may come from diverse sources), I started interviewing the teachers and students at Attakkalari. In one of my initial interviews itself, I got an interesting insight

15. Taylor in his influential work *Ethics of Authenticity* problematizes this new idea of creativity –

The artist becomes in some way the paradigm case of the human being, as agent of original self-definition. Since about 1800, there has been a tendency to heroize the artist, to see in his or her life the essence of the human condition, and to venerate him or her as a seer, the creator of cultural values. But of course, along with this has gone a new understanding of art. No longer defined mainly by imitation, by mimesis of reality, art is understood now more in terms of creation. If we become ourselves by expressing what we're about, and if what we become is by hypothesis original, not based on the pre-existing, then what we express is not an imitation of the pre-existing either, but a new creation. We think of the imagination as creative. (1991: 62).

from a German ballet and contemporary dancer M1, and this was echoed time and again by most artists who I engaged with. She mentioned that when she watches a contemporary performance she is not so much interested in the glamour and scale of what the production is but something which comes across to her as an honest engagement of the dancer with the movement. So, if the dancer is merely trying to impress the audience with lot of acrobatic moves then it's not enough. Somewhere the performer has to show a deeper commitment to the work she is doing. Here she also invoked two other concepts close to the idea of honesty which throws further light on this engagement; these are authenticity and truth understood in an experiential sense. She elaborated saying that when a dancer engages with the movement honestly and experiences authenticity in doing the movement that is when both the performer and the audience experience something more than an artistic expression. She further added the element of sacrifice of the dancer's ego during such an exploration. She and many others have said this in different ways that – initially the dancer uses dance as a medium to express herself but gradually she reaches a point where she becomes the medium for dance to express itself. Sarukkai (2012) echoes something similar in his talk at the Tanzfestival symposium -

The ultimate aim of dance is [to] let [the] movement come into presence, to come into being. It is not about what the movements mean. The struggle of the dancer is to let the movements out of the bag, to subsume her ego and become the medium for the movements to express themselves. Thus, dancers become the medium for movements. (Sarukkai 2012)

Recently in a talk by TM Krishna, a well known Carnatic vocalist and a scholar, at Ninasam Heggodu, he spoke

about 'Art Experience' in a similar fashion. He began by problematizing the culture around Carnatic music scene which is highly Brahminical and patriarchal and has little space for women and people from lower castes and other religious backgrounds to participate or become prominent.¹⁶ However, he also claimed that there are times when he sings and loses himself completely in the music and so does the audience. In such moments he experiences authenticity of his action and a 'surrender' to the form itself. In this surrender there is a possibility of transformation of the artist as well as the form which leads to authentic learning. However, as soon as that moment is gone he is again thinking of how much accolades he is receiving from the audience and how to subdue the violinist and mridangam artist. But it is those glimpses of truth that he experiences which keeps him going in his work and that's what he seeks every time he rehearses or performs.

The more I spoke to artists, the more I got to hear about this art experience of seeking truth. However, as we know from the life and works of Gandhi, seeking truth in experience is not limited to the field of art. As a *satyagrahi* (or a truth seeker) you can experience truth in something as common as making your own salt. A potter, cobbler, blacksmith, sweeper or anyone else can seek truth in their experience of an honest practice. Thus, art experience in that sense is not restricted to the artists or in other words artistic method (or simply art method) can and is put into practice in various fields. By conceptualizing art method, it is not the intention to make it a binary opposition to scientific method as both of them have many similarities. The idea of experimentation, for example, is central to both the methods. That's why we hear the usage of laboratories in both contexts whether it is nuclear physics

16. Krishna explicates these ideas in detail in his recent book *A Southern Music: The Karnatik Story* (2013)

lab or a theatre lab. Art method also employs the use of “play” and “exploration” along with the centrality of body, experience and practice to its processes.

However, there seems to be one strong conceptual distinction which informs the practice of artists and that is the distinction between truth and facts.¹⁷ As I mentioned earlier many of the artists spoke about their work in art as search for truth but they never quite made a claim towards having an objective method to seek truth. Whatever techniques they have used to seek truth is quite contextual to their experience and is not universalizable for everyone (although they are universal; this distinction will be discussed in the next section). Even in their own practices, they have found different techniques relevant for different contexts. Facts, like techniques, form the “content” of their learning, art practice and teaching and don’t have a truth value in and themselves. Facts are epistemological judgments like whether a mudra of bharatnatyam is accurately embodied but they are not truth bearers. Dhareshwar (2010) problematizes this notion of truth which gets associated with facts and argues –

It is the association of truth with objectual thinking that has made truth an intractable concept. Truth, in the Gandhian sense, is neither a property of sentences nor of propositions; truth-bearers are neither sentences, nor propositions. Literally truth-bearers are persons; more accurately, experience is the only truth-bearer. (56)

Thus, for artists it is their search for authenticity in which they can experience truth and what guides them in their work. So even when they are trying to differentiate their practices from other artists, they shy away from a moral

17. This distinction between truth and facts is inspired by a discussion on a draft article ‘Truth or Fact? Reframing the Gandhi-Tagore Debate’ by Dhareshwar(forthcoming)

criticism of the artist as such as they can't judge someone else's experience with complete certainty. Their aesthetic judgment of someone's art doesn't necessarily collapse with their moral judgment of the artist.

Subject, Truth and Ethics

This understanding of locating truth in experience (though not articulated every time) is at the heart of the art method of teaching-learning. Jaychandran Palazhy, artistic director of Attakkalari, constantly reiterates to the dancer-teachers to be non-judgmental towards the students and have an inclusive perspective for all sorts of students who are in the classroom with a spirit of positive encouragement. The moral criticism that seems endemic to our mainstream classrooms be it in Mathematics where the student is ridiculed if he doesn't know if $2+2$ is 4 or in social sciences where he is equally humiliated¹⁸ if he is politically incorrect, is not as ubiquitous in art learning environments (as observed in Attakkalari). The normativization process through which concepts, facts or techniques have come to gain truth value hasn't pervaded arts as much as other fields of education, and seeking truth in experience is still acknowledged.¹⁹ Foucault makes interesting observation about when and how this normativization process happens as he looks at the relationship between subject and truth in Antiquity,

18. For a general analysis of Humiliation, see Guru(2009)

19. The problem is that lack of a capacity in a skill is a particular lack and is not easily generalizable. Thus, if a person does not have the skill to cook it does not imply that the person does not know how to play football. However, a lack in the capacity of acquiring or learning knowledge (as understood in mainstream education practices) is more easily generalizable; thus, a person who does not have the capacity to learn a mathematical subject is more easily judged to have the lack in various other cognitive capacities. The situation has become so extreme that today's competitive examinations for subjects like management still test students in their mathematical ability.

early and late Christianity and Modernity. He argues that in Antiquity –

[S]ubject as such doesn't have the right of access to truth and is not capable of having access to the truth. It says that truth is not given to the subject by a simple act of knowledge (*connaissance*)...for the subject to have right of access to the truth he must be changed, transformed, shifted, and become to some extent and up to a certain point, other than himself. The truth is only given to the subject at a price that brings the subject's being into play...there can be no truth without a conversion or transformation of the subject...let us call this movement...the movement of *erōs* (love). Another major form through which the subject can and must transform himself in order to have access to the truth is a kind of work. This is a work of the self on the self... a progressive transformation of the self by the self for which one takes responsibility in a long labor of ascesis (*askēsis*). (Foucault 2005:15)

He then argues that this relation between subject and truth changes in modernity which he locates in Descartes where now truth is directly accessible to the subject through knowledge of objects (*connaissance*) without any need of transformation. Thus, not only the access to truth is changed but the notion of truth itself has changed. Truth is taken out of subject's experience which develops through long engagement with *erōs* and *askēsis* and is put into the objectual world of concepts and facts. Srinivasan (2013) draws on Foucault and Taylor to argue that even the notion of self changes during this time. She states –

[O]ne witnesses a radical shift in the way 'formation of the self' is now conceptualized. A positive conception of the self which involves cultivating one's will to emerge as self-determining in freedom replaces the earlier idea of formation as the sacrifice of the self which requires

a surrender of one's will to the will of God. What thus emerges is a view of the "secular," autonomous self, individual defined in abstraction from any order or matrix of practices and actions. (21)

However, a major criticism of this understanding of truth and authenticity comes from ethicists as they argue that it can be easily appropriated into soft relativism and subjectivism & thus morally weak.²⁰ We also know how authenticity is a much abused word by the right wing linguistic and nationalistic groups who are always in search of reviving an "authentic" past.²¹ Even in the arts, post 18th century, movements like aestheticism and formalism have regarded "ethical criticism of art as either irrelevant or conceptually illegitimate" (Carroll 2000) and have argued for unbridled creativity.²² In such conflicting positions of art and ethics, how do we then begin to find common ground between the two? One way to do this is by looking at the idea of moral judgment in arts and other fields. As described above, the notion of humiliation is more pronounced in learning that has to do with disciplinary knowledge as against that in arts education. The fundamental ethical issue can thus be located in this difference of moral judgments in these different domains of learning. How can we conceptualize this form of moral criticism related to humiliation? Although not directly related to arts education, this problem can be analyzed through the responses of two seminal thinkers on ethics, namely, Tagore and Gandhi. There is another important relation that they bring out

20. See Bloom (1987) for more on this.

21. See Adorno's (1964) problematization of authenticity in existential thought(esp. Heidegger) which he argues lays ground for fascism, see footnote 5.

22. This move is similar to the one that scientists make in the name of curiosity as Sarukkai (2009) argues.

which is that art is fundamentally linked to non-violence in an essential sense and thus is taken into the fold of their ethical project.

Both, Tagore and Gandhi, problematized the normative concepts that colonization imposed to occlude the experience of truth, assimilated in the lives of common people in India through centuries of integration of *erōs* and *askēsis*.²³ Two small examples that Tagore mentions are of those villagers who didn't think twice before giving water for his overheated car even when there was a water-scarcity in their village and when the people of Mahsud village saved a pilot out of plane crash who was actually bombing their village (Tagore 2007: IV pp. 722-24).²⁴ So how did virtues of generosity and hospitality become so well integrated in their lives that they couldn't act in instrumental reason (a feature of modernity as Taylor (1991) argues) for their own benefit. Bilgrami (2014/2003) tries to articulate the deep integration in Gandhi between truth and non-violence as he tries to understand his ethics. He claims that Gandhi saw a fundamental difference between moral values and moral criticism which to a modern eye are invariably linked together. Bilgrami argues that it is because of our understanding of ethics i.e. "when one chooses for oneself one chooses for everyone," which leads to the conflation of moral values and moral criticism. However, Gandhi saw a deep source of violence in this understanding as this means that whatever one does, he would try to impose it on others, failing which he will judge and criticize them. Gandhi gave

23. *Erōs* and *askēsis* are used in the Foucauldian sense as introduced above.

24. Dhareshwar (forthcoming) while looking at Gandhi and Tagore highlights their common understanding of the truth assimilated in the lives of common people.

a wholesale alternative to this imagination of ethics when he suggested that “when one chooses for oneself, one sets an example to everyone.” This is a deeply moral position but it doesn’t lend itself to become judgmental or critical of others by placing oneself on a moral high ground. When one sets an example for everyone, it is a universal act but not a universalizable one, which means that if someone doesn’t follow the example that I am setting I can only be disappointed in the other, as well as with me because my actions weren’t considered worthy enough of being emulated. Gandhi’s *Satyagraha* was a deep integration of the two as he claimed that truth can’t be experienced without being non-violent in this fundamental way. And thus stating that truth lies not in epistemological facts but in moral experience. Therefore, truth for Gandhi is located in the experience of moral values and not in cognition of propositions describing the world (Bilgrami 2014).

Based on this background, let us come to the issue of teaching and learning ethical concepts especially when they gain moral truth value and become normatively right or wrong. We encounter many normative concepts like secularism, brahminism, patriarchy, privilege, etc in a liberal arts classroom which comes with a moral force that pushes the student to conform to a norm of political correctness. A student unaware of these norms has to learn it the hard way which may include ridicule and humiliation of being labeled as sexist, casteist, brahmanical, elitist or mere ignorant. However, once the naïve student learns the trick of political correctness, he takes up the role of disciplining others into this language. In such a context, the concept becomes rigid to experimentation as there is a punishment associated with not adhering to the norms. Thus, a different kind of imitation emerges where unlike in the arts, this imitation is to conform to what is already right rather than

to make the concept your own through various explorations. The learner has to constantly discipline herself according to the diktats of the concept which may lead to either conformity or a resistance to learn. In the cases when the student is actually able to engage with the concept in her lived experience and a new interpretation emerges which is her own, there still remains a difference between the two. Visvanathan (2014) raises this problem in the case of secularism where he states that the plural interpretations of secularism in the Indian context have become a private affair about which the official version of secularism doesn't care and keeps pushing for a standardized interpretation. So this raises the important question of whether authentic learning is even possible in the context of teaching ethically normative concepts.

Based on the above problematization, we need to rethink how we wish to bring ethical concerns in the domain of education i.e. classroom teaching and learning. If the normative force of ethical concepts create a resistance in learning among the students and may come across as a violent form of pushing some ethical principles down the throat of students; then the very purpose of ethics education is defeated as the form itself has become unethical, to use Gandhi's understanding of moral violence. However, there are many valid concerns in the marginalized groups if we begin to question the validity of these normative concepts as both Tagore²⁵ and Guru (2011) highlight. So how do we then imagine an authentic engagement with ethically problematic scenarios?

25. Dhareshwar(forthcoming) points to this concern in Tagore –

[I]t is true that when the sources of normativity are threatened, society descends into criminality and chaos. That's why Tagore was right to say that European societies cannot be imagined without the state (Dhareshwar forthcoming).

Drawing from the method in art education where authentic engagement with the form carries strong weightage, we have to create possibilities where ethical concepts can be experimented and played around by the students in a non-judgmental space of a classroom without rewards and punishments of adhering to political correctness. In Heideggerian terms our classrooms have to provide the necessary clearing for ethics to emerge in an active engagement by students rather than perceiving them as passive containers to be filled by already established ethical norms. The question that arises here is fundamentally about pedagogy, as to how do we build the trust and skills that the students are able to arrive at their own understanding of ethical action. From the fieldwork in art education, and Gandhi & Tagore's experiments with truth and ethics, there is a possibility of developing this pedagogy for an authentic engagement of ethics in education.

What about the ethics of teaching in all this? What gives us a model for this ethics? The claim in this paper is that the way of teaching art embodies certain fundamental principles that are central to the ethics of teaching in all domains. This happens because of art's engagement with the notion of authenticity – in practice and in learning. By drawing on examples of dance teaching, we have shown how the idea of truth and authenticity play a crucial role in creating a particular ethics of teaching in art practices. This ethical mode has important lessons for a general practice of teaching in other domains. For example, the difference in moral judgement in learning in fields such as mathematics and the sciences as against learning in arts can be grounded on the notions of authenticity, truth and the capacity to make what you learn 'your own'. How do these notions of authenticity and related idea of 'making it your own' play out in the context of teaching propositional and scientific

knowledge? Understanding this challenge might allow us to develop a workable ethics of teaching in all subjects without the concomitant presence of humiliation and related moral criticisms of students.

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Knowledge as Emotion: Non-linguistic modes of learning

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Both academia and industry privilege the notion of a detached or disengaged individual as apt to maintaining the standards of research and inquiry today. This paper in contrast seeks to address the role of emotionality in processes of learning. Learning in this context is not geared towards learning how or learning what but rather learning who. Based on Maslow's notion of self-actualization, this paper traces an alternate epistemology of learning that focuses on the question of what it means to be a human being in general and a human being in particular.

The attempt to explicate such a form of emotional knowledge is pursued by considering learning as that which occurs beyond the ambit of formal language practices and in the domain of day to day experience. In this regard, the experience of visual art is deployed as furnishing a form of knowing which is instantaneous and contributes to the acknowledgement of otherness. This analysis is followed up by exploring the role of presence and silence in various forms of learning that are culturally transmitted. The last section looks at the role civic learning or community learning as well as the world of sports and games play in fostering a rich sense of self as articulated by an alternate epistemology of learning.

Introduction

The idea of conceptualizing non-linguistic modes of learning appeared as a possibility while pursuing my post-graduate thesis. Primarily this project was a conceptual exploration that analyzed a select literature on notions of silence. My hunch was that we did learn a great deal of things informally, especially in ways that do not make use of language as deployed conventionally in education. At that time I was not able to grasp what the form or content of such a learning might have been. Nevertheless I did find some clues in the work of Merleau-Ponty who seemed to have been moving beyond the popular, dormant conceptualizations of language. His focus on the gestural, reverberating the tradition of thinkers such as Giambattista Vico, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder suggested an alternative trajectory available within the intellectual universe (Abram 1996, p.76).

My interest in the matter though inspired by the gestural, tended to extend beyond it. The search for me was rather towards the many possibilities that our bodies engendered between the spoken, the gestural and that which lay beyond that. The direction I was taking in framing an alternate modality to learning and knowledge has been captured quite beautifully by the psychologist Abraham Maslow in his conceptualization of learning. If one thinks in terms of the developing of the kinds of wisdom, the kinds of understanding, the kinds of life skills that we would want, then he must think in terms of what I would like to call intrinsic education-intrinsic learning; that is, learning to be a human being in general, and second, learning to be this particular human being (Maslow 1968, p.74).

My idea of an approach geared to this end hopes not to construe the learner as a blank repository into which

data or information can be transmitted. But rather chooses to return to the basics, to those drives that we can claim to be inherent both collectively and individually in all human beings, to those very undercurrents that seem to in the first place, frame a variety of capacities and capabilities that we exercise and lay claim to as contemporary human beings. Such an exercise is felt necessary not because of the existence of a dominant conceptualization of students as blank repositories. But rather because of certain characteristic tendencies in the practices of contemporary schools and colleges in the framing of the curriculum and the associated pedagogy. Working within severe time constraints and under the coercive influence of result driven audit cultures, education and thus learning today seem to be veering into a limiting exercise of transmitting a set of packaged deliverables in an abstract manner.

The urge to break away from this dominant approach in conceptualizing about humans in general and human learning in particular is motivated by recent transformations in the field of psychology. These transformations are characterized by a move away from the pathological and behavioral as foundational to psychology, towards a more positive psychology that emphasizes the self actualization of human beings as a vital characteristic of our species. The sociologist John F. Glass (1971, p.196) grounds these claims when he states “That man’s search for meaning by himself and for himself is not very successful can be attested to by any psychotherapist.” Drawing once again upon Maslow, Glass proceeds to contextualize such a knowledge as residing in relations to others and within a community.

Our contemporary age which is characterized by notions of innovation, development and progress seem to have to

have no place for a knowledge which is based on a notion of self-actualization and yet grounded in the dynamics of a community. For under the current regime of freedom even self-actualization seems to be a category open to a series of progressive developments that match our technological prowess. The famous mathematician Michael Polanyi in his book “Personal Knowledge: Towards a post-critical philosophy” traces the origin of such a movement back to the pioneering discovery of Copernicus.

What is the true lesson of the Copernican revolution? Why did Copernicus exchange his actual terrestrial station for an imaginary solar standpoint? The only justification for this lay in the greater intellectual satisfaction he derived from the celestial panorama as seen from the sun instead of the earth. Copernicus gave preference to man’s delight in abstract theory, at the price of rejecting the evidence of our senses, which present us with the irresistible fact of the sun, the moon, and the stars rising daily in the east to travel across the sky towards their setting in the west. In a literal sense, therefore, the new Copernican system was as anthropocentric as the Ptolemaic view, the difference being merely that it preferred to satisfy a different human affection (Polanyi 1998, p.2).

What seems to have been lost in this transition between two different subject positions is the richness of everyday human experience. A sensual experience that is nested in between the interface of the human body and the body of nature. An experience that has been time and again relegated to the so called crudities of our more basic propensities of everyday life. Yet without these experiences, let alone survival, one is robbed of the basic richness of being a human being. Paradigmatic of an exploration in this direction would be to posit an equally confounding ‘I feel therefore I

am' in subversion of the infamous Cartesian maxim 'I think therefore I am.

Crucial to treading on such a path is the necessity to drop our categorical gaze of approaching learning as driven by 'facts' or 'concepts' and replacing it by a gaze that acknowledges a feeling of relatedness or a plurality of beings. A gaze that not only acknowledges the presence and connectedness of others but also acknowledges the experience of otherness as being destructive of individuality and of generalizing human values. An urge to such a revision of our 'ways of seeing' can be found in the works of Dillard, Toulmin, Keller and Whitehead (Ross-Bryant 1990, p.82).

The experience of Art as a case study for alternative modes of knowing

In brief one can construe non linguistic modes of learning as being grounded in our emotions. Such a move does not necessarily discount the skill or ability of, for example drawing in itself, but rather contextualises such a skill within the larger economy of our emotional lives. In this sense, the ability or skill to draw, sketch or paint suggests how processes of learning necessarily involve non-cognitive aspects that are often beyond the cognitive task at hand. Such a characterisation acknowledges as we shall see the tacit and seemingly invisible being of such aspects of learning. Approaching learning in such fashion allows for us to do justice to a wide spectrum of human activities and practices and accentuate myriad modes in which we learn about ourselves, the world and our place in it.

An example of such modes of learning can be found in the domain of art appreciation, the contours of which we shall briefly sketch in an exploration of notions of silence in the work of the famous Dutch artist Johannes Vermeer. Painting

is here explored as a form of art and a system of representation that allows for a recourse from the linguistic by virtue of its relative lack of commensurability with the format of our collective social life which seems to be grounded in natural language. This lack of commensurability invokes in the audience a necessity to consider works of art under the context in which they are generated. The blank canvas therefore should be understood as yielding to layers of context that are imposed by the artist. In taking into consideration what is characteristic of human beings, “Barthes goes further than Wolf to say that not only artworks but also viewers are layers of contexts yoked together” (Wiseman 2006, p.318).

In order to address the manner in which this engagement occurs between contexts, cultural and other that are embodied in humans as well in works of art, Barthes proposes two terms, ‘studium’ and its corollary ‘punctum’. Conceived by Barthes, these two terms provide us with a significant method to approach the process of knowledge which underwrites the legibility of works of art (Barthes 1982).

In the context of Vermeer’s paintings, Wiseman introduces us to two different perspectives that use the concepts of ‘studium’ and ‘punctum’ to interpret Vermeer’s work. The first perspective focuses on the inaccessibility of the cultural context of these paintings while the second perspective celebrates the particularity of each painting. A characteristic of subjects in Vermeer’s paintings is their refusal to yield to interpretation.

“In this they are like the contents of the unconscious mind, primitive in being untouched by culture and its systems of intelligibility” (Wiseman 2006, p.319).

The first perspective that Wiseman considers is the relation that Professor Wolf draws between the paintings and the economic, political and intellectual undercurrents of Vermeer's milieu and the necessity to establish continuity between these disparate elements through alternate means. Wolf seems to achieve this theoretically by situating both writing and painting on a common platform and then acknowledging the applicability of illegibility to both these categories. He then invokes the idea of the 'punctum' as a means to present to the audience the contextual, that which is in the unconscious and evasive of natural languages.

Gaskell on the other hand is interested in the particularity of Vermeer's paintings and focuses on the painting: *Woman Standing at a Virginal*. For him the modality of understanding complex pictorial abstractions parallels the modality of love. He invokes the concept of love to highlight the mode through which the visual medium instantly impresses upon the heart or spirit of the audience. This approach can be characterized as dispensing great faith in the direct visual apprehension of the objects in his paintings as representations of themselves. Such an approach is characteristic in undermining the role of the symbolic in works of art. Gaskell suggests that the cultural context or 'studium' of a work of art is overcome as "the punctum operates in the manner of love, and in silence" (Wiseman 2006, p.319).

Wiseman's own analysis claims that the challenge is not in being able to imagine what lies in the consciousness of the subject, for this would only amount to a mere projection of the viewer's imagination. Rather the presentness of the subjects in Vermeer's paintings serve to indicate that they have a life and identity that is characteristically different from ours. In light of this self-containment of the subjects, Wiseman prompts us to "bow before the utter differentness

of others from ourselves, a difference that coexists with a reality, theirs, that, like ours, knows no reserve” (Wiseman 2006, p.323).

In a sense, the ‘life of their own’ that we attribute to the subjects is not a metaphoric construction. Rather the credit attributed to Vermeer seems to stem from the fact that his subjects stand before us like other persons, in whose presence one has to bear witness. “Credit to the paintings alone is due for teaching their viewers that the silence that attends them is a sign of recognition that there are other minds than ours” (Wiseman 2006, p.323).

Following the discussion so far prepares us once again to ask the question: what is a non linguistic mode of learning in art? As discussed earlier, the lack of commensurability between linguistic forms of representation and the form of representation of art seems to provide us with a direction to proceed in. Such a lack of commensurability is made legible here on basis of the presumed self-possession and self-containment in the paintings of Vermeer. Wiseman’s concludes that the silence in a work of art is that which helps an individual acknowledge the plurality of existence in an albeit spontaneous manner.

Gaskell on the other hand is seen dabbling with notions of the subject’s historicity. The silence in the paintings results from what he conceives as a gamble on Vermeer’s part. A gamble that assumed viewers would directly apprehend the objects in his paintings, in a mode similar to that of love. The relation to the emotion, love that is made here and that which we have discussed earlier in relation to the notions of ‘studium’ and ‘punctum’ seem to indicate the non linguistic mode of learning as facilitated by works of art as being radically different from notions of syntactic reason, logic or any such set of structured linkages that are associated with

the cognitive processes that we often associate with forms of propositional knowledge.

On the other hand, Wolf is seen trying to relate the works of art to the milieu of the time. He seems to be drawn to the process by which the private observations of the artist manifest in a work of art which is public. For him the art of Vermeer seems to convey a message that pays tribute to the life of an interior world. The link that he brings to light here is the unique style that characterizes Vermeer's presentation of this internal world of the subject. Characteristic of this presentation is the manner in which the viewer is offered only a token appearance of the subjects interiority as the rest of the interiority is engulfed in silence.

Wolf, Gaskell and Wiseman are thus seen using three different perspectives in articulating the notion of silence in the experience of the art which for our purposes sketch out a brief contour of a non-linguistic mode of learning. They all seem to be pointing us towards the contours of an entity that can be perceived from a variety of perspectives. They posit the related concepts of presence, otherness and interiority as some of the qualities that allude to the non linguistic elements in the visual medium. A medium that, by the virtue of its nature is not directly commensurable with natural language. The common link that all three share though is the ability of the visual artistic medium to presence things in a manner that cannot be rivaled or conceived of by the linguistic medium. It is to this ability of art to appeal instantantly to the non-cognitive, to that which resides in the recesses of language and yet animates it dynamically that one discovers the contours of a non linguistic mode of learning.

Non linguistic modes as a cultural strategy of learning

While the above foray into the world of art has provided us with glimpses of the non linguistic modality as associated with notions of otherness, presence and interiority. An analysis of the practices of certain American Indian communities provides us with a cultural and situated understanding of the non linguistic mode as a valid means of approaching the domain of personal knowledge. In 'To Give up on Words: Silence in Western Apache Culture', Keith H. Basso uses socio-linguistics and ethno-science to introduce us to certain non linguistic aspects of behavior among the Western Apache of Cibecue at the Fort Apache Indian reservation in east-central Arizona. The study presents a number of situations where the American Indians are seen to be deliberately refraining from involving in conversation. The descriptions of these contextual practices are complimented by a discussion on the American Indian interpretation and encouragement of such practices (Basso 1970, p.215).

'Meeting strangers', 'Courting', 'Children, coming home', 'Getting cussed out', 'Being with people who are sad' and 'Being with someone for whom they sing' are six contexts that sketch out cultural specific modes of social interaction in which "silence is defined as appropriate with respect to a specific individual or individuals" (Basso 1970, p.226).

In the context of 'Meeting strangers' we see that the Apache are often distrustful of strangers who engage in conversation too quickly. Such individuals are believed to hold utilitarian motives or considered intoxicated. The ethnographic material that Basso presents describes an incident where an Apache from one settlement avoids speech from an Apache from another settlement for two whole days. They start speaking only after a sustained period of careful observation after

which one of them acknowledges the conduct of the other as acceptable.

‘Courting’ also articulates a similar context of unfamiliarity during which young men and women are often observed refraining from the use of spoken language in public and private settings of early courtship. Girls are often warned by mothers and sisters of the perceived slight in virtue among girls who spoke freely with boys during courtship. Some of these young men too are seen as exhibiting intense shyness, self consciousness, unfamiliarity and not knowing what to say or do as the some of the reasons for keeping mum.

‘Children, coming home’ offers yet another interesting manifestation of refraining from the use of language in dictating familial relations. Here parents avoid speaking with those children who have been away from home for long, often those returning from boarding school. While the children do express their experiences freely, parents listen attentively and only begin to converse after a couple of days. As a mode of re-orientation this response may be baffling to us, but for the Apache parents it represents “the concern that they have acquired new ideas and expectations which will alter their behavior in unpredictable ways” (Basso 1970, p. 220).

‘Getting cussed out’ is another context that plays out on a wide range of locations from houses, trading posts, ceremonial dancing grounds to any place in which an individual can get angry and go on a rant. Though often associated with drinking parties ‘getting cussed out’ is not limited to such situations. The non linguistic engagement maintained in such situations takes cognizance that the enraged party is crazy or in an irrational state of mind. Such an engagement may be characterized as an emotional strategy “to avoid any action that will attract attention to oneself” (Basso 1970, p.222).

In 'being with people who are sad', one maintains certain decorum while visiting friends or relatives who have lost a loved one. Such an engagement is not related to the immediate burial period, but verbal disengagement manifests over the next couple of weeks until the person is believed to have recovered from his/her grief. Such a policy first seems to acknowledge the difficulty for these individuals to engage in normal conversation. Secondly it acknowledges the pointlessness in verbalizing concerns during this period of irreplaceable grief and finally it connects grief to anger, hostility and possible physical violence, pointing at the instability of the self during such times.

The last scenario is 'being with someone for whom they sing' which is bound to temporal and physical locations due to their status as curing ceremonies. Set in accordance to the seasons, these rituals are held either at the ceremonial dancing ground or at the home of the sick individual. During these ceremonies, only the medicine man is allowed to speak to the individual. Verbal communication by others is restricted "because Apaches undergoing ceremonial treatment are perceived as having been changed by power into something different from their normal selves, they are regarded with caution and apprehension" (Basso 1970, p.225).

In close relation to what we have come across earlier as a disregard for the categorical gaze that straddles sertian formal cognitive processes, these six events describe alternative methods that not only identify the ambiguous or unpredictable relations between human beings. But also proceeds to suggest that the non linguistic modes in which these concerns are resolved are not contingent upon the situation itself but upon the ambiguous emotional status of the individual or individuals in the situation. This is why the phenomena of courtship seems to be characteristically different from that employed in the vicinity of a stranger. For

as Basso recounts, “...an individual’s decision to speak may be directly contingent upon the character of his surroundings” (Basso 1970, p.215).

This body of evidence is suggestive of alternative conceptualizations of modes of knowing in which individuals or groups deploy observation and other tacit processes over and above the use of dialogue in mediating processes of personal knowing. The famous American child psychiatrist Robert Coles introduces Kierkegaard’s observation in *The Present Age* to drive home a point about talkativeness as resulting from the fall from grace of the distinction between talking and keeping silent, a distinction he feels is crucial today. Especially when “the hallmark of our time seems to be a lot of psychological chatter, lots of self-consciousness, lots of ‘interpretations’” (Coles 1980, p.137).

The Indian sociologist Veena Das provides us with a similar form of learning in the Indian context. In her essay titled *The Voices of Children* she touches upon such learning when she describes the forms of relationship between mother and child encountered while conducting her fieldwork among urban Punjabi families in Delhi. A particular episode she narrates of a widowed woman Sarla and her son Shanker staying with her brothers family is particularly insightful. Das narrates a typical dinner scenario where the brother and his children, along with Shanker are sitting on the floor to eat food. Both the women are working in the kitchen, Sarla serving the hot rotis as it is being pulled out of the pan while her sister-in law is seen cooking them. As Sarla serves the bread the brothers children are seen voicing their rights towards a share of the hot bread. Sarla’s son Shanker too would participate in this process but would time and again be passed over by his mother until he began to whine. At this point Sarla’s brother steps in, admonishes her and proceeds to serve Shanker a roti out of his own plate.

Das analyses this indifference on the part of the mother as a communicative strategy in which her status as a dependent in her brother's family is being played out. She claims that such a move puts the onus of taking an interest in the child upon the other members of the family. Sarla in this context is not to be read as a cold indifferent mother but rather her passivity should be seen as that which provides the other family members with an invitation to care for her child. "The social structure of the family was thus dramatically displayed to this child at mealtimes every day" (Das 1989, p.272).

Both these contexts of learning in both Apache and Indian culture are closely associated with what have earlier described as Maslow's notion of learning to be a human being in general and in particular. Learning as captured by these two cultural contexts though mediated by the immediate do not seem to inhere in the immediate. In this sense both Sarla as well as the parents of the American Indian children who were returning from school could have been direct in the articulation of their concerns. Yet we see in these contexts, that the immediate is experienced as merely a site of mediation that takes into consideration certain other aspects of the process of knowing, such as an affective sensitivity that lies beyond a merely cognitive treatment of the matter. In such an approach to learning, we see that learning is not limited merely to the elements that participate in such a mode of learning but rather extends to involve various other aspects including aspects such as the emotional that are often absent from mainstream cognitive descriptions of learning.

Thus in both these cultural treatments of the theme of learning we see emerge an alternate epistemology of learning. Learning in these contexts seem not to be associated to the

mastery of certain symbolic processes and methods that formal disciplines hold as sacred but rather point us towards those inherent qualities that emerge in human interaction with its environment and others. Knowledge of this form seem to be associated with our emotions, something that does not seem to have much space within the contemporary epistemic domain of knowledge and knowing.

Lived Experience and Knowledge

Growing up in a small town and experiencing a localized mediation of knowing and being, the move to a bigger city for education set into view a conflict of values that highlights some aspects of the contemporary approach towards life. Among the more powerful feelings that I felt when I made this transition as an eighteen year old was a deep sense of loss. A feeling of unfamiliarity and a sense of a loss of self. A sense of self that had till now been fostered by its associations with the people and places that had foregrounded my sense of both being a particular human being and one in general. Agnes Heller in her definition of the essence of modernity provides a way of making sense of this feeling that I had experienced. She claims that:

Modernity has no foundation, since it emerged in and through the destruction and deconstruction of all foundations. In other words, modernity is founded on freedom (Heller 2000, p.1).

Heller then proceeds to indicate how this foundation of freedom is unfit to serve as a foundation. She invokes both Heidegger and Hegel in claiming that this ground is rather like an abyss because it is a foundation that does not found, but rather stimulates a continuous reinvention. Thus the newly wrought notions of truth, good and justice serve to to displace all existing norms which had in the past set the limit,

scope and form of human knowledge and interrogation. As abstract as Heller's definition may sound, and as confounding as these new notions of truth good and justice might seem it allows us to unpack an interesting trajectory in the paradigm of individual development today.

We can proceed by taking a recourse to the continuous reinvention that such a modernity enforces. At the foundation of such an inquiry is the individual who in the name of freedom is albeit unwittingly directed onto an trajectory of educational and vocational progress that expects him/her to frame the self and its relations with others a quarantined fashion. This stripping away of the emotional being from the locality of his/her affective ties in order to accommodate a disinterested/detached being is a much valued both academy and industry is paradigmatic of the contemporary trajectory of an individuals development.

Emotionality arises out of inhibited, interpreted social acts in which the subject inserts self-conversations between the perception of experience and the organization of action. In these conversations, feelings directed to the self mediate action and interpretation. Emotionality becomes a social act lodged in the social situation (Denzin 1985, p.224).

Examples that illustrate the various nuances of this phenomena abound and I myself am guilty of being party to it. For while pursuing my post-graduate degree in philosophy, I used to live with a friend who was pursuing his degree in journalism. A feature of our educational training that used to come up in our discussions often was the perceived lack of rigor in the journalism course as compared to the philosophy. As I had far more reading to do and assignments to submit, there was a certain intellectual distance that I used to articulate towards my friends on this basis. Though as the face of the matter such an emotional disposition seems trivial, Denzin

claims that “it consists of structures of behavior, movements, mannerisms, gestures, and feelings that are uniquely the person’s”(Denzin 1985, p.227).

We can understand such dispositions as articulating the process of knowledge production if we consider it from the perspective of Rorty as an endless search for consensus rather than an endless search for truth (Moreira and Diversi 2010, p.463). In their essay regarding the politics of knowledge production, Moreira and Diversi thus stake a claim for what they conceive as a visceral knowledge. They claim that this knowledge does not reside in the book or brain but rather in the lived body. The ability to walk through the slums at ease, the ability to interact with soccer fans and sugar cane workers are all considered as representative of such a form of knowledge.

Understanding emotionality in this way directs our gaze towards the larger stratification that is being played out under the pretext of birds of a feather, flocking together. Here formal knowledge and the vocational stratification it earmarks is but a sign of the even larger scheme of social stratification in contemporary society. Doctors fraternizing only with other doctors, engineers fraternizing only with other engineers is suggestive of such a rendering of our being. The gated community of today is thus but a sign of such a scheme of being, enforced by a ruthless and rootless logic of what it means to be a successful human being. This manner of lack of a common foundation is paradigmatic of contemporary educational progress. Which as we have seen earlier in Polanyi’s description of the achievement of Copernicus, is wrought out of a fundamental shift in the affective principles that guide human co-existence.

Education, Experience and Emotion

So far we have discussed the possibility of an alternate epistemology of learning. We have seen how the idea of knowledge as emotion caters to notions of self actualization that the psychologist Maslow held as paradigmatic of being human. We also have seen albeit briefly, starting with Copernicus and culminating in my own personal experiences, the narrow manner in which formal education channels the affective structure of the human potential. Now let us proceed further by briefly surveying a few examples of non formal educational practices and their contribution to the knowledge economy.

We begin this exploration by taking a look at a youth civic engagement practice that is active in Gaza and the West Bank in Palestine since 2002. The Popular Achievement program is a model of civic education or service learning, developed by the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. The program is administered by coaches who are university students between the age of eighteen to twenty four. These students are trained extensively for a period of fourteen days to become facilitators of youth groups of children between the ages fourteen to seventeen. Run for a period of seven months annually, members meet for about two to three hours a week.

In their essay *Learning by Doing: The Experience of Popular Achievement in Palestine*, Suzanne Hammad and Tareq Bakri review the achievement of this program over the past couple of years. By harnessing team building exercises, group discussions and role playing games that reflect on notions of the civic, the program fosters the free expression of opinion which occurs as trust develops within each youth group. “The seven-month learning process of problem identification, power mapping, and action planning and

doing has been flagged as one of the most important outcomes for individuals and groups involved” (Hammad and Bakri 2007, p.35).

The authors credit the program for creating a special space that fosters experiences which are free from the domineering influences of adults and tradition. They also applaud the experiential mode which brings to life concepts which is most often encountered in the form of textbook definitions. Of interest to us is the manner in which the affective is mapped in such practices. As involvement in this form of learning begins from the college students who work as facilitators, involve adolescents who form the action team and extends to the larger community of adults by virtue of the specific action goals chosen on the basis of the shared context.

The experience of achieving specific goals such as the setting up of a Community library or a Computer or Sports room seems to have paved the way for the affective in the sense that they helped in getting the larger community together. The festivals carried out to celebrate the success of the program, in which the adult members of the community participated indicates the larger impact of such civic learning projects.” This has contributed to the creation of a complex network of relationships based on shared experiences, expertise, skills, creativity and wisdom” (Hammad and Bakri 2007, p.41).

Notions of being someone and especially someone in relation to the community is a recurring theme in the testimonies of the coaches. They seem to suggest that both effect and affect are closely intertwined here as the effect of the project was not restricted to the goals that had been set by each group. The blooming of affective relationships between the facilitator and those facilitated, stemming from the non-intrusive, non-coercive and non-judgmental interaction are all suggestive of the alternate epistemology of knowledge that we have been

exploring so far. In an interview to the executive editor of *Change*, the Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles discusses the role that the experience of community service plays in the ethical and moral development of students as well as professors. He frames community service in terms of a moral and psychological antidote to competitiveness and greedy self assertion which he sees only as articulating one aspect of human nature. Though he does not restrict such service to any particular age group, he does claim the intersection between high school and college to be an important starting point as it is here that one can anticipate the development of class divisions.

Coles posits a number of projects that can foster learning through service. Working on environmental and ecological projects, working with children, the elderly, nursing homes, prisons etc. Any domain which requires the energy and intelligence of young people who can provide intellectual, emotional and moral support seems apt for carrying out such service projects. He posits such projects as supporting a two way knowledge process as he sees service as a mutual process which involves both helping and being helped. Speaking of such forms of learning he claims: "Educationally, because I think it is a tremendous way for students to learn sociology, anthropology, psychology and social ethics, and, in a sense, to learn about others and about themselves in the most effective way I know" (Coles 1989, p19).

Sports and Learning

In the previous section we saw a number of learning experiences and the manner in which they contribute to the fostering of personal knowledge that is socially and emotionally relevant. Another avenue that allows us to enunciate such alternate modes of learning is that characterised by the world of sports. Modern sports trace their origin back to the

advent of the industrialisation of England, a period during which the body which was previously treated with scepticism undergoes a radical transformation such that it becomes an important part of the social as well as educational apparatus of the modern state. Sports in this sense comes to represent a valuable form of leisure for urban dwellers and also a rich field for learning important values. At the forefront of such a transformation was the Muscular Christian movement which sought to introduce the care of the body as an important religious imperative (De Ceuster 2003, p. 57).

In her essay *Women and Sports: Extending Limits to Physical Expression*, Prakash offers us a feminist reading of sports from the Indian context. Such a reading traces the gradual manner in which women around the world have after decades of struggle made their entry into the world of sports. Prakash skillfully uses this context to address many of the biological myths associated with the subjugation of women. But the principle insight we can draw from her discussion is the acknowledgement of the manner in which modern sports provide for women, an alternative form of expression, leisure and enjoyment. Acknowledging the heritage of folk dances in having fulfilled this need in the past, Prakash urges that “...we must recognise that dance may not be everyone’s choice of communicating or giving expression to emotion” (Prakash 1990, p. 29).

This quality of sports as providing an alternate form to expression, leisure and enjoyment can often be found listed under the socially and psychologically integrative aspects of sports. In their analysis of the leisure sport of Bowling as an ‘ephemeral role’ that caters to drives not fulfilled by the dominant role responsibility of everyday life, Steele and Zurcher list four psychological and six social functions of sports. Drawing on a number sources they list: preparation for life, catharsis of socially unapproved drives in a

socially acceptable manner, relaxation and recreation and identity generation, reinforcement and expression as the four psychological functions of sport. While affiliation, socialisation, status and prestige needs, occupational needs, fulfilling the wishes of others and the separation from dominant roles and significant others are listed as the social functions (Steele and Zurcher 1973, p.348).

The demarcation problem in sport is a serious concern that often plagues discussions of sport, it is useful to note that one can approach this question either by considering the common traits or characteristics of sports practices around the globe or by focussing on one case at a time (Wertz 2002, p. 100). While the former approach as we have explored suggests the knowledge associated with leisure sports to be psychologically and socially integrative, a more detailed account is necessary to sketch the contours of such a learning.

The modern lifestyle sport of Windsurfing provides us with an opportunity to take a closer look at the experiences of learning that are involved. The experience of Windsurfing as a sport is characterised by the dynamic relationship between body, kit sail and board, water and wind. Learning to windsurf in this sense cannot be drawn upon other previous learning experiences. Knowing to windsurf in this sense resides in the interaction of the body with the kit which involves various fine adjustments of the body in relation to the board and the mast. Since the windsurfer does not have a rudder or a handlebar most steering occurs by using the heel and the toe which adjust the angle of the board against the water (Dant and Wheaton 2007, p. 10).

Since two people cannot surf aboard one board one can discern in such a sport a very intuitive approach to learning. So while the result of being able to windsurf does open access to the subculture, the process though aided by the

hints and suggestions of fellow windsurfers is in not directly intuitive as the required skills are not on the same plane as the skills of walking and running which we learn without really being taught. Dant and Wheaton quote Merleau-Ponty's notion of the 'intentional arc' to describe the manner in which such a form of embodied learning expresses an individual's intentions through the motor capacity of the body. So while the exhilarating experience of windsurfing provides for a unique form of expression, Dant and Wheaton claim that "the motivation to engage in the action and the pleasure derived from engagement are linked to how the body has learnt to be in the world" (Dant and Wheaton 2007, p. 11).

Conclusion

Though such forms of facilitating learning through incidental means still do exist and are pursued across the world, such experiences are receding into the shadow of the rush that is fostered in contemporary cultures. The dominating means to an end approach has cast its shadow across such alternate experiences of learning such that activities are pursued only if there are tangible benefits available for the participant. The packaged deliverable that formal education caters to is now endemic to other realms of the contemporary lifestyle as well. One factor more that anything else has contributed to this subtle overshadowing is the contemporary phenomenon of the time crunch. There exists a vast literature which documents this event, including what the Japanese refer to as *Karoshi* which literally means 'work to death' (Kanai 2009, p.209).

This is a phenomenon that one experiences when one visits most urban centers. Most people don't seem to have the time or luxury to pursue leisure activities that seemingly reflect a sense of self outside the immediate ambit of their vocations.

While critics may point out certain individuals as pursuing such ends, often they are exceptional individuals. What needs to be taken into consideration here is the lack of a universal imperative in delivering such learning experiences across the spectrum. This paper thus urges us to re-consider the dominant manner in which learning is framed and especially the treatment it metes out upon the affective or non-cognitive aspects that often remain invisible within the realms of formal knowledge. Acknowledgement of such factors can assist us in better understanding the process of teaching and learning and the gap that exist between the two.

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Looking into notions of Assessment in Education: Philosophizing Assessment in Education

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This paper attempts to discern the most inseparable part and practice of school curriculum and that is assessment. The kind of assessment being enquired is the one whose purpose is to understand learning in a context, largely that of the classroom with multiple learners and the kind which serves certain pedagogic purposes and not those of judging an individual for his or her potential or ability to do something in future (famously the entrance examinations etc.). This aspect of schooling evokes strong emotions among teachers, learners and educationists. Often being associated with moral aspect¹ of educating individuals; assessment in form of examinations and tests is considered as most important aspect of teaching learning process at least in a formal sense and claimed to be closely connected to learning. The following discussion attempts to abstract theory of assessment and its alleged connection with learning, through various philosophical perspectives and reasoning by thinkers and educationists.

1. Often teachers opine “Pariksha ke bina Shiksha Adhuri hi nahi, nirarthak bhi hai. Bina Pariksha ke shiksharthi aalsi aur durachari banega” (without examination education is not only incomplete but meaningless too. A learner is deemed to be lazy and even may turn towards bad behavior without examinations)

There are certain defining features of classroom assessment; firstly it is closely related to pedagogic process of reasoning about what students know and how they develop a competence in a subject domain. Secondly it is a purposeful practice for various means and ends, which involve assistance in learning, measurement of individual achievement and to evaluate programs (Pellagrino et.al, 2001, p.36). further it can be safely assumed that in principle assessment has to be imprecise to some degree for the assessment results are estimates, based on samples of knowledge and performance drawn from much larger universe of what a person knows and can do. (ibid. 36) And at the macro level the questions of maintaining quality and accountability, for public interest as school education is after all a societal endeavor involving not only material resources but a great deal of tacit expectations of values, socio cultural and not to forget a great deal of national interests. And to this end what else could answer more objectively apart from the report card of a child going to school which has all the symbols, letters or numbers which stand as an assurance of the fact that schools are working to the aforesaid expectations or indeed are not doing so. This understanding about assessment practices poses no problem if it can be freed from added baggage of issues it carries apart from technical aspects of validity reliability etc. the issues are societal on one hand and deeply epistemic on the other. The most important one is that of conception of assessment in practice which has a wide range indeed, starting from informal classroom teaching learning based done by the teachers on everyday basis for their own planning and monitoring of teaching. Secondly on a large scale it assumes the form of school leaving examination or summative assessments at the end of some units of lessons. The latter ones have unavoidable inherent disadvantages especially for socio economically, socio

culturally and to physically or mentally disadvantaged. Even though disadvantage of certain individuals solely as a reading of assessment results can be assumed as an avoidable shortcoming, it is still very large scale to be ignored completely.

Then there are other type of small scale assessment practices as mentioned earlier, that serve useful purpose for the teachers to monitor students' learning, performance in certain skills and to modify her ways accordingly in a classroom situation. Even this type of small scale routine assessment practices have to be deeply understood for not only their pedagogic underpinnings but for their assumed nature of learning and nature of knowledge and not to forget aims of education. As Willis (1993) reiterates "...learning theory that underlies technicist assessment models is based on particular assumptions about the activity of learning and its product as well as nature of knowledge". It is more often that the underlying assumptions about learning when one sets to assess it (learning) by some way is that learning is indeed unidirectional in nature with certain inputs or stimulus creating certain changes in the mental make up of the learner that is plastic and these inputs can be retraced or rather judged by the results of the students assessment. It is quite surprising to know the simplistic ways in which the purposes and the ends of assessment are well agreed upon practically. My experience in teaching in a formal school tells that this centrality and credence of assessment is rarely ever doubted by the teaching community, and it won't be incorrect to claim that all the teaching and learning affairs of the school are simply to serve the purposes of assessment and performance of the students to the same.

Analyzing the needs and possibilities – philosophical perspectives

With the changing conceptions of school curriculum, there is an implicit need to change the assessment practices. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 paved a way to be followed by the schools systems in the country with an aim to change this centrality of examinations and hence was the idea of continuous comprehensive evaluations famously called CCE introduced in the schools. And to the dismay of the conventional teachers and school administrators the idea was more intimidating than relieving for its ambiguity of purpose and complexity of practicing it. Nevertheless continuous and comprehensive evaluation of students with skewed teacher student ratios is a farce and appears to be more victimizing² than the traditional examinations at least for the teachers of our country, and not to forget the limitations which may turn out to the disadvantage of learners.

With this state of affairs the question that could be asked then is what is it to be discerned about assessment for its rooted in the pragmatics of teaching and learning which itself may be conceptualized variedly? And if assessment is indeed indispensable then it is simply a matter of technical aspects of administering various types of educational assessments to keep a check on the happenings in the classroom. The answer to such questions will be discussed further.

2. Continuous and Comprehensive evaluation which is conceptualized assiduously by the school authorities and policy makers as a threat to the education system and hence needs to be kept in constant check by imposing record keeping, maintaining rubrics and constantly evaluating the learners in the garb of formative assessments which are nothing but more exams for the learners and more record keeping for the teacher.

Analytical positions on assessment: Andrew Davis and Winch and Gingell

There have certainly been varied philosophical and analytical traditions which bring in the discourse of learning and hence teaching being an imperative for the same. These traditions emerge out of and beyond those of psychology which largely deals with aspects of learning and less with teaching. But before this there is even a larger, more rigorous attempt of discerning the ideas of knowledge, forms of understanding and hence what is suitable for school education namely curriculum. With this background work of analytical traditions in education little has been talked about assessment in certain traditions while more has been understood in certain others. While the paradigms of understanding knowledge, human learning and hence teaching which are influenced by the behaviorist traditions emphasize certain aspects of human learning³ central to educational enterprise, the more recent approaches including the constructivist one see these differently. Nevertheless none of the philosophical traditions have denied the central role of teaching and choosing certain special acts which qualify for the teaching practice in a formal setting. And hence perhaps assessment has been an indispensable part of the teaching practice whatever may be the assumed need it may fulfill and end to which it may take. If this idea is to be agreed upon then there is little or no scope of any further discussion on assessment practices, for whatever said and done, if assessment serves some if not all educational purposes then its an end to the discussion. But this idea deserves serious contemplation, if

3. Educational traditions which give a lot of importance to focused, control teaching and learning wrought by well defined behavioral objectives, certainly emphasize a need to check and recheck whether the objectives have been met or not through various ways, like tests, quizzes and verbal repetition of what has been taught.

only for one reason and that of the present day scenario of school education which rather seems more ambiguous than clear and seems to be unable to move out of the clichés of competencies, school performance and public assessment based quality debates. Not to forget the question of how the well thought out aims of education be achieved if one takes assessment practices more seriously or otherwise.

Further thinking about assessment also requires more arguing about qualification of large scale assessment in form of year end examinations, summative assessments or board examinations so to say, for these have been a source of greater debate because of various downsides and upsides and analysis certain shows greater downsides than upsides.

Various such attempts to discuss, qualify and analyze the practice, purpose and the philosophy of assessment some accounts present a detailed analysis and argument discussing both socio political and epistemic aspects of school level assessment of learning and examinations. Amongst these discussions certain noteworthy analysis is done by Andrew Davis ⁴(1995). He contends that assessment practices in school in whichever form are not only invalid but also unreliable and further opines that it is not possible to measure any kind of learning through whatever is perceived as assessment of learning. He systematically analyses the perceived needs of assessment and also disapproves of each of these needs by systematically arguing against each case. The felt need of assessment for differentiation of choosing pedagogic interventions for different learner needs is discarded because this type of understanding has certain diagnostic intentions and has cognitive underpinnings,

4. in the paper “Need for philosophical treatment of Assessment” Journal of philosophy of education volume 32

which may very well argued for as well as against, and little generality can be attained. To understand the conceptual flaw in the learners' understanding is a kind of a cognitive treatment which is not necessary; for it is more necessary for a teacher to know the efforts taken by the learner than to judge her cognitive skills on the basis of her performance in certain kind of test. A diagnostic approach is quite negative according to Davis.

Secondly if it can be supposed that assessments can be a way to pin pointedly give feedbacks to students for what they need to do or not in order to learn in a better way, then the contention can be whether such type of feedbacks can actually be understood by the young learners especially if they are too young and if they are old enough wouldn't their attitudes towards learning matter more? Because if learning be so consciously modifiable by the learners then most of the problems or issues of teaching and learning would be simplistically solved, but certainly this is not the case. Davis further discards the validity and reliability aspect of assessment by putting forward that any assessment relates to a performance in a context, any attempt to generalize by predicting that the performance will be the same in further contexts will be unjustified. (Davis, 1995, Winch &Gingell, 1996). Finally the aspects teaching to assessments pose a serious problem to teaching for rich knowledge as the former certainly focus on shallow aspects competencies and skill based teaching to cater only to the demands of modern industrial societies.

But to argue for the positive side of assessment Winch and Gingell (1996) come up with the central argument of accountability of teachers and public education system as a whole. They insist "assessment is a necessary feature of the work of any teacher who takes his job seriously. This is a sufficient reason why a teacher should be prepared to assess

pupils as a part of taking his professional duties seriously” (ibid, 378). Secondly, the reason they have to be accountable is that there are public resources and stakes involved in public schooling and hence it is necessary to indicate to the general public in some manner about the works of the school in terms of how much knowledge and skills are being developed in the learners. To this argument there are some counters which will be explained in the later sections. Some epistemic claims that Winch and Gingell seem to make in order to qualify assessment practices in education are as follows: it has to be agreed that no assessment of learning can be ever completely valid or reliable, but this aspect of any form of assessment should be catered by making them more diverse in nature and certainly whatever that can be assessed of learning should be assessed if not everything. Moreover if teaching involves mere teaching to the test that is to say making the learners perform to their best possible in the tests is not objectionable as long as tests are reasonable and the teaching is sensible (ibid, p. 386). Thus they seem to approve of educational assessment both to the socio political ends and to the teaching learning processes and qualify the standardized testing in terms of year end examinations for the sake of public accountability and evaluation of educational programs.

These two treatments above seem to be polarized in terms of their treatment with respect to assessment in practice as well as in theory. One discards the possibility of any kind of educational assessment completely and the other indeed proves it indispensable for the entire formal educational agenda. However one can also disagree with Gingell and Winch’s position with respect to assessment as serving the purpose for public accountability with a simple contention that such types of assessment practices can always be made easier to administer and to mislead the general

public's understanding about school and about students' performance though not intentionally.

These analysis about assessment in educational practice are indeed important and have a general nature in the sense that one need not want to get into the sociological, systemic and other qualitative aspects of assessment once we agree with the needs and possibility of assessment of learning in school education. But one cannot ignore these aspects completely when it comes to educating masses in a country like ours, with its colonial past still holds on to "British Colonial Ideology" and requires individuals to possess workable aptitudes for certain vocations than to develop rational autonomy of thought and knowledge. With changing scenario of globalization there are even greater vocational demands which need the individuals to be more competent in certain skills viz. communication, technology and market values. And with this emphasis on skill development and competence will hence lead to Thinking of assessment in terms of measurable learning achievement, just leads to privileging a certain kind of learning areas, and impoverishes the child in the abilities, necessary for leading a richer aesthetic, ethical, moral and social life. The second problem with measurability is that there too many assumptions involved in connecting what the measurable are and what the worth learning is. Bill Ayers has put it precisely as "it is beyond the scope of standardized testing to test intuitive, creativity, imagination, conceptual thinking, curiosity, efforts, irony, judgment, commitment, nuance, goodwill, ethical refection, and moral values". Further, what they measure and count, are isolated skills, specific facts and function and content knowledge.

How then can there be a consonance of these important aspects of human learning in formal education? Or could

one hope to work with piecemeal concentrating on one and letting go off other?

Some empirical studies on assessment practices and learning attitudes in students⁵

Many a times one comes across various strategies employed by the learners to perform to the tests as well perceive the role of assessments in learning and hence display certain attitudes towards learning. One such mentionable work is of Marton and Saljo (1976, 1984) (Willis, 1993, p. 386). Their research demonstrates the approaches students used when learning was directly related to quality of learning outcome (ibid, p.386). Two types of approaches or strategies of learning were identified which were termed as deep approach and surface approaches. While in the former approach the learner tried to identify deeper meanings, understanding and integrative approach of linking the present and prior knowledge, in the latter approach the learner is concerned with superficial features of the contents with an intention of rote learning (Willis, 1993, p.387). These approaches enabled a differential understanding and retention of the details of contents. The learners employing deeper strategies were better likely to understand the intricacies of the subject and were better able to link them with the learning outcomes. John Biggs gave a more elaborate account of these strategies in his work with tertiary and secondary school students and their approaches to learning. He basically categorized three approaches and combined them to describe two more viz. surface approach, deep approach, achievement oriented, surface achieving and deep achieving. These approaches were backed by the

5. This section is a part of assignment as a part of a course on “Curriculum and School” during MA in Education (elementary) from TISS, Mumbai, in 2010; unpublished review by Aruna Bajantri of research of Deborah Willis on learning and assessment.

motivational aspects towards learning. The deep approach enabled the learner to perceive meaning and acquiring higher competence through wide readings and interrelating with existing knowledge. The surface approach was employed with a motive of meeting the institutional requirements minimally, thus just enabling limited understanding which can be sufficiently reproduced through rote learning. Achievement orientation approach is generally sought with a motive of ego enhancement through high performance and grades, with a greater strategizing and management of time and resources. Now this description of approaches of learning by the students cannot be complete without the explanation about the concepts of learning possessed by the learners through their learning experiences. Beaty et.al (1990) discusses these concepts as understood by the students regarding what learning is all about? Six broad categories of concepts are elaborately presented in the article, which is as follows:

- A. Increasing one's knowledge: the students view learning as a process of accumulation of discrete concepts and items of knowledge are to be possessed and there is no distinction between knowledge in learning process. Learning here refers simply to acquisition of knowledge.
- B. Learning as memorizing and reproducing: the motive of reproduction of accumulated knowledge here guides the idea of learning, thus learning is conceived as a process of memorization for the purpose of later application in the tests and examination.
- C. Learning as applying: the ability of being able to apply the accumulated knowledge is referred to as learning in this case. Better the application in tests or outcome of rote memorization better the learning. Generally this view predominates almost all spheres of classroom

teaching and learning, as effective teaching is perceived in accordance to the performance of the learners in tests which further assess ability of reproduction of accumulated facts and information and so is the case with effective learning.

- D. Learning as understanding: here the learning is described as gaining understanding and insight from the learning material, for the sake of it. But this view limits itself to classroom and within the school. It is centered on the learner who attempts to extract meanings from the contents.
- E. Learning as an interpretive process aimed at understanding reality: learning means change in person's way of thinking, and which extends beyond classroom to the outside world. The new ways of thinking and change in perception is simultaneous phenomenon with that of learning, not seen as a later application of learning process.
- F. Learning as changing as a person: this is an extension of learning as an interpretive process as the learner changes as person and moves towards self realization.

It is very interesting that these types of concepts are very apparent in daily classroom experience, where one finds students regurgitating the text and mathematical algorithms verbatim for the sake of good performance in the tests and examination. It is peculiar to see that such students hardly seek a qualitative feedback on their performance. The quantitative grades suffice their own need to self improvisation. Also it is not rare to find students struggling to derive true meaning of whatever they are taught and their attempt to contextualize the concepts is very apparent, many a times in such cases the kind of language used to express the need of deeper

meaning either helps the students seek the answers or on the contrary it curtails their effective learning. The latter generally happens when the students are unable to articulate their need for deeper understanding of the given concept and are also unable to relate it to their context. In such cases students succumb to the shallow practices of assessment and their poor performance becomes indicative of their lack of intellect or that of right attitude, a phenomenon described by Nell Keddie in his analysis of classroom knowledge.

These concepts are proved to guide the students' approach to learning, which can be superficial or deep approaches described earlier. Willis emphasizes that these concepts about learning held by learners lead to process and product of learning and that the understanding about students' learning is not possible without discernment of these perceptions. But a deeper analysis of these perceptions about the concept of learning and regarding the reasons behind their inculcation needs to be done. It shouldn't be incorrect to say that somewhere these perceptions develop out of classroom teaching and learning experiences, which are greatly driven by the objective assessment of learning outcomes of the students. Indeed the whole process of teaching and learning is centered more around the aspect of assessment than that of holistic learning which incorporates interpretive process and a change in the way of thinking of the learner; on the contrary learning is discerned as the learning outcome itself. The felt reasons behind the A and B type of learning concept is that the teaching itself involves nothing more than the instruction and supply of pieces of information or discrete forms of knowledge and learning in this form of teaching is considered to have taken place only when these pieces of information are reproduced verbatim. The idea of behavioral outcomes of learning greatly govern the teaching practices and thus the forms of assessment which are easy

to undertake and cheap to administer; a technicist approach of assessment described by Willis. It is ironical that the true need of assessment is hardly understood by any of the players in education which further leads to a never ending vicious circle of teaching for assessment of learning outcomes that build the concept of rote learning assessment oriented approach by the learner. The disentanglement of true need of assessment from the existing practices is almost impossible. Generally the notion of future performance based on today's learning outcomes predominate the classroom culture. It is needless to say that the performance in tests and examination through any means is the factor deciding vocational aspects of the learners' life. The notion of understanding the students' shortfalls or gaps in learning through assessment is a missing factor, instead a poor performance in the tests is considered to be an attitudinal deviance on the part of the student. The failure of performance quantitatively, is attributed to negligence and lack of hard work on the part of the student. The increasing socio economic demands and ideas of competence as well as competition undoubtedly influence the classroom practices. Thus the concepts of learning as rote memorization and reproduction of facts and information taught in the classroom generally predominate, while it is rare to find that student's posses the D and E type of learning concepts.

Identifiable problems with the assessment approach

Willis mentions that the theories of holistic learning and teaching practices hardly converge with the actual practices of assessment. While the learning is theoretically supposed to bring in a change in the way thinking and motivation to extract deeper meaning of knowledge, the actual assessment practices do not seem to check these theories, it to say that the validity of assessment with respect to the theories of learning can be said to be insufficient. Secondly on one side

teaching still is found to be teacher centered but on the other side assessment is simply intended to test the learner only. Further the inability of the student to perform effectively in the assessment is attributed to a behavioral deviance and possession of wrong attitude towards learning by the student. Lastly it can be said that not only the students possess the above mentioned type of concepts of learning but it is also the teachers who perceive learning differently and the held perceptions guide the strategy of teaching as well. Other institutional issues and constraints related to structural problems existing in the educational scenario lead to a technicist approach of assessment, which indeed gives lesser autonomy to the teacher as well as the learner to decide the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. In such a situation one really finds it difficult to answer the questions like assessment for what and how can assessment converge with the idea of holistic learning? To conclude in the words of Willis there is a great need of revisiting the theories of assessment which compliment the curricular reforms and a greater need to develop approaches of assessment which not only assess the students learning but also open up windows for both the teacher and the learner to see the holistic picture of learning.

Some suggestions on assessment

The discussion till now brought into view major conceptual aspects and empirical findings with respect to assessment practices in formal education. While it cannot be denied that assessment of teaching and learning are necessary in an educational endeavor, it is important to discuss certain basic principles that should underlie these practices. It is clear till now that any attempt to measure learning through any kind of assessment does indeed provide a limited answer to holistic teaching and learning, and in spite of this it seems an unavoidable practice. So it is now important to conceptualize

this important aspect with greater emphasis on underlying assumptions about learning and over arching aims and objectives of education. When it is well agreed that aims of education cannot simply be that of supplanting learners with knowledge and information from outside, but to make them active participants in knowledge creation, then the school experience certainly has to be such that it is not linearly organized into small facets of teaching to certain well defined ends. In such a case the assessment of learning cannot be outcome oriented but has to be process oriented. And this not only at primary level but as far as possible at all levels. One might argue that at secondary and tertiary levels where it becomes important aspect of school experience to provide for building up of subject knowledge (forms of understanding) in a more formal sense, the requirements of discipline cannot be simply construed by certain loose interaction in the classroom. Then does this mean that teaching and learning processes have to be strictly controlled and conceived as a laboratory of a scientist who experiments with her objects controlling inputs here and there and observing outputs? This suggestion seems not only improbable but also unethical in a wider sense of endeavor of human education. The classroom interactions have to be deeply thought out for the intended purposes that have to be met and not for mere judgments of individual skill development, that is to say that teaching to test has to be an unacceptable norm of classroom interaction, but teaching in order to develop certain attitudes of learning the forms of understanding has to be a norm. For wanting to teach solving mathematical equation is certainly not an end in itself, it is important that these equations are perceivable by the students as certain mathematical tools in larger realm of mathematical knowledge. With such larger picture of educational objectives in mind, one cannot certainly ignore the smaller identifiable aspects of learning, in the process and constant monitoring of these aspects is an undeniable

need. Thus in principle assessment can assume a form of monitoring as described by John White (1999) “Children’s progress in acquiring rich knowledge and understanding can be followed by a mixture of day to day monitoring and more systematic recording and in class testing. With older students an important form of monitoring lies in seeing how far they are developing a whole hearted commitment to school related activities” (white, 1999, p. 210). But monitoring itself can assume forms of hierarchy in educational endeavor, for one who is monitored is certainly positioned lower than one who is monitoring, and such a hierarchy is nothing different from the traditional teacher and the taught hierarchies.

Teacher student interaction and dialogue- knowing the student personally

The purpose of philosophy in education is not only to ask questions in educational endeavors but also to identify educational ideals. And why should one not perceive ideals in something as technical aspect as that of assessment in classroom. Teachers assuming the role of mediators and facilitators knowledge in perceived ideals of present day education, there is a need to identify that teacher student interactions and dialogues indeed can be processes which replace the older technicist forms of assessment. What can be better than knowing a student personally for his or her feats of educational achievements in the course of classroom interactions and various educational tasks that intend to enhance learning and hence knowledge than to merely test the reproduction of information being fed passively by teachers in traditional ways? For personal acquaintance with the learner is a way to understand the attitudes of the learner and the nature of child in more progressive conceptualization of education. The interaction and dialogue intended here is not a day to day dialogue between two individuals, but more in the sense of educational, intentional

dialogue, where the teacher is certainly at a higher cognitive level trying to bring about desired changes in the learner through well sought out teaching learning experiences and also allowing a scope for integration of various forms of understanding than to be confined within the premises of a given subject matter.

Assessment for Meta- learning

As described in earlier sections that the attitudes towards and perception about learning in students after certain levels do affect learning strategies, whilst these strategies can only be affected superficially through tests and examinations, it is important to recognize that learners indeed display an agency in the process of education, whether negative or positive. The most sought after ideal of liberal education is that the learners actively participate in knowing and creating knowledge. Given certain classroom experiences in piecemeal means and end form, can this ideal be simply achieved? May be never, process oriented approach towards assessment involving greater agency of the learners to decide whether what is appropriate skill that should be assessed by the teacher; when and how to administer a test after completion of a given lesson or unit, places the learner in active participation of teaching learning process. For self judgment and peer interactions have greater potential to lead towards larger social good than nurturing the feeling of individual achievement and competition in performance in shallow tests and examinations.

Principles of assessment and evaluation through the perspectives of aims of education

In discussion so far the guiding principle of assessment and evaluation seems to emerge from various sources like the emergence and consonance over aims and objectives

of education and hence those of curricular decisions, the principles of assessment and evaluation have to map these aspects of formal education. If the aim of education is to develop independent and critical thinking in the learners, one cannot assess the learners merely on reproducible information or routine literacy and competency skills. Further if the larger goals of curricular planning seek to imbibe ideals of social justice, democracy and equality, these goals have to be reflected in assessment and evaluation schemes. If social living and virtues of rational autonomy are to be valued over individual self centered growth, then individual centric learning and assessment of the same have to be discarded by ideas of social learning and social construction of knowledge. Thus the ideals of education to percolate down to those practices in close confines of classroom is indeed a complex process, not to forget as trivial an aspect of educational assessment aimed at identifying and modifying teaching and learning. Objectified empiricist practices of testing and measuring are indeed necessary but certainly not sufficient. What is required is an open ended, principled approach that is indeed comprehensive as well as continuous process with larger overarching aims of education in mind.

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