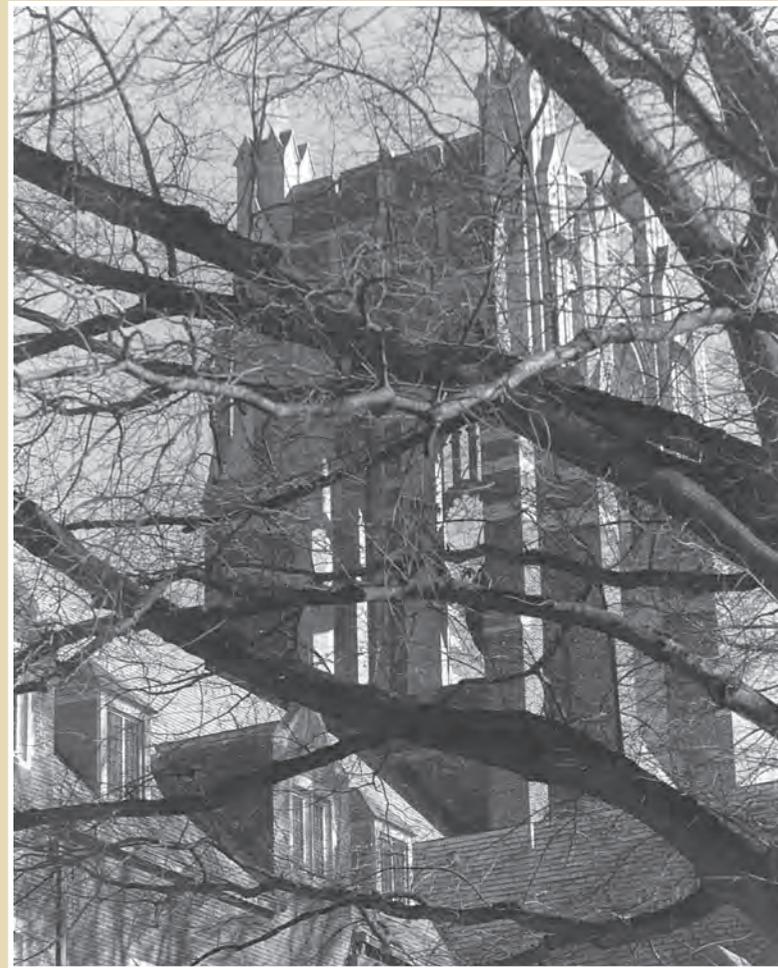


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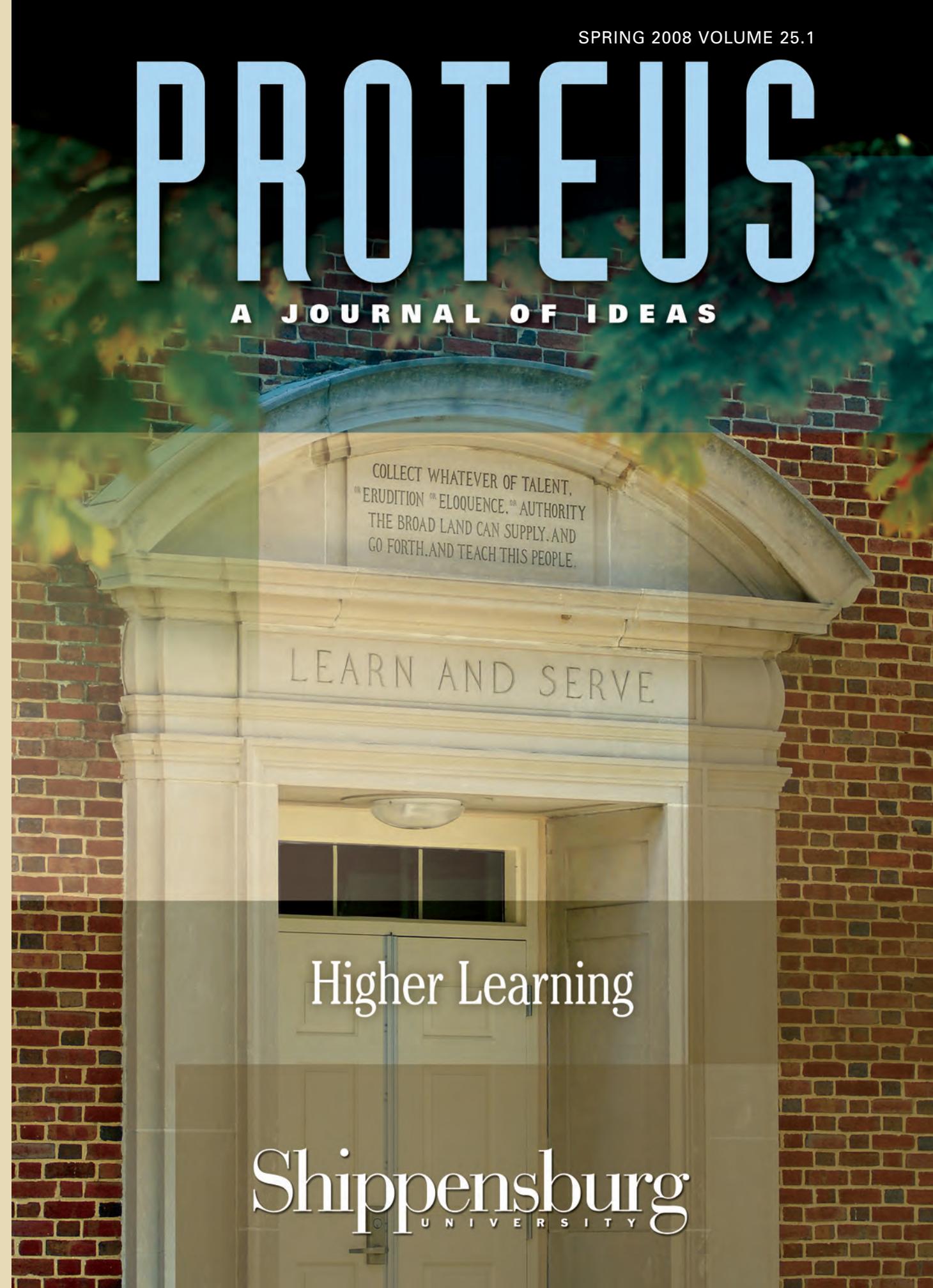
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Higher Learning

VOLUME 25:1

SPRING 2008



An ancient Greek sea divinity, herdsman of seals, Proteus could be elusive by changing his form at will appearing as a lion, a serpent, a boar, water, or a tall tree. However when those who caught him succeeded in holding him fast, Proteus assumed his proper shape of an old man and told the truth.

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Submissions, requests for further information, or orders for copies should be addressed to:

Proteus, Managing Editor
University Publications
Shippensburg University
1871 Old Main Drive
Shippensburg PA 17257-2299
717-477-1206
proteus@ship.edu

Cover design: Hess Design.

- *Proteus* is indexed in
the *MLA International Bibliography*,
PAIS International (<http://www.pais.org/>),
America: History and Life,
ISI Web of Knowledge,
Arts & Humanities Citation Index, and
Historical Abstracts.

- It is a member of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals (CELJ).
- Past issues are available on microfilm from ProQuest, Information and Learning.
- *Proteus* is published semi-annually and is funded by Shippensburg University.

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PROTEUS

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THOUGHTS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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SHIPPENSBURG UNIVERSITY

“Students are trained to believe that deep learning means figuring out the right answer. . . They have been taught to value certainty rather than doubt, to give answers rather than to inquire, to know which choice is correct rather than to explore alternatives.”

– Art Costa and Bena Kallick

The media have been covering the rise of a new generation of college students born in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Labeled the iGeneration, the Y Generation, or the Millennials, this group of young people is described as being connected 24/7. Most of them, having never known life without computers and the Internet, can be seen walking around campus with technology as an extension of their physical bodies. While still sporting the backpacks of old, they traverse the campus fully loaded with laptops, cell phones, and iPods.

Having raised a millennial son, I marvel at some of the cultural shifts I have observed first hand. During his high school years, I witnessed the landline become almost obsolete as he and his friends used Instant Messaging and texting as their primary mode of real time conversation. I watched social networking take on an entirely new form through their sharing personal information in photos, videos, and blogs posted publicly on websites such as Facebook and MySpace.

How are the Millennials characterized as college students? According to Diane Oblinger, they gravitate toward teamwork, experiential learning, and multitasking, not surprising given the technological tools at their disposal. Moreover, having grown up with game systems like Nintendo, many of them become accustomed to learning through trial and error and rapid-fire feedback. Much debate arises as to how professors, the majority stereotyped as Baby Boomers, can best educate today's students. Writing the introduction to this issue of *Proteus* gave me an excellent reason to pause and reflect on the type of learning environment I try to create and the rationale behind it.

It was not until I was a graduate student that I began to seriously examine the instructional practices of those

charged with educating me. I specifically recall my introduction to the ideas of scholar Robert Goldhammer, who wrote about teaching in the Information Age far before it became mainstream to do so. In 1964 he predicted that the proliferation of knowledge and the promise of its exponential growth would force educators to recognize that continuing to pursue traditional models of learning, which, in essence, seek to program students with facts is futile. There exists far too much to learn.

Looking back, I became consciously aware of the fact that school had always been easy for me because in the “knowledge-as-transmission-of-information” model Goldhammer described, little more was required of me than memorizing declarative knowledge and regurgitating it back on tests. Even more alarming was the realization memorization often resulted in my forgetting what I had never fully learned in the first place. Now that I was being challenged to think far more deeply and analyze critically, I felt unprepared, deluded by my good grades, and ultimately cheated by the pedagogy I had been exposed to in my many previous years as a student. Furthermore, upon close introspection, I realized I had been guilty of asking too little of my students in the way of higher order thinking. While I had no doubt that at the end of a unit my students grasped and appreciated the characterization, themes, and symbolism in a novel (or drama or poetry) that was a part of a prescribed curriculum, I found myself pondering whether or not I had provided them with the intellectual skills to read and analyze works of literature without my teacher-centered, directive approach. Did the time they spent with me contribute to their evolving into independent learners?

To be quite honest, the answer was no; I fell short of the mark. At that point over twenty years ago, I consciously

distinguished between *my teaching* and *my students' learning*, recognizing the two were not necessarily synonymous undertakings. No longer looking at learners as empty vessels to be filled from the Fountain of Knowledge, I underwent a metamorphosis. I began designing lessons with a far more collaborative approach to students' learning. Instead of talking *at them*, I talked *with them*. Yes, I still lectured; after all, one cannot think at higher levels without a solid foundation of skills and concepts. However, lecture gave way to depth over breadth of content, time built in for stimulating discussion with a lively give and take of perspectives, and more frequent open-ended assessments that required application and synthesis. As I watched my students flourish and come alive when they were given an active rather than passive role in learning, my teaching, always a passion, grew to become even more of a joy. I gave birth to the professor I am today.

Even now, as I read several of the other articles included in this issue of *Proteus*, parallel notions of the teaching/learning process intrigue me. For example, Baldwin touts "inquiry" or "a collective journey of exploration," while Hoyle describes a similar instructional approach where he builds lessons around "puzzling questions" designed to actively engage his students. Perhaps what distinguishes those of us who remain effective over the years despite the generation of students with whom we interact is the realization we are teaching young people first and the curriculum second. We constantly examine our own practice, use those observations to make informed decisions about what constitutes effective teaching, and systematically gauge what we do in terms of our students' learning. We recognize teaching is a complex, multifaceted process. We model the notion that seldom do we have the answers to all questions; what is important is we know how to search for those answers and we ask good questions ourselves.

In the end, I wonder, does it matter if the students taking our courses are labeled Generation X or Y or Z? I think not. What matters most is our sparking in them a sense of curiosity and an intrinsic love of learning that extends far beyond our classrooms. For Millennials, our plans should include building in opportunities for interaction, both with us as their professors and among their peers. Taking advantage of their penchant for social networking, we must be mindful of the wide variety of technological innovations available to extend learning beyond the walls of our classrooms.

Ever since I began embracing a more student-centered approach to instruction, I find myself drawn to the words of John Steinbeck, which were written as a tribute to the profound impact one of his teachers had upon him. I begin each and every semester reminding myself of the huge responsibility I am given when each group of students comes through the door into my classroom:

I've had many teachers who taught us soon forgotten things, but only a few like her who created in me a new thing, a new attitude, a new hunger. I suppose that to a large extent I am the unsigned manuscript of that teacher. What deathless power lies in the hands of such a person.

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K-12: A WHOLE UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

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There is widespread consensus that too many of our children cannot read, write, or perform basic mathematical operations as well as they should. There is some truth to these beliefs, complicated by the fact that over 25 percent of our youth drop out of high school—that number approaching nearly 50 percent in some areas of the country. This environment is surely not one we want for our children whose fate will determine our collective futures as Americans. Rather than seeking solutions to these problems, pundits and commentators often seek scapegoats to blame and ostracize.

Too often, we also overlook the inextricable links that connect our universities with primary and secondary schools. The public education system molds the students who enter our universities and community colleges. Colleges and universities, in turn, train the teachers and administrators whose knowledge and foresight will shape the learning environments of generations of young people to come. Given this interdependence, it seems clear colleges and universities across the country—public and private, community and technical, two-year, four-year and graduate—must establish more meaningful and more diverse partnerships with the K-12 education system as a whole. Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Business, Engineering, Nursing, Law, Pharmacy, Medicine, Humanities, and, of course, Education must reach out and make an effort to help the K-12 programs accomplish what they need to accomplish. Seamless programs of both formal and informal education and training must be the by-word.

The strength of university departments and schools has always depended on establishing partnerships with their surrounding communities. There isn't a medical school in the country that does not offer public health services to their surrounding communities. No law school in their right mind would think of not involving themselves with both the legal community and the judicial system. Business schools regularly send students to and bring in partners from industry.

Colleges of Education have a special role to play as we seek to establish more meaningful partnerships between universities and K-12 institutions. We must exchange materials, programs and personnel. The K-12 system and Colleges of Education need to be seamless in establishing connections via internships, externships, in-service development, and programs that encourage the free exchange of teachers and administrators between both entities. We must also send out other students—not just our education majors. We must send out all faculty, not just education faculty. We must send out all of our administrators, not just our deans of the Colleges of Education, to encourage, motivate, activate, cajole, help, and make our K-12 system what it must be. If we fail our students in their college education, we are really failing those K-12 students whose futures depend on the wisdom and leadership of our college graduates. There are a variety of immediate actions university administrators and professors can take to begin building more profound partnerships linking our universities and public schools. We can:

- Invite a teacher to lunch
- Invite a class to the university
- Invite yourself back to your high school, your middle school, your elementary school
- Create loaned executive programs where college administrators and professors can serve in the K-12 system and have K-12 professionals serve at colleges and universities
- Read for students and help them with their writing
- Support language arts and mathematics
- Donate books
- Selflessly volunteer your time and talents
- Encourage young people
- Offer scholarships
- Partner with alumni to support schools

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- Do/don't talk about the issues—talk about the ones that are successful and the ones we can improve—don't just talk to hear yourself speak
- Make things happen
- Get elected to your school board
- Help teachers with what they need to be teaching and help them do it. We need to be assertive, not aggressive. Be persistent, but patient. Be excited with solutions and not obnoxious.
- Don't reinvent the wheel. Look to other colleges and universities to see what they have done or are doing.
- Tell your legislators and other elected officials—it is not that legislators don't want to help—they do. They just have a lot on their plate and need to understand what you are all about.

Universities must advise and seek guidance from our partners in K-12 and from the larger public. We need to work with them for appropriate joint success in the budget process for the public sector. In the evenings and during weekends, we need to open up our otherwise empty K-12 and university classrooms and buildings to our neighbors and fellow community members. Can we not use these

spaces to teach young and adult learners and to provide centers for community and neighborhood building? Let's bring more kids—and their parents—to our campuses. I am sure many do not come to college—especially those whose parents never attended institutions of higher education—simply because they do not know what a university is. We must make all community members comfortable, not afraid. In the long run, it's all about our shared future, as neighbors, state citizens, Americans, and residents of a global village.

Through such efforts, the partnerships between universities and public schools will expand—ultimately uniting all our country's educational institutions with a myriad of community groups and private and public organizations. Universities will discover they have as much to learn from the larger world as they have to teach it. Most importantly, new solutions to the age-old problems facing public education will inevitably materialize as a wide range of constituents come to recognize their shared values and goals. Flush with our new found successes, we may even be able drop the fingers of accusation that we once pointed at one another. Then we can simply say “Why didn't we just do this earlier!”

INVITE FOLLOWERS TO THE BALCONY: DEVELOPING STRATEGIC CAPACITY IN ORGANIZATIONS

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As with many higher education institutions, a Midwest college where I worked was short on revenue and long on new ideas. The college's president was transformational in leadership style. He valued collaborative decision-making and nudged the culture in that direction. He often said, "A few good minds with more ideas are better than one mind with limited ideas." His style was to keep the horizon in sight as we worked on today. One of his strengths was to seek input from followers and to check the collective compass for future direction. Most of his administrators struggled with his leadership style because they did not know how to engage in his shared vision. Some were not interested.

The president also valued reviewing processes and making improvements to enhance the college's success and achievement of its mission. As the strategic planner for the college, he charged me with increasing the strategic capacity throughout the institution.

With this initiative, I facilitated the implementation of continuous quality improvement systems throughout the college for three years. We focused on designing an overarching institutional effectiveness model to drive all improvements. We introduced quality improvement concepts within departments, and we established a continuous quality review process for non-instructional areas. Instructional areas already had yearly academic program reviews. Simply put, we were attempting to improve how we do things in serving our mission.

As with any new enterprise, we had some success and much resistance. We pursued a variety of avenues to introduce quality concepts and to assist areas in improving their processes. We assigned trained quality improvement facilitators within departments. We hosted informal discussions and workshops on quality improvement. We offered professional development courses to all employees on improving processes. We even provided individual coaching to department leaders who showed the slightest interest in what we were trying to accomplish. We

expended much effort and provided many resources in changing the college's culture.

A continuum of quality results occurred. Some departments embraced quality improvement and implemented the initiative successfully. However, most departments resisted, despite our efforts. A few departments even deliberately tried to sabotage the program. It was frustrating.

During the third year of implementation, the president announced his retirement. The executive vice-president asked me to abandon the strategic capacity initiative because we were "too busy to improve things around here." I left the college four months into the new president's term.

Reflecting on this experience and its disappointments, I realized what we had asked departments to do relating to continuous quality improvement assumed followers had the necessary skills to think strategically. I concluded we had not provided them opportunities to learn *how to think* strategically. We just inferred or briefly addressed these skills in workshop settings. In analyzing the resisting departments, most of the administrative accomplishments had never required strategic thinking skills; therefore, the resistance may have been based, in part, on the lack of skill development.

Strategic thinking development has been identified as a major problem facing organizations (Bonn 2001, 63-70); however, an agreed upon definition of strategic thinking has yet to emerge in the literature (Pellegrino and Carbo 2001, 375-80). Nonetheless, attempts have been made to identify factors contributing to successful strategic thinking.

Henry Mintzberg (1994, 108-9), a leading authority in strategic management, describes strategic thinking as a particular *way of thinking* with specific and clearly discernable characteristics. The organizational future is re-invented in creative and divergent thought processes through strategic thinking.

Mintzberg emphasizes strategic thinking is not the same as strategic planning. Strategic planning is about analysis. Strategic thinking is about synthesis. Robert (1988) posits strategic thinking is not only different from strategic or operational planning, it is the framework for both of these. Hamel and Prahalad (1989, 66) describe traditional planning approaches as “form filling.” They refer to strategic thinking as constructing strategic architecture.

Sometimes when leaders alone design the strategic architecture of structures, systems, initiatives, and processes, it gets in the way of followers. It blocks their performance and growth. Followers are forced to shortchange their professional initiatives and performances because their organizations cut them out of the conversational loop, which limits what they can do. While the organizational leaders engage in “big conversations,” the majority of followers are allowed to take part only in the “small conversations” that focus narrowly on their jobs, specific tasks, and acquired results (Manning 2001).

Alfred (2001, 24–28) contends these big conversations should not be the exclusive privileges of executive leadership. Institutions whose followers sit strategically idle because they are low on the organizational chart will not grow and flourish. On the contrary, all followers in key positions working for strategic leaders should be well trained as strategic thinkers. If they are not, they offer inadequate support to their leaders (McAlee 2003, 310). Developing followers who think strategically means giving them a voice in assisting the organization to perform better, especially if this type of thinking is embedded in the culture.

Strategic thinking is a way in which everyone in an organization thinks about, appraises, views, and creates the future for themselves and the organization. It is being proactive, not reactive. It is imagining results. It is sensible dreaming. It is creating an ideal future by defining and achieving outcomes that add worth to an organization.

In one study, Linkow (1999) selected twenty gifted strategic thinkers nominated by their peers. He examined factors that led to their success. He sought a diverse group of strategists to ensure the findings would be true for both men and women, across races, and in profit-seeking and not-for-profit organizations. He analyzed the strategic thinking process of each of the twenty subjects within the context of their leadership and conducted interviews with these thinkers. He concluded the following thinking competencies contribute to the making of a gifted strategist.

Multivariate thinking

Multivariate or systems thinkers (Senge 1990; Liedka 1998) see the forest and the trees simultaneously. They get the big picture but do not miss the details. Presented with a choice, they can see immediately how it will affect B, which will affect C, and so on. They have a clear sense of purpose, and their roles influence others in organizations. They start at the end before they begin. They expend energy on the results, not the means and methods. For them, results define means; they work to achieve results.

Linkow identified this competency as the most important strategic thinking skill.

Envisioning

Envisioners want to create a desired future so they spend most of their time thinking about it. They ask the question, “What if?” and usually pose a hypothesis. Their strength is conceptualizing. They spend little time on operational details. When they plan, they often start in the future and work back to the present, similar to systems thinkers. This is the second most important competency of strategic thinkers, according to Linkow.

Reframing

Reframers challenge and restate the underlying beliefs and assumptions of the organization. They often challenge the current wisdom and the status quo (Manning, 2001). While maintaining a positive perspective on what’s working within the organization, reframers identify and create better alternatives or solutions.

Scanning

Scanners constantly seek information wherever they go and from whomever they contact. They digest this information from a variety of sources to arrive at an idea. Liedtka (1998, 127) refers to this skill as intelligent opportunism. They ask powerful, empowering questions that raise the thinking quality of the person queried. They are prolific readers within their field and in diverse arenas.

Initiating

Initiators lead the way. Maintaining a self-responsible attitude, they live by the saying, “If it is to be, it’s up to me.” As innovators, they promote ideas that are new and often unproven. They are the first in a group to offer ideas.

Risk-taking

Risk-takers are comfortable with the unknown or staying in the question. To them risk is nothing more than information or experience not yet fully understood. They see it as a learning opportunity. They encourage innovation.

Valuating

Valuators seek to know and understand the values, beliefs, and attitudes of current and potential stakeholders. They are sensitive to the interests of others. They balance their personal interests with others’ wellbeing to construct consensus.

In *Leadership without Easy Answers*, Heifetz (1994, 252) contends, “Leadership is both active and reflective.” He presents dance as a metaphor for organizational activity. He states leadership is expected to be in the middle of the dance floor with all the activity swirling about in order to keep the organizational beat going.

At first glance, it seems likely that followers want their leaders among them to encourage new steps or to listen to their personal rhythms. However, sometimes leaders are carried away by the dance itself. They lose perspective on the larger patterns of the dance floor, who is dancing with whom, and who is sitting out which dances. Heifetz sug-

gests leaders “stop moving and get to the balcony” (1994, 253). Leaders need to go to the balcony once in awhile to watch the dance in order to gain insight into the larger organizational picture. However, I would extend Heifetz’s leadership dance metaphor.

Sometimes leaders get so caught up in the dance, they do not take enough time to reflect on strategic dance moves followers could be doing. Moreover, the majority of the time leaders watch from the balcony alone. I suggest leaders invite followers to the balcony to engage in conversations about the organizational dance. Balcony watching *together* strengthens organizational strategic capacity. Developing leadership capacity and strategic thinking among followers enhances the organization’s ability to adapt and to prepare for the future. Educational leaders who develop strategic thinking capacity within followers have a better chance of meeting the needs of all students than those leaders who are more concerned with maintaining the status quo.

After reflecting on my experiences and frustrations as a strategic planner in a higher educational setting, I suggest the following ideas (see Figure 1) to encourage and to develop the strategic thinking capacity of followers within an educational organization.

Figure 1 Encouraging Strategic Thinking



Most importantly, model the way (Kouzes and Posner 2002, 14-15) by thinking strategically in all you do. Blend this habit of thinking and speaking into every conversation, presentation, and decision you make. Followers support leaders whose actions match their words. Changing the culture and raising the strategic capacity within an organization begins with the leader. Soon followers will become more comfortable with this way of thinking if they recognize it as your leadership framework.

Insist your leadership team mirrors your approach to developing strategic capacity in others. Followers need to see all leaders within the organization value strategic thinking. Incorporate strategic thinking questions into the interview process for not only new hires, but also for positions on your leadership team.

Encourage strategic conversations by promoting collaboration on programs or projects. Invite all followers in on conversations to improve processes that typically only the leadership team addresses. This facilitates everyone’s capacity to think strategically.

Pose “what if” questions to others when solving simple or complex problems. This gives permission to think outside the box and expand problem-solving skills. It also encourages creativity in meeting student needs.

Never settle for the status quo. Staying with tried and true ways of doing things sets the organization up for stagnation. Permit followers to question the status quo without recrimination. Reassure them their ideas are as valid as yours are when it comes to creating a better learning environment for students.

Become a voracious reader of a variety of sources and engage others in conversations about what you read. Share your readings with those who may have an interest in the topics. Expect your leadership team to practice this endeavor too. Set aside time during meetings with them to discuss what they have read. Encourage poignant questioning and exploring relationships between old and new knowledge.

Prize all innovative thinking. Seek out new ideas from followers in public and private dialogues. Give recognition to those who suggest or implement new ideas. They are usually the ones who will lead the way through any change process within the organization. Praise their efforts in public.

Insist on risk taking. Make efforts to let followers know taking risks is valued. Celebrate big mistakes that ultimately lead to constructive change. For example, select the biggest blunder of the year that led to a specific change and publicly reward this risk-taking behavior. Acknowledge effective change would not have occurred if mistakes did not precede it. Send the message it is okay to be wrong. Sometimes it is only in the wrongdoing that we learn a better way.

Make a practice of seeking input from all internal and external stakeholders. Listen to individual and shared voices in order to understand their values and beliefs. Demonstrate an interest in what they think. With this perspective, building consensus will become less challenging. Developing sensitivity to their points of view will enhance your credibility as a leader, especially when tough choices need to be made.

Finally, be relentless in your commitment to developing strategic thinking capacity within your followers. Raelin (2003, 167), in *Creating Leaderful Organizations*, suggests an ideal organization has no dominant leader; it is “full of leaders.” Everyone takes on leadership responsibilities and shares in the organizational success. Collectively, the leadership structure is spread among those who work at the heart of the organization.

By inviting followers to the balcony and providing opportunities to increase their strategic thinking capacity contributions, you will begin to construct a leaderful organization. As my former president would say, “A few good minds...”

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WHAT IS LIBERAL LEARNING? LESSONS ON PEDAGOGY FROM SPAIN'S "INSTITUCIÓN LIBRE DE ENSEÑANZA"

BENJAMIN FRASER
CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY

*"The whole of life is one continuous apprenticeship"*¹
—Francisco Giner de los Ríos (*Ensayos*, 96)

*"A specialist ungrounded in general culture, is of more harm than use"*²
—Miguel de Unamuno (Sedwick, 463)

"It is obvious that the problems associated with education are not just pedagogical problems. They may also be political, ethical, and financial problems."
—Paolo Freire ('Third Letter,' *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, 36)

Liberal learning is back. So says Carol G. Schneider (2004), president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities since 1998, who in a recent article writes of the "reinvention of liberal learning" taking place in campuses across the nation. Despite the fact the liberal nature of education is misunderstood or ignored by students, parents, and faculty, and even alternately prized and despised by the larger society, she writes, more and more colleges and universities are emphasizing what Schneider boils down to three formative themes: inquiry and intellectual judgment; social responsibility and civic engagement; and integrative and culminating learning. These themes are abstracted out of a variety of emphases or practices familiar to recent college graduates, professors, and administrators alike—first-year liberal arts seminars, undergraduate research, capstone projects, real-world experience, interdisciplinarity, intercultural diversity, social justice issues, and learning communities, just to name a few. But just how new is liberal learning? Importantly, Schneider (and others) acknowledge liberal education "has assumed many forms across different times and places" (6). Yet, is the present incarnation of liberal learning merely a new packaging for an old product? Or is it something more? I assert one of the most important lessons to come out of

the continual invention and reinvention of liberal learning is that the question of education is not one aspect of social problems, but is instead *the* social problem.

Liberal learning shows us our approach to education is our approach to the whole of society—explicitly or not, our pedagogy is a product of and subsequently an influence on a certain philosophy of life. Consequently, fully supporting liberal education may require not only the reinvention of education itself, but also the extensive reevaluation of deeply-rooted, normative structures of social power. In effect, the recent push for liberal learning strives to resolve a crisis of national scope surrounding not only education, but the role of citizenship itself. As my choice of the Paolo Freire epigraph (above) indicates, a liberal education at its best provides the opportunity for the reassessment of not only pedagogical, but also political, ethical, and financial problems. It is my intention this essay not only treat the topic of liberal learning as content, but moreover it perform the goals of liberal learning in serving as a self-reflexive meditation on learning itself, reaching out to other cultural traditions in search of commonalities and finding in this intercultural and intertextual contact a way to move forward with our own reinvention of education.

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As a humanities professor at a state institution that has recently taken great strides in the realm of liberal learning,³ I have become interested in what constitutes this somewhat abstract moniker. At Christopher Newport University, a mid-sized institution of some 4,800 undergraduate students in Newport News, Virginia, we have emphasized the importance of interdisciplinarity and student-centeredness in undergraduate education. And we have pressed upon our students the importance of critical citizenship in order that graduates may leave our university “empowered intellectually and practically,” “aware of the world in which they exist,” and “responsible for the world in which they exist.”⁴ The newly approved university curriculum, grounded in a well-articulated statement of goals,⁵ has had the effect of strengthening the language requirement for all undergraduate students from one required semester to three, forming a liberal learning core curriculum where professors from varied departments teach freshmen seminars on topics of their expertise, and instituting a set of provocative Areas of Inquiry requirements that comprise courses on Western Traditions, Global and Multicultural Perspectives, Investigating the Natural World, Identity, Institutions and Societies, Creative Expressions, and Formal and Informal Reasoning.⁶ Although powerful, appropriate, and timely, the idea of liberal learning is not altogether a new development, but rather one that has appeared in various contexts as an attempt to critically engage the manner, purpose, value and even the nature of education.

I am intrigued specifically by the pedagogical and philosophical lessons we might take from an inspiring educational model rooted in the tumultuous context of nineteenth-century Spain. I offer that exploring the historical example of Spain’s *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* may provide some direction in the quest to answer the questions surrounding liberal learning. In tune with contemporary attempts at liberal learning, the example of the *Institución* cautions against conceiving of learning as something that merely takes place inside the classroom, or even inside the university. Moreover, if education is to serve as a viable path to the creation of truly democratic spaces, or to what David Harvey terms Spaces of Hope (2000), it must reconcile itself with a philosophy of *life* (in all aspects, political, economic, cultural, social) and not merely of learning. Rather than simply bestowing the gift of disembodied knowledge on graduates, our pedagogy must become a self-conscious philosophy that makes it possible to discern how current practices of thinking shape and reshape the world in which we live. It must unite theory with practice. It must be able and willing to reveal the obstacles to critical thinking that still pervade the classrooms, departments and administrative policies of United States institutions today. This education is not merely about *what* is learned, i.e. the content, but in addition *who* is learning. The resulting concept of education is no longer that of a three-stage rite of passage that separates the individual from society for the implantation of knowledge and then restores the completed learner to

society ready for action. Instead, as the *Institucionistas* surely understood and as critical pedagogue bell hooks (1994) acknowledges in the subtitle of an important pedagogical critique that pays homage to Paolo Freire, education must become “the Practice of Freedom.”⁷ What joins the *Institucionistas*, hooks, Freire, and indeed many other implemented and uninstitutionalized pedagogical experiments is the view that a critical encounter with the concept of education is a necessary part of education itself. I believe this encounter to be characteristic of and even integral to liberal learning—in fact, it is the very core of liberal learning. To paraphrase one of the influences on Spain’s Free School, in this approach, the professor’s job is to teach, not a *philosophy*, but to *philosophize*; that is, not *what* to think, but *how* to think.⁸

It is as part of this spirit of engaged criticism I would like to explore the educational experimentation and rejuvenation of Spain’s *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, with an eye toward how to understand, if not how to reframe and support, the present-day use of the term “liberal learning” in institutions in the United States. In doing so, I wish to follow the example of Rubén Landa (1963). In an article on the School’s founder, “D. Francisco Giner como educador,” he makes a similar direct comparison between the American schools of his day and the *Institución*. Having heard of a pedagogy conference at an American university that took on the unresolved problems of education, Landa remarks:

Well then, all of them (the problems of education) had been solved by the *Institución* around a century ago. I will cite four: the faculty, examinations, exceptional students, fomenting reflexive thought. In saying that the *Institución* “had solved them”, I mean to say not only that it had “thought of” a solution, but that it had also “implemented” it (99).⁹

I do not wish to imply a successful implementation of liberal learning goals involves following a step-by-step recipe distilled from historical example, but I do think, as did Landa, we may look to the historical example in question as a source of inspiration. This inspiration lies in the spirit of the institution—its unified philosophy and pedagogy. The example of the *Institución* suggests that when liberal learning is uncompromisingly embraced as the primary educational goal, the philosophy and the pedagogy of the school must closely entwine in order to suggest a new perspective on the whole of social life.

A brief yet nevertheless crucial note on the historical context of Spain’s *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* will suffice before proceeding on to analyze what must be understood as a wholly compelling educational experiment. Any analysis of the *Institución* must keep in mind the turbulent material and immaterial changes of the 19th century: the increasing decline of the power of the former potent Spanish empire; the increasing dependence of Spain on social/cultural models taken from France during the reign of Carlos III and Carlos IV; importation of

the literary café and “tertulias;” the scientific institutions created in the name of national progress (a tribute to *el despotismo ilustrado*); the Spanish defeat by Lord Nelson in 1805; the French invasion of 1808 and the independence movements of nascent Latin American nations (1810-1820s); the tumultuous transition from Fernando VII’s rule to that of his daughter Isabel II despite the intent of the “ley sálica” which restricted succession only to royal males—a transition which brought about the first of many “Carlist” wars that divided the country between supporters of Isabel II and Fernando’s brother Carlos; not to mention la “Gloriosa,” the revolution of 1868 that overthrew monarchist rule and paved the way for the first (if short-lived) Spanish republic of 1873-74. The Restoration of the Monarchy in 1874 was accompanied by the (re)institution of a conservative clerical regime, the rise to power of Cánovas del Castillo,¹⁰ the political chaos of regional caciquismo and a continued, polarized opposition between liberals and conservatives—a tension that would be expressed in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 and one that arguably persists to this day.

It is in this context of the Restoration (1874-1931) the Institución first opened its doors in 1876. Anticipating the late-stage national identity crisis explored by the turn of the century literary generation that Azorín (José Martínez Ruiz) labeled the “Generación del ’98 [Generation of ’98],” highlighting the Spanish empire’s loss of its last colonies in 1898, the Institución turned to education as a solution to the ever-downward spiraling of Spain’s national strength and identity.¹¹ Faced with the Restoration ideal of a normative education, one closely controlled by the State and the Church, the Institución sought to break out of what its members saw as an impotent paradigm:

...quite a bit remains to be done for all dogmatism to be excised from university education.... In particular our governments (turning their backs on history) have declared more than once and impotently at that, that the student attends the University only to inform himself of consecrated truths and to accept them, to obtain that <<ready-made science>>, avoiding dangerous novelties (Giner, 125).¹²

The Institución, whose most well-known members, among others,¹³ included Francisco Giner de los Ríos (1839-1915)¹⁴ and, later, his disciple art historian Manuel Bartolomé Cossío, was founded as “an antidote to the stultifying academic atmosphere of the state schools” as one critic puts it (Klibbe 1958, 191). The atmosphere the Institucionistas nurtured was one of liberal ideas that sought connections and relationships with a world outside of Spain that had been, and would be still for many years, demonized by a typically provincial view of Spanish nationhood. Reginald Brown (1980) notes the frequent and numerous polyglot letters received by don Francisco¹⁵—a testament to the international character of the school’s vision. The Institución formed connections with England (192) and even gave honorary professorships

to a United States minister in Spain by the name of James Russell Lowell (190-94), John Tyndall of London, Carlos Roeder of Heidelberg, Guillermo Tiberghien of Brussels, and even the famous Charles Darwin of London (the last four as of 1877, see Jiménez-Landi, 45).

The ideas that helped form the Institución were heavily nurtured by that spiritual doctrine known as “krausismo,” imported from Germany’s Karl Christian F. Krause (1781-1832) by the Spaniard Julián Sanz del Río (see López-Morillas 1980). For critics such as Juan López-Morillas, the Krausistas were a continuation of the spirit of the Enlightenment, which as Eduardo Subirats (1981) has written was insufficiently developed in Spain, and as such, were the first class to think of themselves as an intellectual class (López-Morillas 1982, 73). Taking as their starting point the Krausist ideal of the possible perfection of every human being, the Institucionistas envisioned education as the most crucial tool in achieving this perfection. Education trumped even the dogma of the Catholic state in importance. Pointing out that Krause had attended Masonic meetings in Dresden, Pedro Alvarez Lázaro emphasizes powerful parallels between the Institución’s universalist values and Masonic tenets of universality (1989, 114). The idea was students of the Institución, in order to help bring about a transformation in the stultifying national character of Spain, needed to embrace universal values. In turn, this universal push was later kept alive by the philosophical and spiritual (not religious) thinkers and writers of turn-of-the-century Spain who had experience with the ideals of the Free School such as Miguel de Unamuno, Antonio Machado, and Azorín.¹⁶

A discussion of these ideas allows a comparison of the manner, purpose, value, and nature of the education offered by the Institucionistas with that offered by a more contemporary model of liberal learning such as that embraced by Christopher Newport University, among other preeminent liberal arts universities. It is my hope this comparison will generate further discussion on the nature, successes, and challenges of liberal learning at state institutions of higher-learning in the United States. The current state of American life, if it does not recall for many the turbulence and polarization of nineteenth-century Spain, at the very least calls for greater scrutiny of the nature of education and of its relationship to large national and international problems. The present discussion will focus on the importance of pedagogy, understood in the wide sense, in reconfiguring this debate. By pedagogy, and in using this definition I acknowledge a debt to the models of critical pedagogy explored by hooks and Freire, I mean not merely the proper content of education, although content does figure into the discussion, nor solely the question of method, although this question is certainly crucial. Instead, critical pedagogy involves not only the questions of content and method but also a discussion of the nature of knowledge, and the influence of socio-cultural context on the very definition of knowledge. The pedagogy that results when knowledge is taken to be a quantity, a fixed

object that can be given or received, accepted or rejected, as in the dogma of the Catholic Spanish state for example, is quite different from the pedagogy that takes knowledge to be a quality, an interaction, an exploration. Recalling a philosophical dilemma discussed by Henri Bergson (a teacher of Antonio Machado in Paris), we may say the difference between these two pedagogical approaches, one quantitative and one qualitative, is the difference between the open and the closed (see Bergson 1932). The Institución's approach may in fact be best understood in the context of a line of philosophical thought that avoided the false dichotomies of the time, escaping the closed forms of both a strict materialism and an immaterial idealism. This line of thought runs from the Krausism of the Institución¹⁷ to the philosophical and literary postures of Unamuno, Machado, and Bergson (see Gómez García 1983)¹⁸ The pedagogy the Institución succeeded in implementing, and which the recent incarnation of liberal learning in the United States strives to replicate, is, subsequently, an open pedagogy that emphasizes a questioning approach opposed to the dogmatism of both extreme materialism and idealism.

This open pedagogical posture was, for the Institucionistas, a topic of great importance and great discussion, although due to the anti-dogmatic stance of the Free School, there is purposely no clearly delineated or correct model for instruction.¹⁹ Landa (1963) writes of Giner, one of the leading figures of the Institución, that "he never wrote a complete explanation of his pedagogical doctrine, perhaps because he was more interested in doing, in educating, than he was in explaining" (90).²⁰ Nevertheless, from published scholarship on the school, its students and teachers, and on Giner himself, as well as his own anti-dogmatic writings on education, the general direction of the Institución's pedagogical approach may be easily ascertained if we first free the word from its popular use in the context of United States educational policy where pedagogy is certainly a charged term.

There is a certain tendency in the United States, (I must cite the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the increasing, some would say dangerous and even counterproductive, reliance on overly-quantitative standardized testing in the classroom), to approach learning/knowledge as if it were a quantity, something to be measured, a dosage to be increased, a faucet that may be turned on or off. Noted critical pedagogue Paolo Freire has termed this closed paradigm of education "banking education," in which students are viewed as mere receptacles for deposits of knowledge made by their teachers (see Freire 1989; 1998). He writes, "Content cannot be taught, except in an authoritarian, vanguardist way, as if it were a set of things, pieces of knowledge, that can be superimposed on or juxtaposed to the conscious body of the learners. Teaching, learning, and knowing have nothing to do with this mechanistic practice" (1998, 72). In addition, in the term banking education, Freire has made a connection between this simplistic model of knowledge as content and larger economic and social patterns that

hooks and other critical pedagogues have found powerful. Understood in a simplistic, quantitative context, pedagogy merely involves controlling the speed and efficiency of input and internalization and regurgitation of content/quantity that has not necessarily been integrated into the *life* of the learner. I caution the reader not to make sense of the Institución's use of the word pedagogy in terms of content-acquisition.

Juan López-Morillas (1982) draws out the main pedagogical critique launched by the Institucionistas against content-acquisition in language that, for the contemporary pedagogue will certainly recall that of Freire. He contrasts Giner's vision of education with the common attitudes of the time—attitudes that, the reader will note, have not altogether disappeared from the contemporary educational landscape, Spanish or American:

Schools, institutes, and universities share the common goal of filling up the student, as an empty receptacle, with knowledge of poor-quality, reduced to recipes, measured out with elaborate effort, that ought to be regurgitated with minimal loss of weight and volume within a pre-determined time frame (83).²¹

Although predating Freire, in a different language, and on a different continent, neither did the Institucionistas view education in these terms of the banking system. For them, following a model some would call Socratic, learning was not quantitative, but instead qualitative. Giner described the method that resulted from this conception of knowledge as "[el] método intuitivo," (the) intuitive method (*Ensayos*, 105). The results of a quantitative and non-intuitive method, an intellectualist method, were certainly appalling to Giner²² and later to one of the Generación del '98's most outstanding thinkers, Miguel de Unamuno.²³

For the Institucionistas, real education, the sort of education that was to redefine Spanish nationality and to bring Spain back on track with the rest of Europe, was not a well-defined and implemented technical education and an accompanying pedagogical focus on content but rather a qualitative humanistic education that called upon all faculties of the learner, an education of the whole person (see *Ensayos*, Grados naturales de la educación, 99).²⁴ López-Morillas notes that:

Against the primordially intellectual preoccupation of the pedagogy of use, the Institución underscores <<the necessity of maintaining a universal, encyclopedic character in teaching. It is not fitting to promote—Giner adds—the development of the intelligence without that of our remaining faculties>> (*Ensayos*, Introducción, 14).²⁵

The qualitative definition of knowledge as well as the universalist educational paradigm supported by the Institucionistas made it necessary to seek out interdisciplinarity—as job seekers and hiring committees will know, a current buzz-word to be found in many humanities job descriptions. Regarding the universal principle of the education offered by the Institución, Giner wrote:

Through an application of this very principle, we witness, on the one hand, the infinite subdivision of the Faculties into sections and into specific degrees; and on the other, the ascendance of a questioning of the existence of the Faculties themselves, which is to carry this subdivision to the extreme (133).²⁶

There was of course yet another consequence of the Institucionistas' philosophy and pedagogy. Drawing upon the Krausist influence of the time, Giner emphasized the importance of what we may now call a student-centered education.²⁷ The teacher was not to be any longer the sole arbiter of truth, but rather a guide, a resource, a facilitator. Julián Sanz del Río proposed "a teaching (in which) the Teacher and the student learn and instruct one another jointly and thought is taught and revised continuously" (de Jongh-Rossel, 831, quoted from Azcárate, 289).²⁸ In this student-centered education, Giner argued, the teacher was nevertheless extremely important:

It is he who, breaking the molds of the sectarian spirit, demands from the student that he think and reflect for himself, to the extent of his abilities, without restricting them through imprudent frugality; that he investigate, that he argue, that he question, that he attempt, that he doubt, that he unfold the wings of the spirit, lastly, and surrender himself to the conscience of his rational personality: the rational personality, which is not a frivolous prerogative of which he can boast and so misuse his free will, but rather a law of responsibility and of labor (105).²⁹

All of the above, the qualitative definition and universal character of knowledge as well as the importance of interdisciplinarity and student-centered education, worked as part of a unified philosophy-pedagogy that was the heart of the Institución.

Even a cursory glance at the mission statements of American undergraduate institutions will reveal a remarkable correspondence with the dictums and methodology of the figures and spirit of Spain's Institución and their followers. Taking Christopher Newport University's *Vision 2010* statement of goals as an example reveals just how strongly the tenets of the Institución resonate with the contemporary goals of liberal learning. If Giner insisted "The whole of life is one continuous apprenticeship,"³⁰ *Vision 2010* seeks to "stimulate a lifelong desire for learning" (University Priority 1, Goal C). To the scholar of Spain's turn-of-the-century literary production, the university's goals to "encourage the wise use of knowledge in the service of human freedom" (University Priority 1, Goal C), and to "connect liberal learning to ethical conduct and civic responsibility" (University Priority 1, Goal D) recall Unamuno's denunciation of pure, unapplied knowledge: "Knowledge for the sake of knowledge! Truth for the sake of truth! That is inhuman" (Sedwick, 464).³¹ Through the Institución, Giner wanted not merely to instruct students, but to forge useful citizens: "The *Institución* seeks not to limit itself to instruction, but rather to work toward the formation of men who are useful in the

service of Humanity and the nation" (116).³² In the same way, CNU, for example, wants to "Connect liberal learning to community outreach through service and leadership" (University Priority 2, Goal D; see also University Priority 5: An Engagement between the Campus and Larger Community).

The opportunity provided by the example of the Institución is to acknowledge education is no mere product of a Taylorist machine that may be assembled piecemeal. Rather education is an integrated, unfolding, and evolving whole that must emphasize interrelation itself over the supposedly discrete parts that must be interrelated. A university's mission of implementing liberal learning, an important first step towards emphasizing interrelation, is only as successful as its teachers and students. More crucial than the institution, Giner considered the teacher to be the most important component of a liberal education:

This problem of personnel is one of the most serious problems of education. The teacher represents not merely an important element of that system, but rather its primary element, if not the whole of it. Give me the teacher and I will give up the organization, the locale, the material means, many factors, in the end, that contribute to help his functioning. He will find a way to make up for the insufficiency of each one of those (114).³³

Yet the institution must afford teachers the freedom to pursue the search for knowledge as qualitative and the resources to insure their students a connection with the world outside the university. Teachers must encourage active participation in the learning process in the structure and design of their courses as well as in day-to-day classroom activities. And of course, responsibility lies with the students as well. They must take the initiative and be open to pursuing knowledge *actively* rather than awaiting the passive reception of information (see Giner, 124; this idea is also key to the critical pedagogies of Freire 1998, 31; and later hooks 1994). Moreover, it is a question not merely of what the students are required to do in the university, but what they choose to do when they leave it. As Unamuno wrote, "The worst illiteracy is not that of those who don't know how to read or write, but that of those who, knowing how to do so, neither read nor write" (see Sedwick, 464).³⁴ Of course, as the founders of the Institución were quite aware, students did not reach higher education without having already formed to some degree their intellectual and civil ideologies. This motivated the Institucionistas to reach out to students in the earlier stages of education (see Giner, 85-94; this idea is also important for Freire 1998).

The model of liberal education provided by the Institución emphasizes the interrelation of all parts in a cohesive evolving whole. This does not merely mean the interrelation of disciplinary takes on subject matter, although this interdisciplinarity is important (see Giner, 133). Instead, education involves not merely the interrelation of information and approach, but the interrelation of people: students and teachers, teachers and administration, administration and the community, community

and the larger society. More fundamentally, it requires the interrelation of theory and praxis at all scales of social life and educational practice.

The history of Pedagogy at every moment appears to us as constituted by two essential, dialectical and complementary aspects: *educational thought* and *educational institutions*. The interrelation that, without any doubt, exists between these aspects—an interrelation, in its own way, that is highly complex and variable, inscribed at the center of the debated question between *theory* and *praxis*—needs not lead in any moment to a confusion between the two. Educational *thought* (idea, concept, theory) and educational *institution* (social formation, practical application), meet in a reality that is ideally unique and simple: education; but in order to be comprehended by human understanding it must be methodologically separated (Gómez García, 13).³⁵

This assessment of the interrelation of theory and praxis, thought and institution, was not wasted on the Institucionistas, it was not wasted on Freire (see 1998, esp. Ninth Letter), and neither has it been wasted on contemporary American colleges and universities. Recent efforts in the realm of liberal learning, as seen in the examples above and throughout, emphasize the integration of a traditionally isolated educational practice with the whole of social life. These efforts strive to be consistent with the unity of theory and practice espoused by the Institucionistas as well as more contemporary critical pedagogues—bell hooks (1994) and one of her influences, Paolo Freire (see 1998, 17–26, esp. 20).

Yet the reinvention of education is difficult, as I have indicated and as the Institucionistas were aware precisely because the relationship of education to social life is not one of part-to-whole. To reinvent education is necessarily to reinvent social practices and values themselves, to disrupt the traditional structures of and normative exercise of power. In fact, the success of the liberal learning paradigm is dependent on a concomitant reinvention of social life itself. In effect, this is the message of hooks's *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), an important work calling for the integration of these two spheres that are routinely thought to be distinct. As hook illustrates in her work, the normative rules of a standardized university life influence not only the content of instruction but most importantly the manner of instruction. Contrary to the stated goals of liberal learning curricula, this standardized manner of instruction, this pedagogy itself institutionalizes colonizing notions of power and appropriate behavior. The author is proof that despite the pressures of university standardization and normative codes of social power, a teacher may indeed succeed in delivering a qualitative education. Yet her writing also suggests this attempt by the teacher to step back from the tenets of banking education is no simple task. It has delayed effects that are immeasurable by standard university practice. It does not succeed or fail on the teacher's efforts alone, but rather is dependent on

the students' collaboration, it requires students unlearn traditional classroom practices and later readjust to them, and it subjects the teacher engaging in liberatory pedagogy to an antagonistic relationship with other teachers and possibly with the goals of the institution itself (see especially Chapter 10, 129–166).

In short, the important shift in pedagogy that has been practiced by the Institución, by Freire, hooks, and others, is certainly present in recent initiatives on liberal learning. Yet without a far greater shift in the educational philosophy of our nation as a whole, liberal learning curricula will be easily conceived as shaping the proper content of classes rather than the pedagogy implemented in them. Embracing a truly critical pedagogy requires motivated teachers and students ready to shift their classroom practices, an administration willing to restructure university procedures to support that shift, a public disposed to reconceive the importance afforded university-education, and a workplace that values the freethinker over the drone. Ultimately, a study of the Institución may raise more questions than it provides answers. If liberal learning is indeed being reinvented (Schneider 2004), I implore this be understood as a response to a crisis of national scope and character. The *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* was, in its time, just such a response. In like fashion, contemporary models of liberal learning need to find new ways to motivate students and teachers to conceive of themselves as partners in learning. Successful liberal learning curricula must be accompanied by a commitment to seeking out and nurturing both community support and international partnerships, as did the Institución. But most importantly, these curricula must engage the production of free-thinking students as citizens in a changing world that has, in the main, exhausted traditional approaches to social change.

The big problem of liberal learning? It is the responsibility of the society, the institution, the discipline, the teacher, and most importantly, of the student. The success of the pedagogical-philosophical model enacted by the Institución may be attributed largely to the invigorating position that it held with regards to national identity, and to the motivation for change this national crisis inspired in students and faculty alike. Are today's colleges and universities willing to take part in a redefinition of problematic national attitudes and policies? Do increasing class sizes work against fostering the discussions appropriate to the global and interdisciplinary goals of liberal education? Do they do anything to combat "the isolation and lack of communication between teachers and students" (Giner, *La universidad española*, cited in Roig, 236–237; also see Landa 1963, 99).³⁶

Whereas a qualitative education is possible for willing teachers and students here and there, we need to recognize that at the institutional level the success of attempts at liberal learning may be offset by market factors: increasing class-sizes, a technologically-focused job market emphasizing a skills-based education, and, as hooks demonstrates so powerfully, patterns of social power that stigmatize alternative conceptions of and pathways to knowledge.

Most importantly, if liberal learning is to be a success today, that is, if it is to produce students for whom civic engagement is a prized responsibility and for whom active thought trumps the passive acceptance of ideas, it must be accompanied by a transformation of national scope, a thorough attempt to reinvent not only education but the very ideal of democratic process, one that is increasingly at risk. The larger society must help to give teachers and students reason to think such a transformation is possible. Liberal learning as a pedagogy can emphasize the importance of civic engagement, but without a philosophy of *life* to imbue the concept with concrete and historical meaning, to assess and to call into question the purported and actual values of a nation, citizenship itself is indeed a vague and dangerous thing.

END NOTES

1 English translations, by the author, are used in the text with the original Spanish appearing here. *La vida entera es un continuo aprendizaje*

2 Un especialista sin base de cultura general, es más bien perjudicial que útil

3 See Web Site liberallearning.cnu.edu.

4 See Web Site liberallearning.cnu.edu/foundations.html.

5 See Web Site vision2010.cnu.edu/index.html.

6 See Web Site liberallearning.cnu.edu/core.html.

7 Freire's first book was titled *Educação como Prática da Liberdade* and was published in Brazil in 1967.

8 Julián Sanz del Río, quoted in Landa (1963) 'El maestro de Giner y de todos ellos, Sanz del Río decía, como Kant, que su propósito como profesor no era enseñar "una filosofía sino a filosofar"' (p. 96). Not surprisingly, Elías Díaz (1998) attributes similar if not exact quotations to Giner and Cossío (p. 337).

9 Pues bien, todos ellos [los problemas de la educación] los había resuelto la Institución hace cerca de un siglo. Cito cuatro: el profesorado, los exámenes, los alumnos superdotados, fomentar el pensamiento reflexivo. Al decir que la Institución 'los había resuelto', quiero decir no sólo que lo había 'pensado', sino que también lo había 'hecho.'

10 As Antonio Salgado (1963) notes in his book review, on the 26th of February 1876, the government ordered professors' course materials to be systematically reviewed to safeguard against 'los prejuicios que a la enseñanza ha causado la absoluta libertad' (p. 186).

11 This theme of the importance of education in national regeneration, of course, can be traced back to earlier outspoken Spanish authors and critics, not least of all Benito Feijóo (see esp. 'Causas del atraso que se padece en España en orden a las ciencias naturales' in *Cartas eruditas*) and Mariano José de Larra. See esp. 'Costumbres. El casarse pronto y mal' where el Bachiller writes, 'Deje, pues, esta masa la loca pretensión de ir a la par con quien tantas ventajas le lleva; empiécese por el principio: educación, instrucción. Sobre estas grandes y sólidas bases se ha de levantar el edificio [de la nación española]' (p. 134).

Jiménez-Landi (1959) shows that the patriotism/national theme, one which we often associate with the Generación del '98, was already present in Giner '[...] la otra gran pasión de don Francisco era su patria. Una patria que le había enamorado por su belleza y que le proporcionaba disgusto profundo en su contextura política y moral. El la amaba hasta en la materialidad de la tierra, de los ríos y de las rocas. Por ello, solía exclamar: <<¡El día que España esté a la altura de su paisaje!>>' (p. 20, also p. 24; see also Gayana Jurkevich (1994). Reginald F. Brown (1982) emphasizes the similarities between the Institución and the Real Instituto Austuriano founded by Jovellanos in 1793. Brown does not intend to establish some sort of causal chain between the RIA and the ILE, but merely to signal the existence of similar educational models in Spain's history.

12 ... falta aún no poco para que de la enseñanza universitaria se destierre todo dogmatismo.... Precisamente nuestros gobiernos (volviendo la espalda a la historia) han proclamado más de una vez y hasta con formas impotentes que a la Universidad no va el estudiante más que a enterarse de las verdades consagradas y aceptarles, a obtener esa <<ciencia hecha>>, huyendo de novedades peligrosas.

13 As Mallo (1956) notes, the others included 'Figueras, Salmerón, Moret, Azcárate, Costa, Linares, Montero Ríos, los Calderón, Messía, Hermenegildo Giner, Soler, García Labiano y otros, muchos de ellos verdaderamente insignes' (p. 166).

14 For an excellent biography of Giner and a discussion of the Institución, see Jiménez-Landi (1959).

15 Brown relates 'Seleccionando al azar dos años, calculo que don Francisco recibía en 1898 cartas políglotas de unos 80 corresponsales, y en el siguiente de unos 90' (p. 127). Students were routinely encouraged to travel abroad and to explore and know the world outside of Spain, 'Era costumbre inveterada institucional coger a un joven prometedor y echarle sobre Alemania o Inglaterra con pocos conocimientos del país y casi ningunos del idioma' (p. 127).

16 De Jongh-Rossel (1986) specifically notes that 'En sus años formativos [Miguel de] Unamuno se consideró discípulo de Francisco Giner de los Ríos,' p. 830. Tuñón de Lara notes of Antonio Machado's education that 'se ha recibido de los ocho a los catorce años en la Institución de Libre Enseñanza' (p.7). Rubén Landa (1963) documents the admiration that Azorín felt toward Giner (p. 89, n. 1). Although necessarily influenced by Krausism, Giner himself did not profess that the school was itself 'krausista.' 'Por fortuna —decía el propio Giner— estos principios pedagógicos no son racionalistas, krausistas ni ultramontanos, sino la sustancia que ha informado en realidad toda enseñanza educativa digna de este nombre' (La Universidad española, Madrid: La lectura, 1916: p. 271; see also Jiménez-Landi, p. 34).

17 For Elias Díaz (1998, p. 339) krausism is itself this in-between philosophical posture.

18 'Y por lo mismo dice [Giner] no aceptar ni las teorías materialistas para quienes no existe el espíritu como ser propio y sustantivo ni las teorías idealistas que reducen el cuerpo a un producto de actividades espirituales' (p. 28).

19 As regards the goals of the institution, Jiménez-Landi (1959) includes in his biography of Giner a cited series of notes where he sketches the shape of the future institution (pp. 14-15). Equally interesting are a series of pedagogical principles articulated by Cossío in a document created for the Institución's 50th anniversary and recovered by Jiménez-Landi (p. 21).

20 nunca escribió una exposición completa de su doctrina pedagógica, quizás porque le interesaba más el hacer, el educar, que el decir

21 Escuelas, institutos, universidades coincidían en el común propósito de henchir al educando, cual vacío receptáculo, de un saber pacotilla, reducido a recetas, dosificado con esmero, que debería ser regurgitado con mínima pérdida de peso y volumen en un plazo previsto.

22 Los resultados, luego, de las propias o ajenas investigaciones que mejor comprobados parecen, se comunican al alumno, el cual ya no tiene más que aprenderlos, librándose de la tarea enojosa de buscarlos; verdad es que adoctrinado por el hábito, si algo pide es que se disminuya hasta el mínimo de los mínimos la dosis de sabiduría que ha menester para salir aprobado. (FG Ensayos 92)

23 Unamuno mentions in 'Recuerdo' the qualitative nature of education thusly: 'no es posible reducirla a formulas transmisibles y menos a recetas. Era el hombre y el hombre se da en espíritu, pero no es posible traducirlo en letra' (p.3) 'Recuerdo de Don Francisco Giner.' Obras completas. Ed. Manuel García Blanco. Vol. 3 Madrid: Escelicer, 1968. 4 vols. 1966-68. Richard Shuall highlights Freire's important mention of Unamuno as an influence in his Pedagogy of the Oppressed ('Introduction', p. 11).

24 In 'El espíritu de la educación' Giner writes that 'La Institución no pretende limitarse a instruir, sino cooperar a que se formen hombres útiles al servicio de la Humanidad y de la patria.' The paragraph that follows develops the idea in wonderfully simple Ginerian prose (Ensayos, p. 116).

25 Contra la preocupación primordialmente intelectualista de la pedagogía al uso, la Institución subraya <<la necesidad de mantener en la enseñanza un carácter universal, enciclopédico. No cabe promover —añade Giner— el desarrollo de la inteligencia sin el de nuestras restantes facultades>>.

See Giner, Ensayos, p. 111-12; also Brown (1982) p. 262 regarding the RIA.

26 Por una aplicación de este mismo principio, vemos, por un lado, subdividirse hasta lo infinito las Facultades en secciones y hasta en grados particulares; y por otro, llegarse a poner en cuestión la existencia de las Facultades mismas, que es llevar a lo último la subdivisión.

27 'el estudiante, no el maestro, es el primer elemento' (p. 168, Roig—cited from Giner, Obras Completas, Madrid, volumen X, 1924.)

28 una enseñanza [en que] el Maestro y el discípulo aprenden y se edifican juntamente y el pensamiento se enseña y rehace continuamente

29 El es quien, rompiendo los moldes del espíritu sectario, exige del discípulo que piense y reflexione por sí, en la medida de sus fuerzas, sin economizarlas con imprudente ahorro; que investigue, que arguya, que cuestione, que intente, que dude, que despliegue las alas del espíritu, en fin, y se rinda a la conciencia de su personalidad racional: la personalidad racional, que no es una vana prerrogativa de que puede ufanarse y malgastar a su albedrío, sino una ley de responsabilidad y de trabajo.

30 La vida entera es un continuo aprendizaje

31 ¡Saber por saber! ¡La verdad por la verdad! Eso es inhumano.

32 La Institución no pretende limitarse a instruir, sino cooperar a que se formen hombres útiles al servicio de la Humanidad y de la patria.

33 Es este problema del personal uno de los más graves de la educación. El maestro no representa un elemento importante de ese orden, sino el primero, por no decir el todo. Dadme el maestro y os abandono la organización, el local, los medios materiales, cuantos factores, en suma, contribuyen a auxiliar su función. El se dará arte para suplir la insuficiencia de cada uno de ellos.

34 El peor analfabetismo no es el de los que no saben leer ni escribir, sino de aquellos que sabiendo ni leen ni escriben.

35 La historia de la Pedagogía en todo momento, se nos aparece constituida por dos aspectos esenciales, dialécticos y complementarios: el pensamiento educativo y las instituciones educativas. La interrelación que, sin duda alguna, existe entre estos aspectos —interrelación, por otra parte, sumamente compleja y variable, inscrita nuclearmente en la debatida cuestión de la teoría y la praxis— no debe conducir en ningún momento a la confusión entre ambos. Pensamiento (idea, concepto, teoría) educativo e institución (configuración social, realización práctica), educativa, confluyen en una realidad que es idealmente única y simple: la educación; pero que para ser comprendida por el conocimiento humano debe ser desglosada metodológicamente.

36 el aislamiento e incomunicación entre profesores y alumnos

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EDUCATING LATINOS

RUBEN BOTELLO

Amid the uproar over Latin American immigrants in the United States are Latino citizens like my parents, siblings and I, native-born Americans treated like foreigners in our own country nevertheless.

As a pre-schooler, I did not know there was a parallel universe in our hometown where people with an alien language, culture, and traditions expected us to learn their language and assimilate into their foreign way of life. I first learned about this subtle discrimination in the first grade where, on the second day of school, I felt like I had landed on an alien planet.

The first day I was placed in a classroom full of Latino children like me. The second day I was moved into a class of white children who did not understand my language and the teacher only spoke English. I wanted to go back to the Latino class, but I had no choice in the matter.

Throughout the first grade, I did not know what my teacher and classmates were talking about. It was not until the second grade that I began to understand their language. Unfortunately, what I heard too much of during recess were the derogatory names my classmates were calling me like wetback, greaser, taco and beaner. Some even demanded, "Go back to where you came from!"

The more English I learned the more it seemed my classmates did not want me around. Beyond calling me names, some of them ridiculed my accent, my burrito sack lunches, and how I dressed. How could I be expected to assimilate and learn how to read, write, and count in their language when my classmates were treating me so badly?

By the third grade, I totally hated school because none of my classmates seemed to want anything to do with me. Since I was separated from the other Latino students in the first grade, we had become alienated from each other, and they did not seem to want anything to do with me either. Learning English opened me up to all this emotional abuse. I was a much happier child and far more eager to learn before I knew English.

Where did my classmates learn all the terrible names to call me, anyway? I never heard a teacher utter these words. Where did they learn to put me down because of my Latino heritage and why?

I thought learning English and assimilating into the Anglo-American way of life would gain me acceptance. I worked so hard to fit in. As a last resort, I tried to make my skin white by scrubbing it with Clorox bleach and Brillo pads so my classmates would accept me.

The next three years of my elementary education were like a death march. I hated myself for becoming the inferior Latino my classmates convinced me I was. I became increasingly depressed and quit trying to make good grades. By junior high school, I wanted to quit altogether. I not only hated school, I wanted to die.

Fortunately, the Italian-American music teacher for our school district offered to teach me how to play a sousaphone when I was walking by his band hall one day. Learning to read music in the eighth grade was a much-needed diversion from my depression and playing in his high school band even inspired me to graduate and go to college.

The band teacher was like a father to me and I grew to love being in his 100-member band. Had he not cared enough to teach me music, I would have surely quit school in the ninth-grade like most Latinos did. I was fortunate to have been rescued by this understanding man but most of my Latino peers were left behind as are millions of Latino students today.

This high Latino failure rate has much to do with the lack of Latino role models in our nation's schools, colleges, and universities. Whether U.S. citizens or immigrants, Latino students are in dire need of educators who can respond effectively to their personal, psychological, mental, and/or emotional as well as academic needs. These role models are especially needed in elementary schools where most Latino children first confront soci-

ety's demands they quickly learn English and assimilate into the Anglo-American way of life.

The U.S. Census estimates about 24.4 percent of Latinos age 25 and older have less than a ninth-grade education, as compared to 3 percent of whites. This and other findings suggest Latino students are about eight times more likely to be left behind than white students in U.S. schools today. (Table 6.1).

There are over forty-three million non-institutionalized Hispanics in the United States. Of these, over 6.1 million live in the Northeast, over 3.4 million live in the Midwest, over 15.4 million live in the South, and over 18.1 million live in the West. Almost fifteen million Latinos, more than one of every three, are under age eighteen (Table 1.1 and 19.1).

How many of these young Latinos are or will be left behind by our schools, colleges, and universities as government and society clamor about too many Latinos in the United States? Are the classmates of today's Latino children behaving any better toward them than my classmates behaved toward me long before this latest wave of immigrant-bashing spread across the nation?

My elementary school teachers probably never realized how much racial harassment and discrimination I suffered though since my fear extended to them too. There was no Latino educator I could talk to about these hostilities. The first Latino educator I ever met was a professor who helped me understand my lack of cultural pride and self-esteem but that was years after high school.

This college professor taught me the true history of Latinos in the United States and it made me feel so much better about who I was, am, and will always be. With this new sense of being and purpose, I began to help other Latino students deal with their identity problems via Latino history, music, theatre, and dance as a college teacher too.

Latinos of all ages have a natural or innate connection with each other. Because this basic sense of cultural relevancy or kinship is lacking in most of our nation's schools, colleges, and universities, generations of Latinos are being torn apart, and this hinders most of us from receiving a quality education as we struggle with a lack of positive role models in our schools.

This critical connection cannot exist for Latino students where there are no Latino educators to inspire them to excel in their classes. But there are the exceptional Latino students in America's high schools, college, and universities who can help meet this need by choosing rewarding career opportunities in education. Colleges and universities should actively recruit many of these Latino students into their education departments so that in the near future, these students and educators can meet this growing Latino need in the spirit of not leaving any of our nation's children behind.

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LISTENING, I AM: SELF-INQUIRY IN BOHMIAN DIALOGUE

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When You Can Endure
When the words stop
And you can endure the silence
That reveals your heart's pain of emptiness
Or that great wrenching-sweet longing,

That is the time to try and listen
To what the Beloved' eyes
Most want to say. (Hafiz, 143)

Taking the time to stop, really stop, and listen; or rather, *making* the time to stop and listen, where that means to stop and listen so intently you forget yourself in the listening. How often does that occur in our days, our weeks, and our lives? A listening so pure no thought can impugn it, no distraction can dissuade it from its intent to track down the scent of wonder, of mystery, of it-knows-not-what. Such a listening feels like a communing with a silence so loud as to quiet the whole of the normally riotous mind in one fell swoop of attention.

When such a listening arises in a person's life it is as a gift from the Beloved, from the sacred source itself, and is due all the reverence owed to the divine, even though it may be such divinity desires nothing more than to be heard, in this silent listening, with a rapt, attentive heart-and-mind. Yet ironically we are often of such a nature as to return this gift unopened. Ungratefully choosing instead our own path of willful thought and erudition in the belief that hearing more of ourselves, more of what we *think* about things, will deliver us over to that same gift held out to us in silence, as though we could drain the emptiness of that silence with words, with concepts, with theories, with intellect, with—hubris. Try as we might, the emptiness returns, the silence yawns, ever surrounding our chatter within its infinite grasp until we might just surrender to its touch and stop. And maybe for the first time ever, find a rest more deep than any we have ever known, a peace in giving up the chatter to listen to that beloved silence...and all it has to say.

The idea that such an opening to the mystery/ies of one's own being is a gift given only to the select few—the yogis, the gurus, the roshis, the lamas, the mystics—is precisely what holds such silence at arm's length. One may become convinced it is a road too difficult to travel, too lofty, or even “just too damn spiritual for such a down-to-earth person like myself.” I venture not only is the realization of such a listening possible for each one of us, but its promise lies at the heart of inquiry itself, in the essence of every question *as* question. It may be cultivated by not only the traditional methods of meditation but a certain method of dialogue as well. So rarely is the gift realized in one fell swoop of enlightenment where all the mental images and sounds are drowned out in the flood of silence that the vast majority of us live in need of something more than the promise of a magnificent-yet-distant revelation.

The form of self-inquiry and dialogue offered here is just one possible way to educate ourselves in the most important wisdom, that of self-knowledge, and to cultivate at least a taste for its silence while yet living amidst the roar of thought and longing. This way *needs* the sounding of thought so we may become attentive to the spaciousness of thought's echo in the primordial silence. If we become attentive to the tacit dimensions of our thinking we may hear it differently, with greater depth. It is the space within which thought echoes that is the silence, the infinite space within which we may, as Hafiz invites, hear “what the Beloved's eyes most want to say.”¹

Self-Inquiry as “Awaring” Amness

It is somewhat strange we often think of the beginning of philosophy—the love of wisdom—as having occurred in ancient times, and that philosophy consists of a certain long tradition, a body of texts and knowledge, encompassing a lineage of great thinkers. For when philosophical beginnings and philosophy itself are cast in such an historical light it often conceals the most genuine origin and practice of this longing for wisdom: one’s own questioning concern for self-understanding, a concern that is inherently free of any and every tradition, belief, dogma, theory, or conviction. Aristotle said philosophy begins in wonder. The entrance to the oracle at Delphi—famous for having proclaimed Socrates the wisest in all of Athens—carried the simple inscription “know thyself.” But what has followed from such directives? I suggest most often they fill our minds and souls with the aura of a great quest, instilling us with the drive to discover the truth about ourselves, about life, and so through a form of higher education solve the greatest mystery of all, the enigma of being.

We set out to answer the questions that excite our minds with wonder. Or we begin carving out for ourselves the road to truth, staking claim to an innumerable quarry of so-called knowledge along the way, trusting to others the task should we fail to complete it. It would seem the great questions, like any question, call upon the inquirer to answer them, or at least to make the attempt to find an answer, and so seem to call her away from that place of wonder whence the pursuit of philosophy—as the deepest form of self-education—begins. But what if the great questions such as “who or what am I?” are great simply because the question *itself* holds more truth than any answer possibly could? What if the task was not to begin with the question, but stay with it, deepen it, make one’s home in its inherently disquieting uncertainty?

The supposition the question may hold more truth than any answer leads to at least two important implications. First, it directs us to look not to some hoped-for future result to our inquiry but to look more deeply into what we are experiencing in the question, now. Second, it has the power to sever all ties to the authority of others, all connections to tradition and theory. This is not to say these connections do not live on, especially as the context within which we, as inquirers, think and ask the question. Such a supposition, especially when an existential realization, makes it strikingly clear to us we are totally on our own in our quest, that we must be more alone, more honest, than we ever have been to genuinely face the *questionability* within this question. This may not be realized until we have attempted to formulate satisfying responses to the question, making full use of the efforts of those who have gone before us, or of our current teachers or preachers, or any figure we hold dear as offering authoritative leadership for our quest. We may only come to realize the full power of the question through failure to satisfy it. Through a process not unlike that of *neti, neti* employed in Advaita Vedanta, where the gradual recognition that every quality

I name to help me fill in the blank in the statement “I am _____” only shows what I am not. The question turns us back upon ourselves, but feeling a growing discontent with its questioning power we struggle to move forward, through thought, toward a solution, where even knowing none can be found still gives us the security it’s best to try, that our fight is a noble one that brings with it a noble, philosophical bounty. Or, perhaps disheartened and defeated, we give up the quest and, ala Hume, retire to the poolroom to soothe away our intellectual *ennui* with a pint of ale.

But as Jiddu Krishnamurti would so characteristically point out, this sense of discontent, indeed even this incapable dis-ease with the question of our own being, is the necessary condition for our finding our way not to a truth or a philosophy of being, but to discover a new way of seeing, as it requires we *look* in an entirely new way. This does not mean a new direction for, as he was also famous for having said, “truth is a pathless land,” meaning the truth of one’s being is not found at the end of an in-order-to process, as the result of an intellectual, analytical line of inquiry, but is rather *how one sees where she already is*. The power of the question, in its very questionability, is the power to halt thought in its tracks, to stop us where we stand and to call us to attention: to draw our attention back from what others have said, back from the promise even of what we have said or might say or think, back to—attention itself. This is an odd power. Through it the question becomes aware of itself, as it were, *as* a true question, for it stands naked in its wondering, all benefit of verbal, conceptual clothing having been shorn away. That is why this possibility—that the question holds more truth than any answer—requires honesty of us. This nakedness means we face ourselves in the poverty of thought, with no excuses or masks to cover this bare truth. It is also why it leaves us alone, for no other’s clothes, no one’s story or explanation or theory could possibly cover our own nakedness. It cannot do so authentically at least, and in the face of the power of the question itself inauthenticity cannot stand for long.

What is being proposed here is best understood in light of the quest to know ourselves, or with reference to the investigation into our being or, individually framed, into the question of “who I am.” Despite the fact few of us might acknowledge such an inquiry, it could be argued this is the central issue for each of us insofar as each of us seeks fulfillment. This implies each seeker feels *unfulfilled*, there is a lack within his life he hopes to remedy through one process or another, or he has some sense, at least, of discontent. So it is not only the spiritual or philosophical seeker of wisdom who feels propelled *away from the source of discontent*, of not-knowing, toward a future, hoped-for realization and discovery that will thoroughly quell the discontent: it may be the human condition to flee this disquietude. Yet the suggestion remains if one truly wishes to find the “I,” the nature of self and what it is to *be* self, then he need only look more deeply into the question itself and drop any avenue of thinking or mental activity

that leads away, that tempts us toward what may lie *ahead*, what may be *next*. Zen master Dogen put it succinctly: “to study the self is to forget the self,” for all sense of self vanishes when the question becomes intense, when the mind becomes exhausted and retires in the flame of the question itself. Or again, as Ramana Maharshi phrases what I might call this ‘radical’ form of self-inquiry—radical in the sense it stays at the *root* of the question in its questionability—the inquiry into “I” shunts the mind, withering it into dissolution.

From where does this ‘I’ arise? Seek for it within; it then vanishes. This is the pursuit of wisdom. When the mind unceasingly investigates its own nature, it transpires that there is no such thing as mind. This is the direct path for all. The mind is merely thoughts. Of all the thoughts the thought ‘I’ is the root. Therefore the mind is only the thought ‘I’ (Godman, 50).

As long as “I” pursue an answer to this question, the very thing in question—“I”—remains presumed, remains tacitly in the background *behind* the pursuit as its basis and support. So the “I” is not investigated at all, and we effectively *act as if* it were no longer even *in* question. So long as we remain identified with the mind we continue to tacitly assume this “I” as the thinker, the perceiver, the doer, the agent of all that “we” do. Thus the question “who am I” remains the object of *the very thing in question*, and indeed seems to like it that way, for it—the so-called ego—then gets to have a problem to work on, perhaps the biggest of them all, and chewing on problems is manna to the mind.

Self-inquiry is a different creature altogether from the philosophical pursuit of the “problem of the self.” As the “direct path” it short-circuits all intellectual attempts at a conceptual formulation (which every problem consists of) by turning awareness back upon itself *in the mode of wonder* and *with the attunement of care*. That we are awed by *wonder* means the questionability of the question is alive, and that we care to hold this wonder means we are in no rush to evade the question by any form of mental movement but remain open to it, silent, perhaps even stilled by the strength of the wonder itself.

What remains of the question? The silent wonder in the face of the existential fact—“I am.” Part of the wonder is no characteristic I name about this sense of being, this “amness” if you will, comes close to comprehending it. In light of being, standing nakedly in amness, the mind naturally quiets and awareness, or the attention of acute listening, naturally intensifies. Or again, it is a making clear, a non-conceptual kind of clarification of the primordial sense of being, not by positing it in the mind as thought but by “awaring” it directly. Indeed, there is no existential difference between amness and awareness, between being and awaring, and radical self-inquiry is the direct path by opening the way to where we already and always are, here and now amidst an unbroken, continuous field of experience, participant in an infinitely intricate web of relationships with no dividing lines. Awararing in such

fashion we may see the fragmentary nature of thought, that it cannot operate without making divisions, much as a computer can store no data without the difference of one from zero. Seeing in such a way means holding to the existential state of just don’t know. This not-knowing is the essence of the question of self, as it is of any question, but now we see the value and necessity of staying with the not-knowing, for we see the truth held in the question at the same time we see the truth broken, fragmented in any mental answer or formulation of the problem.

It is important to note this in no way means that thought is bad or there is a suggestion here that conceptual formulations are all inherently futile or worthless. Rather, when it comes to the question of being, of one’s own being, of who or what *I am*, such formulations have a predominantly negative function *insofar as we truly wish to reveal our self-nature*. The idea here is essentially aligned with what Eckhart Tolle—who points us back to the now while elucidating the insanity of seeking ourselves in the future—means when he says we need time only to discover that we don’t need time to know who we are. The inherent questionability of the question must become intense enough to quell the strong momentum within the nature of the mind to deal with it mentally, meaning in thought, and for most seekers that means the path of thought needs to be followed to its own demise, a demise that ironically takes place in the womb of its beginning—in the wonder of the quest to know oneself.

Bohman Dialogue as Catalyst to Radical Self-Inquiry

What I have been calling radical self-inquiry does not designate any specific *question* but rather a certain form of questioning and how it is dealt with. The verbally formulated question “who am I?” is but one possibility of phrasing what, in radical self-inquiry, is essentially beyond words in any case. This is true of many Zen koans as well, where it is not so much the wording that is important but rather to what extent the koan is, as it were, “swallowed whole,” how much of oneself is given toward the koan-as-koan, or the puzzle-as-puzzle. One famous collection of koans is entitled the *Gateless Gate*, pointing to the fact there is nothing to be solved as such, but that barrier—the idea the koan has a specific solution—is only a barrier so long as this idea persists, and what is required is to forget oneself in the depth of the koan’s “puzzleness.” When a koan becomes this daunting it is said to be like a red hot iron ball lodged in one’s belly, and no matter how one struggles it cannot be dislodged. That is the flame of self-inquiry, or the deep discontent of “just don’t know.”

But while Zen masters may actually give their students koans to wrestle with, we often find koans arising tailor-made for us in our daily lives. I feel these are the most genuine, the kind that will spark the greatest flame. After all, each of us encounter problems that deeply trouble our hearts and minds, that keep our thoughts churning and chewing as the problems continually rise up, demanding attention, demanding to be turned over time and again like a cow chewing her cud. We find little mental rest

or ease as these problems occupy our attention and stir up negative emotions with their mental storylines. But we may eventually begin to sense our dis-ease has more to do with the nature of this thought activity than with the content of the problems themselves. This is when the seed of self-inquiry begins to sprout and take root—in the “problemness” of our most worrisome problems. It is possible, too, a profound sense of wonder may arise from an experience of deep beauty, love or peace, but insofar as these experiences are often enjoyable they do not spark a sustained inquiry; they are, in short, all too often taken for granted. So most often it is the thorn in one’s side that gets our attention, as we can find no rest until we solve the problem, and this becomes our koan, whose solution demands we delve more deeply into the problem maker and sustainer—the “I.”

It may be something of a truism that for Zen, as for Yoga and Vedanta, the solution is the complete quieting of the mind, indeed the dissolution of the mind, and so meditation is then often taken to be the recommended route to true peace of mind, to the awaring of amnesia. Yet even then one may tacitly assume the “I” in the attempt to discover a *future* enlightenment, a *future* cessation of mental activity, where seeking precisely postpones the realization that can only *be now*. But when self-inquiry becomes radical, when the questionability heightens, attention naturally becomes so keen the mind slows to a crawl as it looks into itself, driven by itself. Self-inquiry is not the self attempting to still itself, but rather to radically *apprehend itself*. While perhaps a subtle distinction, this is most significant as it proposes the power to quiet the mind lies within the very wonder of the mind. The care necessary to stay open to the question as question, to stay open to wonder, can naturally still the mind, for one then can see oneself as one is, and so there is no need to try to make thought cease. If one’s desire is strong enough, peace of mind is close at hand, as it was for Ramana Maharshi. But another possible and potentially powerful way to increase the flame of self-inquiry and the light of self-awareness can be found in the method of dialogue developed by physicist David Bohm.

For Bohm, following Krishnamurti with whom he often conversed, our problems are often generated because of the nature of thought to *fragment* all it touches, and most essentially to divide the thinker from the thoughts. Once divided, thinking can only generate more fragmentation—and thereby conflict, both within oneself as well as with others. One begins to understand that what is needed is a certain dissolution of the mind itself, since the content of the mind inherently bears with it fragmentation. Thinking alone cannot solve the problems generated by thinking, and most especially not our life koans. We need a way to see the tacit and non-verbal levels of thought, to see the operation of the thinker *in action*. Then we may truly come to see not only that thinking generates and perpetuates our problems but how it does so, and this itself is self-knowledge. This kind of seeing is the action of a deep transformation, an inner revolution. This is not to

say Bohmian dialogue is a way to solve our problems or deliver us from our koans, and the very fact it is not about finding solutions is one of its chief characteristics. I will briefly outline its chief features and attempt to point out how it facilitates self-inquiry by virtue of its avoidance at playing the game of solving our problems or acting as a kind of group therapy. Likewise, Bohmian dialogue is not intended to be merely an intellectual discussion or forum for entertaining thoughts and analyzing their contents. First and foremost it is intended to be an exploration of the *patterns* of thought.

This it does via a group of people—generally 20 or so folks of different ages, backgrounds, interests and beliefs—engaging in minimally facilitated discourse about virtually any topic. Whatever topic arises (though usually not about dialogue itself) is explored by the group with honesty and with an ear for keeping it real, meaning abstract discussions or general story-telling are to be avoided. The spirit of inquiry that guides this exploration is one of innocence, much as when children explore: they do not have an agenda, they are not bent on finding something useful or helpful toward solving their problems, but rather they engage in a kind of *play*. This is not to say dialogue is not serious nor the issues do not often become deeply complex or emotional, but only that there is no set objective toward which the exploration is served: we explore for the sake of exploration in the spirit of discovery.

The group is especially dedicated to exploring dysfunctional patterns of thought, patterns that lead to what Bohm called “incoherence,” for it is the seeing of those that most elicits self-knowledge and also sparks coherence within the group. (Briefly, dysfunctional patterns of thought are always accompanied by some form of emotional negativity or resistance, and are always found at the heart of our problems.) This incoherence is the failure to see what we intend in thinking is not what is achieved; we often lack the awareness to see what directly results from our thinking and not what we would *wish* for. We immediately know whether an intention to raise an arm succeeds or not through an awareness called proprioception, and dialogue was for Bohm a way of developing a similar kind of immediate awareness for our thinking. The inquiring form of exploration also demands a heightened awareness, a kind of listening that is attuned not to the content of the thinking but rather its overall tendencies. This form of self-inquiry explores the *tacit* dimensions of the thinking process, while yet actively engaged in the explicit level of the verbal dialogue.

Similarly, attention is broadened to include not only the content of the dialogue but also to feel the underlying tones, attitudes, emotions, and assumptions of those in the group. Communication is understood to be at many more levels than the merely verbal level of what’s being said. When some awareness is kept at this “feeling level” of communication, which means is kept in an important measure in the body, the process of thought—and often the process of another’s thought—is brought into a unique kind of relief, is made to appear in ways one may not be

accustomed to in our usual manner of self-reflection. This is the foregrounding of the tacit levels of thought. I do not mean to suggest this tacit level is either homogenous, unitary, or can be made to fully show itself as a whole to awareness: it is far more a matter of degrees, such that ever deeper levels may be discerned and explored.

In large part dialogue accomplishes this in that it avoids the all-too-tempting desire to seek for solutions to problems, conflicts, or emotional pain that may arise and seeks instead to direct attention to what is happening as it's happening and to continue to explore what is transpiring. This is the spirit of radical self-inquiry: the care to keep open to the *questioning*, and the desire to refrain from diffusing the wonder with attempts at solution. Dialogue is unique in this regard since it utilizes thought, even encourages it in ways, as a direct means of seeing how thought tacitly operates, how what we self-reflectively understand as our conscious thoughts are deeply conditioned by patterns—human, not personal patterns—and so cultivates a deeper, inquisitive awareness that tends to hold, by increasing degrees, to the wonder of the inquiring awareness itself. That dialogue is close to the “direct path” pointed to by both Ramana Maharshi and Krishnamurti was clear to Bohm himself:

So we can see that there is no “road” to truth. What we are trying to say is that in this dialogue we share all the roads and we finally see that none of them matters. We see the meaning of all the roads, and therefore we come to the “no road.” Underneath, all the roads are the same because of the very fact that they are “roads”—they are rigid (Bohm, 44).

This is the negative route of inquiry whereby it becomes clear that all attempts to furnish a thought-full solution to the question bankrupt themselves and we learn to stay close to the inquiring awareness itself which is inseparable from the amness of being. This is because we are thrown back upon the inquirer himself as he is held *by* the inquiring awareness; such attention strips awareness of its guise as a self, of its conceptual clothing. Beneath the I-thought there is no I. There is simple, pure awaring. Listening, I am.

Conclusion

The beginnings of philosophy, as the love of wisdom, are not essentially in the past as the promises held forth in those beginnings are not in the future. Socrates, the man who knew only he knew nothing, knew enough to engage in dialogue with others for the purpose of spreading his unique brand of wisdom: “just don’t know.” I do not mean to say his purposes were the same as those of

radical self-inquiry, but it is at least interesting to note he had to first lead his companions in dialogue to *aporia*, to the “lack of passage” that is the recognition of “don’t know.” What I do mean to suggest is that “don’t know” is the beginning of the love of *wisdom and that wisdom means abiding in this don’t know*, and most especially as abiding in the deep sense of wonder within the question of one’s own being. While this sense of wonder may lack the power to provide an intellectual answer to this question it has the far more wonder-full power to clear away the false sense of self that conceals being. It seems this deeper power has been largely forgotten in the tradition of philosophy as it becomes ever more populated with experts who can communicate their wisdom only to other academic initiates. Likewise, this power is not the exclusive right of the mystical initiates, nor is what it has to offer only available to those who practice spiritual penance or years of meditation. It lies within us as the essence of inquiry itself, at the heart of the quest to understand ourselves.

There is no answer to this question *and no need to seek for one*. What is needed is only the cultivation of the questioning, of the inquiry as it naturally inclines us to pay closer attention to what the question has to say, whatever question that may be. Bohmian dialogue is a way that travels between the roads of intellectual exposition and meditative seclusion, between the dominant paradigms of both western and eastern philosophy, as it inculcates a sensitivity to allow thought to “re-sound” in the silence of inquiring awareness, or cultivates an ability to see the tacit dimensions of thought *as thought operates*, without trying to make it stop. It utilizes a natural potency of awareness itself: the potency of self-inquiry.

ENDNOTES

1 The inspirations for this essay are many and diverse, but chief among them is the felt need, as a university teacher of Asian philosophy, to both realize as much existential clarity with regard to the fundamental, egoic patterns of the mind as possible as well as discover a mode of helping others to understand the teaching simply, directly, without abandoning the academy wholesale. As I hope the essay reveals, this requires a certain synthesis of elements from the Asian meditation tradition with those from the Western tradition of reflective inquiry. What has resulted is an open-ended, living and dynamic form of interpersonal inquiry called Bohmian Dialogue.

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GRADING PAPERS ON EVERYDAY RACISM IN ISRAEL

LAUREN L. BASSON

It is time to grade the last assignment I have given my undergraduate students in the course I teach on Minorities in Democracies at one of Israel's institutions of higher education. The course draws a diverse group of students, including Ashkenazi Jews (Jews of European descent), Mizrahi Jews (Jews of Middle Eastern and North African descent), immigrants from the former USSR and Ethiopia, Bedouin and other Arab citizens from both the north and south of Israel. My classroom serves as a microcosm of Israeli society, one of the rare contexts in which the broad spectrum of Israeli citizens is represented.

In preparation for this assignment, I have asked the students to read Philomena Essed's insightful essay in which she defines the concept of everyday racism, describes incidents that illustrate what it looks like in practice, and details a careful format for interviewing people who have experienced or witnessed incidents of everyday racism in their own lives (Essed 2002). The assignment is simple. Interview someone who has experienced an incident of everyday racism or discrimination (I broaden the concept slightly to fit the Israeli context) and analyze it using Essed's format.

The results are raw, painful and revealing. While the world's attention is focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, my students document incident after incident of everyday racism that takes place within Israel's borders and among its citizens. Some write about the racism of Israeli Jews toward Palestinian Israelis. Arabs (including Muslims, Christians and Druze) constitute approximately twenty percent of Israeli citizens and many identify themselves as Palestinian. A number of students write about the daily discrimination and humiliation Palestinian Israeli citizens experience from Israeli security guards on busses and at the entrances to train stations and shopping malls. One student who interviewed himself describes being delayed by security guards at the train station while he was on his way to the university. The security guard kept him waiting

while allowing other passengers to enter the station until finally, the student missed his train. When the student asked why he was being delayed, the guard replied, "The difficult situation [in this country] is because of you and you're still complaining?"

Another interview concerns a Bedouin student from a remote village who sought a room in an apartment near the university. Each time he called about a room for rent, he received the reply the room was already taken. After receiving the same negative answer for the eighth time, he finally asked the man on the phone, "Is it already taken because I'm Arab?" The man replied, "Yes," and hung up the phone. The student eventually found a room in the dorms that he shared with a Jewish student who barely spoke to him.

Many of the student interviews, however, do not concern Jewish racism toward Arabs. They concern Jewish racism—or ethnic discrimination—against other Jews. These students write about discrimination against Mizrahi Jews, that is Jews of Middle Eastern and North African descent, discrimination against Ethiopian Jews and discrimination against Jews who recently immigrated from the former USSR. Most of the perpetrators in these stories are Ashkenazi Israelis.

Some of the stories concern discrimination that takes place in public settings—the army, the workplace, and educational institutions such as the university. Each year several students report how friends have been prevented from entering nightclubs on the basis of their Ethiopian, Mizrahi, or Bedouin descent. Some of these incidents end in physical skirmishes while others simply result in humiliation and resignation on the part of those denied entrance to the clubs. One student notes the irony and bitter resentment of a young, Ethiopian soldier who risks his life during the week to defend his country but is denied entrance to a nightclub on the weekend due to the color of his skin.

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Another interview concerns a young Bedouin woman who goes for a job interview at a branch of a large chain of pharmacies located in an upscale shopping mall in Tel Aviv. The store manager is clearly taken aback when he realizes the job applicant is a young, Bedouin woman wearing a hijab, a Muslim headdress. When he finally interviews her after making her wait a long time, the first thing he asks is whether she would be willing to remove her headscarf at work. He then asks her a series of questions about her personal and family life, none of them relating to her qualifications for the job. The young woman who faced discrimination on the bus and at the entrance to the shopping mall in order to attend the interview is hardly surprised when she doesn't get the job. Nor is she surprised to learn a few weeks later a Jewish peer with fewer qualifications has been hired for the position.

The intersection of gender and racial discrimination described in this interview is also present in others. One student interviewed a 35-year old Russian with an engineering degree who was reduced to working as a cleaner (janitor) at the airport after immigrating to Israel. The woman describes the intense discrimination she faced from prospective employers as well as in other public settings such as the grocery store where workers hurled comments at her like, "Go back to your stinking Russia" and "Go work in prostitution like all the other Russian women."

Another student who interviewed herself describes going to the home of a male friend with whom she attended one of the country's most elite high schools in Jerusalem. She enjoyed the delicious lunch served by her friend's mother and commented to him afterward on what a nice mother he had. Well, he replied, the only reason his mother was being so friendly was because she knew the two of them were just friends. "If my mother thought I was dating a Mizrahi girl," he continued, "she wouldn't let me in the house."

Some of the most poignant and provocative interviews concern racism that takes place in intimate, family settings. Last year one of my students was an angry young man who was convinced I was grading his assignments unfairly. Time and again I tried to explain the academic criteria on which the grades were based and show him where his work needed improvement. He became angrier and more belligerent as the semester progressed until I honestly began to fear him. Then he turned in his interview on everyday racism. In contrast to all of his other work, it was detailed, articulate, and straight to the point. He had chosen to write about his own family. The essay described the racism displayed by his Polish maternal grandparents toward his Egyptian-born father and the schisms this caused in his family while he grew up. He recounted the deep ambivalence these experiences provoked in his own sense of identity as the son of a "mixed" Mizrahi-Ashkenazi couple.

This year a female Arab student registered for my course but rarely attended class due to her obligations for a teacher-training program she attended simultaneously. Her absences were made more noticeable by the fact that

when she did attend, she was outspoken, articulate, and very sharp. At the beginning of the semester, the student arrived immaculately dressed in a long robe and matching headscarf. When she returned at the end of the semester, her appearance had changed. She wore a stylish black pantsuit with brightly colored accessories. The student approached me sheepishly on the last day of class and apologized for all of her absences. She was also concerned I might not recognize her. I assured her that of course I recognized her. She expressed surprise. But her appearance had changed so much, she said. I tried to explain that despite the contrast in her wardrobe, the person wearing the clothes was still clearly recognizable.

In one of her first assignments for the class, this student wrote about her own "mixed" identity. She described the tensions involved in growing up as the daughter of a Circassian mother and a Muslim Arab father and the discrimination and confusion she faced at school as a result. The Circassians comprise a minority ethnic group associated with the Arab population in Israel. Whereas Circassian men serve in the Israeli army, Muslim Arabs do not. My student grew up constantly feeling if she defended the actions of one side of her family, she was offending members on the other side.

In her essay on everyday racism, the same student describes the discrimination faced by a young Muslim woman who was denied entry to a Christian school due to her religion. Another student who teaches school in a Bedouin town writes about the racially discriminatory attitudes of "white" Bedouin students toward "black" Bedouin students, the descendants of slaves, who complain about being called "ugly blacks." These stories point to varieties of intra-Arab discrimination among Israeli citizens that are rarely acknowledged or discussed within Israeli society.

In past years when I gave this assignment, a sizable minority of my Jewish students chose to write about incidents of everyday racism that took place outside of Israel. I did not restrict the assignment geographically. I had already learned from other experiences some Jewish students were simply unwilling to confront the possibility racism exists in Israel. Nearly all of those who wrote about racism outside of Israel conducted interviews with family members who had experienced anti-Semitism in either Europe or the United States. This year, however, the vast majority of my students chose to write about racist incidents that took place in Israel itself.

Most students write about contemporary incidents. A few choose to interview older family members about experiences in their past. One Mizrahi student, for example, interviewed her grandfather about the extreme discrimination he experienced from Ashkenazi bosses in his workplace as a new immigrant from Iraq in the 1950s.

What emerges from these interviews is a unique and often startling picture of the multiple forms of ethno-racial and religious discrimination that take place in contemporary Israel. Not only Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel, but also Mizrahi Jews, Ethiopian Jews, and recent immigrants

from the former USSR experience severe marginalization. Palestinian Arab citizens experience much more profound exclusion than citizens associated with the Jewish sphere but all of the groups mentioned are subject to various forms of formal and informal discrimination not experienced by veteran Ashkenazi citizens of Israel.

Two things become immediately apparent as I read my students' essays. One, everyday racism is alive and well in contemporary Israel and my students know it.

Unlike most of their elders in politics, the media, and academia who shy away from any mention of racism within Israel, my students recognize racism when they see it—on a daily basis. They recount incident after incident of blatant discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, and gender.

I realize there is a problem in importing Philomena Essed's approach into an Israeli context. Essed notes, "The concept of everyday racism relates day-to-day experiences of racial discrimination to the macrostructural context of group inequalities represented within and between nations as racial and ethnic hierarchies of competence, culture, and human progress" (203). She asserts "everyday racism involves cumulative practices, often covert and hard to pinpoint" (208). The incidents Essed describes—in places as diverse as the Netherlands and contemporary South Africa—are examples of aversive, subtle, often hidden racism. The stories my students tell, by contrast, are mainly of blatant, in-your-face, aggressive racism. There is no need to apply Essed's careful analytical approach in order to determine whether racism is at play in these cases. The perpetrators in the incidents my students describe are not shy about their racist beliefs or restrained in their actions.

The second thing I quickly realize is a good number of my students have not bothered to read Essed's eloquent article. Even those who have apparently read the article apply her careful methodology sloppily, partially, or not at all. Some of these students rarely attended class either. Others came to class and participated in our discussion about ethnic discrimination in Israel based on Henriette Dahan-Kalev's moving analysis of Ashkenazi oppression of Mizrahi Jews based on her own childhood experiences as a Moroccan Jew who passed as Ashkenazi (Dahan-Kalev 2001). At least some of my students took part in in-class exercises concerning self-fulfilling stereotypes and racial privilege based on well-known works by Mark Snyder and Peggy McIntosh whose relevance to the Israeli context we debated at length (Snyder 2001, McIntosh 2001). I want to believe these sessions contributed to the sensitive ways in which my students approached their final assignment on everyday racism.

I sigh deeply as I began marking down essays written in vivid prose about the injustices of racism taking place inside Israel on a daily basis. The interviews, some of them transcribed and submitted without any analysis, are searingly honest. My students are alive to the nuances and plentiful varieties of everyday racism in Israel. Their interviews may not follow the format I asked for but

their transcriptions are full of emotion and potent detail. I begin to realize this emotional power is less apparent in the essays by those who have spliced the interviews into sections and summarized them according to the instructions I gave. With the analytical rigor and comparative potential gained through Essed's methodology, the sense of immediacy is often lost.

I grade the papers carefully, applying the criteria I laid out for my students in writing, the criteria I repeated in class, the criteria I insisted yet again would influence their grades on this assignment. Israeli students are not known for following directions (or for coming to class). They nodded; they insisted yes, yes, they understood—and here are the results.

As I begin enforcing the rules I have created, I feel my heart breaking inside. I am enraged at the injustices my students have so eloquently exposed at my request and at myself for perpetuating inequalities my students have revealed by grading these essays according to academic standards that privilege members of the dominant group.

The same socio-political and institutional circumstances that contribute to the instances of everyday racism described in their essays also contribute to some students having more sophisticated academic skills and preparation than others. The article I have assigned is in English, a language Israeli students are required to know in order to enter the university. But whereas English is a second language for Jewish students born in Israel who began learning it in the first or second grade, it is at least a third language for my Arab and immigrant students. Many of my Ashkenazi students come from middle class families and attended schools with high academic standards in cities and suburbs in the center of Israel, while many of my Mizrahi and immigrant students come from working class families and attended schools with poor reputations in low-income development towns on the outskirts of the country. The socio-economic and educational standards in Israel's Arab communities are lower still.

Asking my students to read and digest Essed's essay as the basis for this assignment means I am posing a far greater challenge to some students than to others. As an instructor who is teaching this class in my fifth language, Hebrew, I am well aware of this discrepancy. I doubt I would be able to read and fully understand Essed's essay if I had to read it in Hebrew instead of English. In other words, I'm not sure I could complete the assignment I have given my students—certainly not if I had to turn in the final written product in Hebrew.

I go back to the essays. An Ashkenazi student details the story of an Ethiopian peer who was denied entrance to a nightclub and then argues articulately the incident was not necessarily racism. After all, she too has been denied entrance to nightclubs in the elite suburbs north of Tel Aviv. Sometimes they're just full. That essay gets a 10, the top grade. She followed all the rules. She organized her presentation and made her argument precisely according to the format I prescribed.

I look back at the powerful interview by the Arab student who exposes discrimination between Muslims and Christians in Arab schools—a topic rarely addressed in Israeli society where Arabs are conveniently lumped in a single group and ignored by the Jewish establishment. That essay gets a 3. The student makes no reference to Essed's essay whatsoever.

I cringe as I write these numbers on the papers. Looking at the grading patterns makes me feel sick. As usual, I watch the ethnic hierarchy emerge in the numbers I assign. The Ashkenazi students, careful and obedient and well-prepared by their former academic training, receive the top grades. The Mizrahi and Ethiopian students, less academically privileged and often under greater financial and family stress, receive the middle grades. The Arab students, often completely unprepared academically and frequently unable to attend class due to family crises and work obligations, receive the lowest grades in the class.

Essed's meticulous methodology was developed for evaluating incidents in countries where racism is often cloaked in euphemisms and superficial politeness. What relevance does it really have in a country where people make no effort to hide their racism? Why did I even bother to ask students to scientifically evaluate whether the incidents they wrote about were racist when they included comments like: "Yeah, that's right, I'm not letting you into the nightclub because you're Ethiopian;" "My mother wouldn't let me into the house if I dated a Mizrahi woman;" "Why don't you become a prostitute like the other Russian women;" and "Yes, the apartment is unavailable because you're Arab."

I go back over all the papers again. I raise every grade to 10. My students may not have read the article. They may not have learned how to analyze an interview according to Essed's criteria. But they have documented—in stark, revealing prose—the ugly mechanics of how racism operates on a persistent, grinding, daily basis in Israel. That knowledge is far more important than format or footnotes. And it is far more than most of their peers have learned.

I continue to berate myself for not having instructed them better, for having been soft on the deadline, for not having done enough to reduce the gaps in conventional academic skills. And then I tell myself, no, Lauren, your students have shown you they learned the more important lesson. Give them the credit they deserve for having reached that understanding. Give yourself credit for having helped them in that process. We all deserve 10 on this assignment.

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FROM PLATO TO FOUCAULT: HELPING MILLENNIAL STUDENTS LEARN HISTORY IN THE DIALECTICAL TRADITION

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For as long as I can remember, going back to the late '60s when I was a Ph.D. candidate graduate assistant, teaching freshman composition at SUNY/Buffalo, I have used questions more than any other pedagogical mode in my classrooms. *Used* is misrepresentative, because I did not know the answer ahead of time, wasn't hiding it up my sleeve like the ace of spades in a magic trick. Repeated inquiry felt like a natural, comfortable mode of discourse, creating a classroom atmosphere akin to a collective journey of exploration. Q&A was the great leveler; and on their end-of-term unsigned evaluation forms, the students appreciated this effort, noting "Mr. Baldwin's great discussions" in which "he actually listened to our opinions," as a welcome, refreshing antidote to "boring lectures" where the teacher "spewed out" information to be memorized and then forgotten the day after the exam.

Four decades, and many shifts of consciousness later, I've moved past a succession of signposts along the multi-generational road, but the freshmen are, thankfully, still teenagers. At Montclair State University, after the History Department chairman sat in on my Gen Ed class to evaluate me, he said he had never seen a professor so successfully "problematize" the subject matter. Indeed, the birth of the Internet, and the post-9/11 syndrome have given rise to exponentially more unresolved questions on my part than ever before. The students, now as then, say they relish the spirit of inquiry.

Such persistent sentiments have moved me to reflect upon the educational staying-power of the dialectical tradition (with respectful deference to the fact I am not a trained philosopher by discipline) and to offer some examples of classroom-tested applications of the dialectic in contemporary praxis.

Let me issue one corrective before I forge ahead. I should have referred to *a* rather than *the* dialectical tradition, because one scholar's tradition is invariably another's exception.

However, the connective tissue between the contributory elements is strong; and the cumulative effect at the conclusion creates a viable foundation upon which I have built the teaching and behavioral templates that follow.

Theory

To begin at the very beginning: *Dialektike*, in the ancient Greek, was the art of ideally-convivial discussion and debate (Williams, 106-108). Contradictions rising out of such conversation gave stimulus to thought; which, in turn, led to investigation of basic principles of The Truth via further discussion. Plato's version of the dialectic, exemplified so entertainingly in *The Republic*¹ is about the argumentative method of first determining and then analyzing the interrelationship between ideas as a way to seek their definitions, leading the soul toward superior knowledge (Pappas, 156-7). Here is a text in which continuous polarities in subject matter—knowledge vs. opinion; kings vs. philosophers; benign gods vs. vindictive gods; the rigor of justice vs. the freedom of anarchy; curricular reform in school vs. education at street level; domestic habituation vs. public tradition; the obedience of reason vs. the wildness of desire; forms vs. things; poetry as high mimesis vs. poetry as mawkish sentimentality—are rivaled by reflexive, witty meditations on the intimate process of talking, in and of itself: "But Thrasymachus," Sophocles chides the young – and rude – Sophist and renowned rhetorician of Chalcedon (17, 39), "how can anyone who admits he doesn't know the answer then try to answer anyway?" (Plato, 35). Further on, "Well, then" Sophocles pointedly posits to his moody interlocutor, "shall we counter Thrasymachus with a set speech of our own? He will then contradict us; *we*, in turn, will rebut *him*. Then we shall have to count and weigh the merits of the two sides of the argument... On the other hand, we could continue the pattern of our discussion so far, simply

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seeking to identify areas of agreement and disagreement” (45). Sophocles relishes the process of inquiry as if it were a plentiful buffet, snatching bites of food in haste, here and there, without fully tasting them. He takes more pleasure, he says, sampling tidbits of wisdom rather than satiating his hunger with any one dish, presenting the (perverse) confession at the end of Book I “that the outcome of the discussion is that I know nothing” (52).

The means of his dialectic do not, at the outset, seem to justify—or even set the stage for—its end. Nevertheless, by the end of *The Republic*, we are left with no ambiguity about the most important theme—whereas the chief function of the state is education, the mechanism for education no longer functions properly. The entire system must be dismantled and replaced with a new, comprehensive syllabus, one that will educate men to be – above all else – *just*. The resultant ideal society, according to Plato, can only be governed by wise men of reason, moderation and discrimination, generous men who understand that tap-roots in the soil of self-mastery arise to invigorate the flowers of the common weal (15–20).

* * *

G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831) endorsed the early modernist debt to Greek civilization as the harmonious starting-point for the dialectic. “Among the ancients,” he writes in *The Science of Logic* (1812), giving credit where due, “Plato is termed the inventor of Dialectic...Wherever there is movement, wherever there is life, wherever *anything* is carried into effect in the actual world, there Dialectic is at work” (Ackenberg, 1). The dialectic, in Hegel’s moral worldview “the only true method,” exemplifies his belief in the connectedness of all people and things. Man achieves self-definition by a commitment to reciprocal, contingent interrelationships in society. In the course of being-in-the-world day by day, through the untrammelled exercise of his mind in all-too-human, transient propositions, paradoxes and theoretical questions – out of this essential conflict, desired resolution arrives: What is best for the community ethos begins with the “general individual” understanding what is best for *himself* (Kauffman, 1977).

Hegel brought this theoretical dialectic down to earth in the practicalities of supervising one hundred fifty primary, elementary, and high-school boys during his nine-year tenure (1808–1816) as professor of philosophical preparatory sciences and rector (head teacher) of the Nuremberg Classical Gymnasium (Tubbs). Hegel’s forthright, confessedly “long-winded” (Hegel, 171–233) correspondence on “the business of teaching” contains, among many gratifying revelations, his “distaste for traditional didactic forms of instruction.” At all costs, Hegel reproached his old friend, district school superintendent Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer, the classroom teacher must avoid “mere lectures...the misery of endless inculcating, reprimanding, memorizing...of ceaseless spoon feeding and stuffing.” Rather, “in learning, a young mind must behave independently” (218).

Furthermore, “teachers should never,” Hegel declared, “induce in children a feeling of subjugation and bondage

– [nor] demand absolute obedience for obedience’s sake.” To “live educationally,” the child must evolve, in defined stages, from the bosom of his “natural family” outward into “acceptance of the work of the world...the civil culture.” In the course of this difficult maturation toward emancipation, if guided properly by a helpful, caring teacher, the pupil will engage in the struggle to “comprehend the contradictory nature of experience.” And if, along this path, the pupil makes mistakes, so much the better; because, to Hegel, the “use of the notions, ‘right or wrong’ is simple minded, and one of the chief obstacles to the progress of understanding” (Kauffman 1965, 167–175; Tubbs).

“In the boy’s pedagogical progress,” Hegel concluded in his first major published book, *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1807), “we recognize the history of the education of the world” (Kauffman 1965, 44–45). Here was a natural flow replenishing and renewing itself in *all* rational minds – *all* “grades of culture,” not only the elites; to learn through experience by building upon prior knowledge and “mak[ing] fixed thoughts fluid” (52–53). The “dialectical movement...this way that generates itself, leads itself on, and returns to itself,” arrives full circle (98–99). It follows on the grandest, global scale that “the march of [man’s] reason through History,” Hegel writes in the ambitious *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1820), “is a complex, *dialectical* process...the development toward the *Consciousness of Freedom* as expressed in the political, cultural and religious institutions of a nation” (Arkenberg).

* * *

William Torrey Harris (1835–1909), raised in Providence, Rhode Island, as the Connecticut-born son of a North Killingly farmer, left Yale before the end of his junior year and headed west to the young city of St. Louis, an avowed “spiritualist, phrenologist, astronomer and geologist” (McCluskey, 101–105). Mentored by Amos Bronson Alcott, infused with Transcendentalist fervor for German idealism, young Harris had resolved that “Hegel was *the great man* among modern philosophers, and his large logic was the work to get.” Devouring the *Science of Logic* and *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, he wrote, “ushered [me] into a sort of high court of reason...[where] one gazes, as it were, into their eternal archetypes.” In alliance with like-minded colleagues sharing his intrepid intellectual spirit, Harris was instrumental in founding the St. Louis “Movement” and Philosophical Society in 1866 and the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* in 1867. That year, he was appointed assistant superintendent of the city’s public school system, and was quickly promoted to superintendent, a post he held for a dozen years before rising to become U.S. Commissioner of Education (109, 145).

From these platforms, Harris devoted his high profile and “Teutonic vigor” (112) to a single-minded crusade to move Hegelian principles and morals into the center of the American educational system. In the introduction to one of his annual *Course of Study* reports to the St. Louis School Board, Harris pointed to Plato as the first teacher “who showed us...[in his] famous dialectic...the natural transition between idea and idea” (130). American schools

after the Civil War had to find ways to meet the challenges of an ever-more urban society, especially in the study of humanities and the arts. Through the students' continual exercise of what Harris called "self-activity" (137) change would continue to be the only constant on his watch. He led the way toward the establishment of the modern kindergarten and the secular high school and promoted the creation of school libraries. Taking another influential leaf from Hegel's book, Harris was also the author of several studies on school management.

Beyond these resonances, Harris echoed Hegel in sharing the conviction that the atmosphere of inquiry in the ideal academy served as the training-ground for a young person to become a contributory member of the wider society: "In a world of continual dialectical struggle, pedagogical *theses* and *antitheses*...rise and fall along the march to ultimate *synthesis*" (*Hegel's Influence*).

* * *

"When I was first studying the German philosophers," John Dewey (1859-1952) wrote in an admiring letter to William Torrey Harris, "I read something of yours on them of which one sentence has always remained with me – you spoke of the 'Great psychological movement from Kant to Hegel.'" So it was that at the age of twenty-one, Dewey published his first scholarly article, "Metaphysical Assumptions of Materialism," in Harris' *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* (McCluskey, 175, 180). The following fall, Dewey matriculated at Johns Hopkins University to begin graduate study majoring in the philosophy of social relations with a minor in history. There, he fell under the immediate sway of a fellow Vermonter, Professor George Sylvester Morris, who "left a permanent deposit on [Dewey's] mind" (185, n.18). Morris reinforced in his intense, "whole-souled" (182) lectures "Hegel's *synthesis*" of polarities—man and nature, science and naturalism, "subject and object, matter and spirit, the divine and human...operat[ing] as an immense release, a liberation... the supreme reality of this principle of a living unity maintaining itself," Dewey recalled, "through the dissolution of hard-and-fast dividing walls." The tie between teacher and student was so strong that when Morris left Hopkins to chair the department of philosophy at the University of Michigan, Dewey went with him as an instructor (Rockefeller, 127, 146 n. 4, 5; McCluskey, 183, 189).

Dewey's version of the dialectic reached its dynamic peak in *Democracy and Education*, the 1916 classic which, in consideration of his best-known, exemplary works, warrants particular attention here. Dewey insists that in order for knowledge to seize hold in the mind of the student, it must be "kept alive." The student must perceive that there is a palpable direction to his learning. Study of the past, abstract history in and of itself, is not only insufficient, it is unrealistic. The true teacher needs to demonstrate the continuum with the present day (Dewey 1985, 81ff).

My essay cannot possibly accommodate the capacious evolution of John Dewey's philosophical journey into and beyond psychology, pragmatism, sociology, technology, politics and religion. "I believe that all education proceeds

by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race," Dewey wrote. "The child [must be] stimulated to act as a member of a unity, to *emerge* from his original narrowness of action and feeling and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs" (Dewey 1998, 229ff). These opening passages from his crucial 1897 essay, *My Pedagogic Creed*, give the lie to Dewey's professed abandonment of Hegelianism in later years. The disavowal should be viewed as the philosopher's legitimate desire to let go of what he called "the spectator theory of knowledge" (i.e., the distanced observance of strict, restricted intellectual hierarchies), preferring to take on the largest and most liberal arena of epistemology: "man within nature, not a little god outside."

Three decades later, Dewey escalated from a *Creed* to his eponymous *Credo*, the first tenet being that only when we become entangled within the matrix of community, where we can "do useful things for others...in pursuit of [our] own exclusive ends" will "experience, itself, [become] the sole, ultimate authority" (Dewey 1985, 129, 131; McCluskey, 198, 232, 434).

* * *

I am grateful to the late Richard Rorty (1931-2007) for the transitional link that follows. In the process of wrestling this attenuated pedagogical chronology forward to our own time and place, it was only natural I turn to Rorty's prophetic, bridge-building *oeuvre* for guidance. The consummately controversial pragmatist, the philosopher who famously did not want to be pigeonholed into a department of philosophy, even when resisting the long shadows cast by Plato and Dewey, Rorty discovered lasting solace (as do I and, I am sure, the multitude of our profession) in Dewey's "view of the virtues of inquiry... and [his] holistic conception of human intellectual life" (Ramberg, 11).

Digging through Rorty's writings for similar affirmational nuggets, I came upon a 1990 *Raritan* Magazine essay with the title: "Foucault/Dewey/Nietzsche," commencing with the assertion "Foucault can be read, with only a little strain, as an up-to-date version of John Dewey." Rorty says Michel Foucault (1926-1984) characterized himself as an iconoclastic "knight of autonomy;" but in less-haughty moments, his guard lowered, Foucault dissolved the (dialectical) boundaries of his moral and ethical identities, "his sense [Rorty writes] of his responsibility to others and his *rappor a soi*."

Placing Michel Foucault into the tradition I have traced thus far, Rorty shows how Foucault likewise needed to reconcile his precious autonomy with the pressing demands of "the public space" (Rorty). "Whether he wanted to be or not, [Foucault] was a useful citizen of a democratic country, a man who did his best," Rorty concludes, "to make its institutions fairer and more decent." Rorty's humanizing and sympathetic insights drove me to revisit Foucault. I decided the best place to start would be at the originating scene of *his* dialectic, aired in a seminal lecture at the College de France on December 2, 1970 (Foucault, 215ff).

“The Discourse on Language” was a powerful lament on the pernicious effect of the subdivisions of discourse in the society at large, and, in particular, in the silos of the academy, “controlled, selected, organized and redistributed...exploited and divided” (216, 222) wherein Foucault sounded a theme brought to full iteration in his magnum opus, *Surveiller et Punir (Discipline and Punish)*.

Scales dropped from my eyes as I re-viewed the “Discourse” lecture. Three major assertions leapt forth. Foucault’s first clarion-call—a strict, disciplinary approach to teaching was antithetical to the natural processes of learning because no single discipline/department could realistically claim possession of the sum total of all knowledge pertaining to it—set off a retrospective synaptic spark: Dewey’s essay on “Education in Relation to Form” from *How We Think* (1933). This was a book I read as a proscribed treatise on *How We Should Think*, opposing the dogmatic imposition of “subject matter defined, refined, subdivided, classified [and] organized according to certain principles of connection that have been worked out by persons [i.e., adult teachers] who are expert in that particular field” (Dewey 1998, 275-276).

Second, pertinent to *my* scholarly field, was Foucault’s declaration there was no viable way to understand history in the abstract. We must return to causality, acknowledging the results of the actions of individuals. Here again, Dewey weighed in on the debilitating, tedious danger of “making the pupil ‘analyze’...exaggerated attention to forms supposedly necessary for [him] to use if he is to get his result logically... This method invades history and even literature, reduc[ing them] to outlines, diagrams, and other schemes of division and subdivision” (275-276).

And third—I was embarrassed Foucault’s bold *caveat* had eluded me in prior readings—his valedictory assertion in the College de France lecture, accompanied by a question: “Our age, in attempting to *flee* Hegel...in thinking against...this great, slightly phantomlike shadow prowling through the nineteenth century” was “pay[ing] a high price...Can any philosophy continue to exist that is no longer Hegelian” (Foucault, 230-237)?

How much more *grammatically* dialectical, I said to myself, could a writer be? The time had come to cross the divide separating theoretical background from practical foreground.

Practice

“Who are you?”

...is the question I ask on the first day of each new semester to ignite the other-directed ambience of my classroom. *Affect* sets the tone upon which pedagogy stands or falls; I want my students to see I am aggressively interested in knowing who I will be teaching and why they are here. Their awareness of my sincere curiosity about them is the first important cornerstone in building learning. The students must come to understand I conceive of them as people living in the world at large, not only inhabiting one hour and fifteen minutes twice I week when I talk to them and they talk to me as part

of a class called History 110, Introduction to American Civilization, or we have a chance meeting in the hallway or on the quad pathways.

Let’s get real: Two and one-half hours out of a 168-hour week is 1.4 percent of their time.

To obtain and collect their responses, I do not distribute printed questionnaires. I speak the questions aloud, ask them to write the questions down, then provide ample time to write the answers. Here are some of the questions I ask: Why are you taking this class? What is your major and why did you choose it? Why are you in college? How are you paying for college? What is your job (or as is more often the case, jobs, plural) and how many hours a week do you spend on it/them? Are you the first person in your generation of your family to go to college? Do you still live at home, or are you renting an apartment, or staying on campus in a dorm? What do you think is the value of a college education? What kind of career do you want to enter when you graduate, and why? What are you passionate about in life – what are your sports, what kind of music do you like, what kind of food do you like, what are your friends like? If you were in my position and you had to stand up in front of the class and talk about ‘why history is important,’ what would you say?

It is unscientific to generalize on the basis of one year’s worth of surveys, but I am going to do so anyway. I am talking here about mostly freshmen, with a scattering of sophomores in my Gen Ed classes, anywhere from thirty to forty students. Their common denominator—and most welcome challenge—is the preponderance of the students are *not* history majors; this is a core course they have to take to fulfill the university’s distribution requirements.

Their initial sentiments about the course, rarely enthusiastic, range from neutral to mildly interested. They may be taking the class because it fits into their complexly-calibrated schedule and allows them to dash over to the parking garage and exit the campus in time to drive to their twenty-to-forty hour a week jobs. They may be taking it because my online description “sounded interesting” or because a friend told them I was a “good” teacher or they read the critiques on www.ratemyprofessor.com where I was described as someone who “cared about his students,” gave “interesting” take-home exams, and even “wrote the textbook himself.”

When I scribble the words “liberal education” on the blackboard, and ask if they know what that term means, I get blank stares. Students are forthright about assessing college as a place where “you have to get that piece of paper” that will provide a “ticket to a better life” and allow them to “get ahead in society” as “adults” (they often remind me that “we’re in college – we’re *adults* now.”) They say “maybe at one time, back in the day, a high school diploma was good enough for success,” but “not anymore.”

Insofar as actual course content is concerned, the requisite term “relevant” is offered up—to my surprise—just as much as it was in my radical youth, when it possessed more politically-sensitive implications. In my students’ minds, utilitarianism takes precedence over learning for its

own sake. They are paying their own way, and seek some kind of quantifiable applicability to their lives within the courses they take, which is why there is frequently a measure of skepticism about the “point” of the “soft” humanities, as opposed to more ostensibly practical majors such as psychology or justice studies. These freshmen may not know—if they do not as yet, they will soon discover—the typical college student changes his or her major half a dozen times in as many years.

Who am I?

...reciprocates in kind, with my background and information. I am fully aware the students have already checked me out—Googled me, visited my web site, www.neilbldinbooks.com, read my weekly blog, www.nj.com.njvoices in the Newark *Star-Ledger*, exchanged e-mails (or text messages and IMs) about me. I let them know I know what sleuthing methods they employ to find out about people’s profiles, that “I have no secrets” (with this Internet generation, how could I, even if I wanted to?), that “I have been around the block many times;” and so it is “going to be difficult for [them] to hurt my feelings.” This last remark elicits knowing smiles. The bottom line is all of my ostensible public renown, credentials, bibliography, and favorable anecdotal ratings from reputable and/or questionable sources will come to naught *unless I can capture—and maintain—their attention* from day to day, for other reasons beyond their intent to find out as soon as possible “what I want from them” so as to pass the course—one more three-credit hurdle on the track to the next three-credit hurdle. I am not denigrating the fact that passing the course is important to my students. But this goal, in and of itself, does not provide sufficient motivation to drive me forward as a teacher.

They take the earnest speechifying under advisement. Nobody is going to reveal surprise or confusion. Nobody wants to look “stupid” or “lame” in front of his or her peers. I press onward. I tell them here in the university, my expertise is a given. I am teaching American History not merely because I am possessed with a lifelong enthusiasm for that subject. I have the scholarly training and mastery to teach any one of a number of syllabi in literature or history or cultural studies. It goes further. Transcending the material at hand, I have always had an abiding enthusiasm for helping young people learn how to think better and thereby *learn how to learn*.

Remember, I say to them, information is not knowledge, regardless of the discipline. Beyond disciplinary confines stretches a far broader terrain, and thinking with more effectiveness is the gateway to that richer territory. If I can stimulate them to think beyond the pre-eminence of content by memorization of dates and famous figures and use their minds more energetically and effectively; and if I can show them how to think interrogatively, with focus and purpose, then I will have succeeded in making this semester less of a Tuesday-Thursday class and more of an experience.

Which is why, I tell them, you will often hear me ask, “*What do you think?*”

As I insisted at the beginning of this essay, it is not a rhetorical question. I actually do want to know, as a way to provide them with a stimulus toward formulating and expressing opinions. The students in History 110 are surprised to hear the white-haired professor asking for their opinions. They have been acculturated to accepting someone else’s *pro forma* opinion. I remind them an opinion is not an answer; it is a nuanced statement subject to further debate, and so, a neat solution is not guaranteed. Such repetitive uncertainty makes the students a little nervous; especially when I lean against the door jamb with my arms crossed and wait, ever so patiently, for someone to speak.

* * *

The establishment of respective stances in the class—my coming to know the students and facing them; then the students coming to know me; my posing questions, then their thinking about whether to agree or disagree—is the dialogic glue uniting everything we do from these early entry points onward. This structure clears the way for the defining rubric of my course: News is the first draft of history.

The oft-trumpeted “crisis of historical literacy” in young people cannot be resolved in a stultifying vacuum of thick, endlessly-updated, multiply-edited, expensive textbooks. Our students need to cultivate habits of mind leading to comprehension of past precedents that set the context for present events. Habituated connection with the wider world is the only way to become conversant with the narrative continuum of past and present. The past will come to life when they see how it sets up what is happening now. Toward that end, every student in my class is required to identify one consistent news source with which they are to connect every day of the term, whether it be CNN, *The New York Times*, Channel Four, Fox News, aol.com, bbc.com, or (there is no point in prohibiting it), wikipedia.

Our positions relative to each other help set up an atmosphere of trust and reciprocity—my two-way street theory of learning. I thank the students when they are able to tell me something I don’t know, because you cannot teach properly unless you are willing to learn. I want them to understand the accompanying reciprocal nature of the subject matter. We are all going to be active participants in the search.

Right about now, someone will raise her hand and mention a phrase she learned in high school, “You mean, history repeats itself, right? Perhaps we can learn from our past mistakes.” Murmurs of agreement. A comforting mantra, but what do those words really mean? “It means that human nature is always the same,” a young man in the back row says. Similarly-reassuring words of wisdom. Are you telling me people in the seventeenth century were just like us, I ask. Someone else calls out, “In the sense that we’ve always had wars, so maybe our generation we will figure out a way to stop the killing.”

Okay, I say, but how can you even begin to analyze this problem, or any one of a number of widespread problems

in the world today, if you don't go back far enough to understand what caused them?

I accept their silence as an answer. I feel the wheels turning, and nod my head sagely.

* * *

The pedagogical practices in my immersively dialectical classroom are grounded in the subject matter of American history; but as you will see below, the elements can be replaced with components from other subjects.

—Learning to think like an historian at the beginning of the fall semester, which falls on the anniversary of the World Trade Center tragedy: Imagine the you of 9/11/01 vs. the you of today. Is the you of now different than the you of then? In what ways? Is the USA of then different than the USA of today? How so?

—We read a clipping/op-ed/editorial/essay from the newspaper. I keep my eye on the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and bring in choice punditry on hot-button issues – the Spelling Commission, accountability, assessment, core-curriculum debates, diversity, lack of knowledge-base in freshmen (“how can they become good citizens if they don't know how to write a sentence...”) Such opinion-pieces never fail to elicit indignant and/or adverse responses. After we read the selection, we write Letters to the Editor and give him a piece of our minds. I collate salient excerpts from the letters and post them on our Blackboard site for everyone to comment upon further, continuing the conversation through the rest of the week.

—We've been studying a typical historical figure from the past. What if [John Winthrop, Thomas Paine, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Jane Addams, Sojourner Truth] were to come back to life and walk in that door right now? In what ways would he/she be disillusioned/pleased with what has happened in America since his/her lifetime, and why?

—People say the current Millennial generation is selfish and materialistic and has no inclination to give back to society. Agree or disagree? What if you were in charge of all philanthropy in America and had the authority to resolve our most entrenched social problems: How would you go about it? What would be your list of priorities?

—Events do not arise in the abstract. As you can plainly see, I believe history is made by people who have been influenced by other people and who, in their turn, go on to affect those who come after. Who are the people who have influenced you in your own development, and in what specific ways has their influence changed your behavior, the decisions you have made, and the directions you have taken in life?

—What is the (albeit clichéd) definition of “The American Dream” and what are the obstructions to that dream? Does progress cause poverty? In a society where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, what are the mitigating factors that prevent many of our citizens from achieving their dream? If you found yourself in a condition of abject poverty, what practical strategy would you use to get out, and get back in the game?

—If you had to take the diametrically opposing view to what you actually and sincerely believe about [whatever subject we are discussing today], what would it be, and how would you make your case convincingly?

—The great debate: Manifest Destiny is a proud, typically-American ideal **or** Manifest Destiny has made us into the world's policeman and is an embarrassment to our national image. Which one of these statements do you agree with, and why?

—High and Low culture: a false dichotomy? On a Sunday afternoon, one person decides to watch the Super Bowl and another person decides to attend a symphony orchestra concert. Is one of these activities an inherently better cultural pursuit than the other?

—Think of the major players on our national stage right now. Then imagine yourself fifty years in the future looking back at this year. Pick someone from the forefront of the news in the early twenty-first century whose reputation has survived, and say why.

—...and finally—at least as of now, in our incessantly-changing world—let's ponder a recent assertion by Zbigniew Brzezinski, professor of foreign policy at Johns Hopkins University, and former National Security Advisor under President Jimmy Carter: “America's role in the world scene has become more *'dialectical'* than ever,” he writes, “as the American state, relying upon its dominant power, acts as the bastion of traditional international stability; while American society, through a massive and varied worldwide impact facilitated by globalization, transcends national territorial control and disrupts the traditional social order” (11).

SYNTHESIS

...which is why today's propulsive, results-driven educational environment will only become more so in the years ahead. The question for teachers at all levels is not *whether* we are going to respond, but *how*.

When my students, especially second-semester seniors, talk about the real world, they actually half-turn toward the windows and gaze out as they say the words. I ask them what they mean, and they share trepidations on imminent graduation and what they hope to do once they “get out.” Pointing to those same windows, I plead with them to stop thinking simplistically about the classroom as a cut off, insular place. Rather imagine we are surrounded by a differentially permeable membrane, allowing the rest of the world—the rest of life—into school, and conversely, drawing their minds outward. I say education is integral to, not separate from, life in general.

Epoch after epoch, philosopher after philosopher, the ideal dialectical model was consummated when the student came forth as an informed, engaged citizen.

We need to teach *applied humanities* for the twenty-first century.

ENDNOTE

1 Jonathan Lear, Distinguished Service Professor, Committee on Social Thought, University of Chicago, Letter to the Editor, *Wall Street Journal*, June 19, 2006: "...this summer, I am reading Plato's *Republic* again – a book I have read and re-read for about three decades...coming to understand a way of life, an approach to the world, a grasp of beauty and truth."

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STILL THINKING ABOUT TEACHING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

JOE HOYLE

The Quote

Richard Nixon was serving his first term as president of the United States on the day I began teaching in college. When I pass along this piece of trivia to my current students, they ask whether I knew Abe Lincoln personally or went to school with Teddy Roosevelt.

My career has been a long journey, an ongoing challenge to engage students and engineer learning. Over the years, a few of the days have been truly astounding; the education process hummed along like a well-oiled machine. Probably an equal number of classes proved to be unmitigated disasters; utter confusion wiped out every hint of comprehension. In truth, a vast majority of my teaching has been on the margin—we could have accomplished more but we could have also done worse. When dealing with human beings rather than mechanical robots, definable success is often elusive. Progress is made, but in steps so tiny they can rarely be seen by the naked eye. However, through good days and bad, the journey has been an absolute thrill. I only wish I could continue for another thirty-seven years.

What is the true role of the college teacher?

Potential responses resemble the available answers to a complicated multiple-choice question: to challenge students to think for themselves, to open their minds to alternative possibilities, to guide them in making complex connections, to mentor as they begin their initial steps into the world, to create excitement about learning so they will continue the quest throughout their years, to introduce the infinite beauty of our world, to stir up indignation over the wrongs that plague our planet, to ignite a passion that will light their lives, to console and motivate, to encourage and empathize. This list has no end—a daunting array of assignments for three 50-minute sessions each week spread over a mere fourteen weeks. Overwhelmed by so many lofty aspirations, even Mother

Teresa might have been tempted to focus exclusively on conveying facts, figures, rules, and equations. When all else fails, teaching “stuff” is an easy out.

Some teachers do not settle for that most basic level of education. Over the decades, I have had the honor of working with a number of superb teachers—individuals who pushed well beyond the mere conveyance of information. Without much apparent effort, almost by intuition, they seemed capable of providing exactly what each of their charges needed in the way of guidance and inspiration. Whether a student was at the top of the class or the bottom, they could individualize their attention to meet that person’s specific needs. Moreover, they practically radiated a contagious joy for learning.

For me, observing such master teachers always raises fundamental questions about the core aspects of this profession, questions which can be summed up as “how do they manage to do it so well?” What attributes enable a teacher to be truly outstanding? How does one educator bring material roaring to life while many others make it appear incredibly boring? Is success simply a result of years of practice? Is there a common thread of excellence that can be uncovered whenever learning actually occurs?

During the summer of 2006, I posted a series of random thoughts about education on the Internet. A few weeks later, e-mail arrived from a professor in England who stated rather succinctly: “I am not sure who said it but here is a quote about teaching that I think you will appreciate.” I have lost the correspondent’s name but that person provided me with a true epiphany about my profession:

“Teaching does not come from years of doing it.
Teaching comes from thinking about it.”

The words were simple but the meaning profound.

Suddenly, I better understood those teachers whom I had admired. Their talents had not been developed purely

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as a result of years of repetition. For them, the education process was not viewed as a series of isolated events occurring over time. Rather, the students and their intellectual development reverberated in the teachers' thoughts, night and day, weekday and weekend. Almost like background music, a litany of mental questions was constantly being turned over and examined. How can I make the connection clearer between these two events? Why has the quality of a particular student's work fallen in the last few weeks? How can I relate the upcoming topic to the real world? Why do so many of my students consistently miss the same specific concept?

Since receiving that e-mail, more of my time has been allocated to thinking about teaching, my students, and the education process in general. Like a chess player plotting ten moves in advance, I find myself walking through specific questions over and over—considering the various options and their consequences. This is a representative sample of what has circled through my head almost ceaselessly over the past year. Opinions are provided but few facts. Teaching does not come from seeking pat answers; teaching comes from thinking about it.

Questions Seeking Answers

For me as well as many others, Dr. Ken Bain is a true hero. His book, *What the Best College Teachers Do* (Harvard University Press, 2004) is a wonderful celebration of educational excellence. The ideas and actions of outstanding teachers at schools across the country are analyzed based on extensive observation and discussion. Chapters such as "How Do They Prepare to Teach?" and "How Do They Conduct Class?" should be required reading for every person involved in the education of college students.

In April 2007, Dr. Bain visited the University of Richmond—where I teach—for two days to lead a series of programs culminating in an open discussion of students and learning. Midway through this final session, one faculty member cut right to the chase by raising the question probably utmost on the mind of every member of the audience: "How does a person really become a great college teacher?" Dr. Bain's response was swift: "Oh, that is easy. I can tell you how to become a great teacher in a single sentence."

The room fell silent. The professors leaned forward with anticipation to hear the ultimate truth from the master. The veil was about to be lifted. "You will always be a great teacher when you can convince your students to care about the material you are teaching."

Dr. Bain's revelation was both simple and obvious. But, I wager I have pondered that one sentence every day for the past eighteen months.

Why should any student ever care about what I am teaching? In the "olden days" (perhaps the period before the radical era of the Sixties), college teachers seemed to serve as parental authority figures more than they do today. At that time, the scope of *in loco parentis* was widely discussed. Perhaps it is merely an urban legend created by the passage of many semesters but I suspect—in some

bygone era—if a professor stared intently at the students and demanded "I expect you to learn this material because I say so" it was sufficient motivation for many. As in the military, the carrying out of orders often went without question. Contrast that attitude to the words of a recent student of mine (now working on a Ph.D.): "College students are very busy people. They will always allocate their time to tasks where they perceive the most potential benefit. If the purpose of a class assignment is not readily apparent, there is always something else that is putting incredible demands on their time." This quick peek into student thinking provides a world of enlightenment for all of us in the education profession today.

In earlier times, the students' position of acquiescence was accentuated even further by a genuine fear of failure. It is no secret the quantity of poor grades was significantly higher at most colleges only a couple of decades ago. More than a few students got Fs; some were sent home. I remember quite vividly laboring for hours to memorize complex calculus and physics equations so I might satisfy my professors. By passing their courses, I hoped to avoid being shipped to Vietnam. The darkness at the end of that tunnel made many of us "care" deeply about the subject matter being presented in every course regardless of our personal inclinations.

Teaching dynamics have changed radically. The incentives are also different. I cannot even imagine the amount of eye-rolling that would occur if I walked into class tomorrow and informed my students "I expect you to learn this material because I say so."

Every campus is filled with busy, distracted students. The entire generation seems to suffer from acute hyperactivity. Can college teachers adapt to this new world especially when grade inflation has significantly reduced the "stick" aspect of motivation?

One remediation that invariably pops up in any conversation about the difficulties of teaching in college today is the eradication of grade inflation. Without question, this phenomenon is an embarrassment and faculties need to clean up their own mess. The grade A means excellent and should never be awarded for anything less. Students who work to achieve outstanding performance are punished when equally good grades are given for mediocre efforts. Unfortunately, the desire for a high grade point average is a fundamentally different concept than wanting to gain understanding and appreciation of subject matter. The all-time favorite student question ("Is this going to be on the test?") is proof that concern about doing well on an examination is not the same as thirsting to attain knowledge. Grades can be a supplemental motivator of student effort but that fails to address the essence of Dr. Bain's admonition: "You will always be a great teacher when you can convince your students to care about the material you are teaching."

What leads students to care about a subject? Periodically, I ask my students to write a paragraph about their best college teacher. Each selects one professor and describes the

characteristics that made this individual stand out above the rest. The ostensible justification for this request is to focus attention on the inherent qualities of a successful leader. Although it does satisfy that stated goal, the real purpose is more personal.

I am always intrigued by student attitudes toward their own education. Frustrated professors sometimes complain today's students only desire good grades and entertainment. Perhaps the assertion is true but—in all the years I have given this assignment—I have never once encountered a response proclaiming “Dr. X is the best college teacher I have had because I got an easy A” or “Dr. Y is such a wonderful educator because he is incredibly funny.”

Instead, I invariably receive page after page of glowing descriptions of teachers who have impacted the students' lives in some immeasurable fashion. Although the words and phrases vary extensively, three sentiments form the vast majority of all comments:

“Dr. X challenged and pushed me to reach my full potential,”

“Dr. Y genuinely cared about me as a person and helped me to grow and mature,”

“Dr. Z was able to engage me in the subject matter; I had expected the class to be boring but it was extremely interesting.”

If this informal survey has any validity, students are most likely to care about the material being discussed if (a) they feel they are being challenged in a productive (and fair) way, (b) they sense the teacher cares about them as unique individuals, and (c) the subject is presented in an engaging manner so it stimulates their interest. This list is hardly shocking. Entire books can—and have—been written about each of the three.

However, the list does raise a fundamental question: In 2008, why do many college teachers continue to lecture? To me, this is the ultimate question in any crusade for better college education. This one-directional approach is hardly challenging or engaging and is rarely used to communicate a genuine caring attitude toward the students. Research shows lecturing to be a rather ineffective style of presentation. Yes, facts and figures can be conveyed from teacher to student but the development of appreciation and understanding is severely limited. Lecturing might possibly have been adequate for 1957 but times have changed. (Interestingly in 1781, Samuel Johnson asserted, “Lectures were once useful; but now, when all can read, and books are so numerous, lectures are unnecessary.” Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*) Today, professors simply tend to talk too much. Alter that delivery system and the world of education changes rather rapidly.

In my own musings, I define a lecture as any class session where roughly 75 percent or more of the talking is done by the teacher. My suspicion is that in many college classes at least 90 percent of the words actually come from the instructor. There are many reasons why this method remains popular but one is rather obvious: Lecturing is the one approach that requires absolutely nothing from

the students. Student buy-in is not necessary. Neither enthusiasm nor preparation is important. They sit and, maybe, listen. The professor's work is not held hostage by the need for students to get emotionally involved in their own education. Professors feel secure because they have complete control over the class. The focus can be exclusively on the conveyance of material.

Professors who do seek more interactivity must be prepared to deal with frustration. They may spend hours getting ready for an important session only to find sleepy students who have failed to invest even five seconds preparing for an in-depth conversation of complex material. Appeals to contemplate and debate a troubling topic in class are resisted. Ideas are shallow and poorly thought out. Legitimate discussions are impossible unless students have worked in advance to attain a minimum degree of knowledge.

I once began a teaching seminar by discussing student attitudes toward learning and then read Matthew 26, verse 41 in the Bible (Oxford Annotated Bible, Rev. standard ed.): “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” All of the professors in the room nodded their heads in agreement. Education can be like dieting and exercise—the significant benefits that await are obvious but many still prefer to avoid as much of the effort as possible. Under such conditions, lecturing has a wonderful appeal.

Students claim to want challenging, caring, and engaging teachers but often wind up as stenographers. When that happens who is to blame? Are students lethargic and uninterested because of the method by which they are taught or do professors revert to lectures because students are lethargic and uninterested?

Lecturing is not universal but virtually no one will deny its popularity. Teachers need to be encouraged to venture beyond this approach so their students will, ultimately, care about the material being taught.

There must be fifty alternatives worth trying; I want to propose one for consideration.

In *What the Best College Teachers Do*, Ken Bain quotes a renown educator who describes teaching as an attempt to create puzzles for students using material taken from his discipline: “Those puzzles and knots generate questions for students, he went on to say, and then you begin to help them untie the knots.” This statement presents a truly beautiful picture of educational enlightenment.

For example, the three days on which the Battle of Gettysburg was fought is a fact. The same is true for the names of the generals involved in the conflict, the number of casualties, and the eventual winning side. As Samuel Johnson points out, all of that information can be learned by reading a book. However, a history teacher can use “puzzling questions” to challenge and engage the students in order to help them develop deeper insight.

“What are the three most likely events that could have changed the outcome of the Battle of Gettysburg?” (*a puzzle involving judgment and evaluation*)

“Why did each of the three events you selected in the first question fail to transpire?” (*a puzzle involving analysis*)

“How might the world have been different during the subsequent ten years if the Confederacy had won that one battle?” (*a puzzle involving educated speculation*)

“What lessons from that battle can be applied to later wars?” (*a puzzle involving connections*)

Although not a history teacher, I can easily envision a group of students having an intense discussion over each of these questions with the “teacher” serving more as a guide or moderator. In college, the concept of the professor as a guide is quite appealing.

At each of my class meetings, I distribute a list of approximately four to eight puzzling questions (which I refer to as “conversation starters”) that the students are to discuss at the next session. To make the point clear, the first set is e-mailed to the students one week before the first class along with detailed instructions and my expectations. Uncertainty is eliminated; all are aware they will be called on to address one or more of those puzzles—either through a direct response to a written question or the assessment of another student’s comments. They quickly discover the puzzles require more than rote memorization. They are being asked to consider specified situations (often containing seemingly random details) and then be prepared to identify and analyze the pertinent information as the group gradually unties the knots. Students are challenged to present logical, considered responses they can actually support. They do not have to be smart but they do have to be prepared. (A Yale professor e-mailed me a letter written by an angry Yale student to the school newspaper that challenged professors to “call students out on their bull.” This astute suggestion might actually improve student learning significantly.)

As the discussion progresses, students become engaged by necessity. More importantly, if the puzzles are well constructed, the students find the investigation to be interesting. Learning actually is fun. Hopefully, they recognize the entire process is solely for their intellectual development and, thus, understand I do care about their growth and maturity.

During the first weeks of each semester, student answers tend to be sloppy and ill-conceived. I probe their responses and try to show the holes in their logic; other students point out where a different thought pattern might have led to a better resolution. Developing a foundation of understanding is similar to filling a bathtub one teaspoon of water at a time; it takes much work and patience. With perseverance, by the end of the semester, the level of conversation will have improved dramatically. Most students do seem to adapt quickly to the give-and-take nature of the conversation. The most common remark I receive from students is “I am always amazed by how fast the time goes by in this class.”

Can every subject be taught by using puzzling questions? Socrates certainly seemed successful. “How did

the brush strokes used by Van Gogh differ from those of other artists of the time and why did that make a difference in his development as an artist?” “How would the world be different today if Al Gore had been elected in 2000?” “Why does the Gospel according to St. John in the New Testament have a different beginning than the Gospel according to St. Luke?” “In *Othello*, what do you believe was the underlying reason for Iago’s actions and provide at least three lines from the play to support your conclusion?”

When I talk with younger faculty members, I always suggest they toss out their lecture notes and start to create puzzling questions for their students. The process is not simple; those puzzles must be carefully crafted and constantly revised. They have to be sequenced to guide the students’ thinking logically through complex concepts so they can arrive at their own understanding. Eventually, though, this approach to education can be used to encourage students to care about the material being examined. Once that battle has been won, the professor’s job becomes considerably easier.

The Payoff

Thinking about teaching for long periods of time can give any person a headache. Challenging students and pushing them constantly to do their best will strain even the most patient teacher. Keeping them engaged in the study of complex material is a difficult goal to attain regardless of the approach being employed in class. Truly caring for each of the scores of individuals sitting in class every semester is a job more suited for a saint than a mere mortal. Teaching in college can quickly become a profession with extraordinary (virtually unlimited) demands. Over three decades ago, I developed a formula to help remind me of the sacrifice needed for success. It is not exact science but it provides a reasonable benchmark for the type of effort required.

If I can be an average teacher with X hours of work,
then I can be a good teacher with 2X hours of work
and a great teacher with 3X hours of work.

The question teachers face each day is: How good do I really want to be and how many hours of work am I willing and able to invest to achieve that level of quality?

This decision is complicated because the psychological reward system for teachers can be virtually invisible. Novels and movies tend to present college teaching in a glorified and unrealistic fashion. The wise professor speaks and all of the students hang on each word—the guru and the disciples. The transformation of young minds takes place right before the professor’s own eyes. Accolades pour in from admirers. Daily reality, though, can be quite a different story. Rewards for a job well done are elusive. Professors do not fix cars or construct furniture or bake cakes or heal the sick. At the end of the day, the warm glow of specific accomplishments is rarely present.

Whether the teacher lectures or engages in animated classroom debates, students look the same walking out of class as they did upon entering. Immediate gratifica-

tion for spending additional time to develop a thoughtful and effective educational experience rarely exists. Even to the trained eye, average exertion often seems to produce the same results as great effort. Students do not always express their deepest appreciation for being challenged to think. Teaching is like planting apple seeds. The person who sows those seeds is unlikely to be around to enjoy the grown tree or the fruit it yields.

The teacher's work is performed almost on faith that good results will come eventually from the effort being expended. Over time, faith can wear thin. Teachers are not human if they have never wondered why they work so hard. There is the assumption apple trees will grow from their efforts but those results are rarely glimpsed. Teachers do the work purely on hope.

Shortly after President Nixon resigned from office, I had a student named Donnie. I remember Donnie as an average student who had average skills and did average work. He was a nice young man who did not stand out in a class of twenty-five juniors. Until June 2007, I had not heard from—or even thought of—him for over thirty-one years. Then, I received the following e-mail late one Saturday evening:

"I'm one of your old students just wanting to say thanks. I'm sure you get many e-mails like this; something from someone in your past you couldn't possibly remember. But that's okay—we remember you. I was a Gardner-Webb student in the mid-70s. I had you for both introductory and intermediate accounting and somehow survived. I was a young kid/student who didn't have a clue about accounting, studying, thinking—you

get the picture. But I have to say: you taught me (us) so much. I left Gardner-Webb with a degree but, more importantly, with a philosophy and strategy about thinking that came directly from you. Today I'm a Senior Vice President and Chief Risk Officer for Retail Banking for one of the country's top 4 banks with responsibility for a \$65 billion credit portfolio. I would not be here without your guidance. Your approach to teaching, asking so many questions (putting us constantly on the spot), was perfect for so many of your students. So perfect, that when I got my first job it was easy because all I had to do was analyze business financial statements, calculate ratios, review trends, etc. That is what I did for most of my weekends for two years under you. But it was so valuable. My wife and I were talking tonight about major influences in our lives and you came to my mind. Congratulations on your outstanding career and the many, many lives that you've influenced. Thanks especially for influencing mine."

I am lucky. After so many years, I get the thrill of seeing a few of the apple trees in blossom. That makes this job so much easier. As an older professor, I do not have to prepare for class each new day purely on the hope that some benefit is accruing to the students. I know, from experience, the extra effort required to do this job is worth the time and energy that must be invested.

College teachers plant seeds every day—people who move on to live happy, productive, and successful lives much like Donnie.

That is what this profession is all about.

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