Philosophy *of* Education Society *of* Australasia

PESA CONFERENCE 2014

Conference Papers
ISBN Number: ISBN 978-0-473-29684-1

Table of Contents

Philosophy *of* Education Society *of* Australasia

PESA CONFERENCE 2014

Author name: Claire Coleman
University/institution/affiliation: University of Auckland
Title: That here were more things we were capable of doing rather than how we are now and I think that we can go further and yeah?”: Reflecting on the use of role to engage students

Abstract:
This article critically reflects upon my 2010 Masters research into the use of process drama to enhance engagement for Year 10 Pasifika boys in a social studies classroom. During this research students decided not only what they wanted to know but also how. Students also expressed great surprise at their own abilities. These findings motivated my PhD work and have raised a number of questions about notions of engagement that will be considered. Is it enough to have students engaging with the subject or do students need to be aware of pedagogical practices being used in order to fully engage with their education? How might the use of a fictional realm with an authentic focus allow students to engage in a different way? Finally I will consider how process drama actively seeks emotional, creative and thoughtful learning experiences.

A New Scene

Silent, individuals with their heads down once heralded as the epitome of a well behaving and hard working classroom, have been replaced by the new markers, of learning – groups in chatter. Action learning, questioning the teacher, presentations and debate are taking the place of dictation, numerous textbooks and endless copying. Classrooms certainly look more fun and students seem to be engaging but how far does that go? How willing are we to let students see behind the curtain of education to see the man who works the levers of Oz the great and powerful? Could "engagement" be a more elaborate method of teaching the same old, same old? We want graduates who can ask questions and solve problems but who identifies the issues and how ready are we for seriously critically questions?

While engaging students continues to be a popular focus of research (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006) and seen as the answer to improving student outcomes and raising achievement. The question remains as to whether these concepts are necessarily compatible. Does the constant focus on raising academic achievement merely distract from considering the overarching objectives of education and its philosophical influences. Is schooling still indoctrination into the accepted ways of the world? Do schools offer students a space in which to engage with themselves as human beings?

Using process drama and participating alongside students in role offered new space in which to engage personally with students and share the learning experience.

> "Yeah that was good cause Mr Mead doesn't get involved with what we are doing, like he is not that into it, so to have like you be in it was kinda cool"   (Interview notes, 4th September 2009)

Working together as collaborators challenged the institutional hierarchies and pushed students to act as creators of their own learning. This article will provide a reflection upon my master's thesis, discuss how role may encourage engagement and raise questions about the aims of engagement.

Previous Research – The Master's Tale

My master's research sought to use process drama pedagogy to provide a space for Pasifika students to engage outside the hierarchical construct of the classroom. Employing a case study approach and guided by a stance of reflective practitioner, I conducted four process drama sessions based on theme of colonial New Zealand to explore the question:

> "Does the use of process drama to teach social studies engage Year 10 Pasifika boys at Ihi College and if so how?

Process drama evolved from the work of Dorothy Heathcote and employs both naturalistic techniques of drama, such as role-play and other theatrical (distanced) techniques, focusing not on a final performance but the experience of the participants as it unfolds (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; O'Toole, 2008; Wagner, 1999). As a piece of problem-based learning, participants work in role and within a fictional framework to tackle a dilemma. Both the teacher and the children actively engage in make-believe and materialise 'temporary worlds' (O'Neill, 1995).

While engagement is seen as a positive and sought after goal of NZ teaching practices it remains a deeply contested term (Gibbs & Poskitt, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2009). Despite the intense interest in engagement there is still significant debate around the term and the ideological assumptions associated with it (Coates, 2006; Harris, 2008). Definitions range from simply a physical presence at school (Willms, 2003) to concepts of involvement, effort, commitment and concentration (D. Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008) and a sense of belonging (Libbey, 2004).

Limitations in measuring engagement via teacher observation have also led to engagement often being equated with compliance to teacher determined activities. The linking of engagement to academic achievement has also reduced engagement to something that students choose to do and does not consider the impact of ethnic, social or cultural factors (Samu, 2006). Furthermore the definition of engagement has been shaped by the dominant Eurocentric culture and may have limited relevance to minority cultures (Swain & Palgrave Connect (Online service), 2005).

My view of engagement recognizes recognizes it as a multifaceted concept influenced by a range of internal and external factors (Gibbs & Poskitt, 2010). It encompasses a sense of connectedness, a sense of agency and a sense of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2003). Mindful however of the limitations of a Eurocentric definition of engagement and incorporating ideas of flow theory and students' own beliefs about being engaged. Recognising that an engaged participant requires a sense of connectedness, a sense of agency and a sense of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; D. J. Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2003). It values a students' own beliefs about being engaged.

The Script – Methodology and Design

This research was underpinned by constructivist theory, which views knowledge as individually constructed. Rejecting a positivist definition of truth and instead understanding it as evolving and changeable (Schwandt, 1994).
"The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities)"(Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 24)
Constructivist theory acknowledges the potential impact of the researcher upon the all aspects of the study. Maintaining that you cannot separate an objective reality from the person experiencing, processing, and categorising that reality and that reality is not only of our making but, of our collective making (Sciarra cited in Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129; Stake, 1995). Positing that knowledge is created in the interaction between researcher and participants this study presented the findings we generated together while encouraging readers to develop their own understandings (Stake, 1995). Given this pedagogy of collaboration, a qualitative research approach was most suitable (O'Toole, 2006).
Qualitative research involves approaching the world, as it exists and interpreting events in relation to the beliefs people hold within a natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It values the human element and accepts the subjectivity of personal accounts as an essential element so deepening understanding (Stake, 1995).
A case study approach was selected because it investigates phenomena in real world settings and allows for the relationship between phenomena and context.
By employing a reflective practitioner stance throughout I attempted to acknowledge my personal connection to the topic and subsequent influence. Capturing tacit and ambiguous understandings, reflective practitioner research (O'Toole, 2006) complements process drama learning which is also emergent and unpredictable (Heathcote, 2008).
This research favored ethnographic tools to gather direct and implied responses (Stake, 1995). In an effort to obtain participants' viewpoints, I used: participant/teacher observation, critical friend observation, research journal entries and semi-structured interviews. The analysis formed a narrative told from various perspectives and supported by quotes and evidence. While conscious of my own position in the research, I sought to tell the heart of the story. Using crystallization provided an opportunity to reflect from differing viewpoints and create a complex understanding (Ellingson, 2009).
Through this research I hoped to gain a greater understanding of why students would seem to thoroughly engage in some activities and not in others. What influences prevent them from engaging and what it meant to them to be engaged.

BAG OF BONES: THE PROCESS DRAMA

The four drama sessions were based on an existing resource Jacob's Secret (O'Connor, 1994) which explored the history of colonial New Zealand. It began the inquiry with the discovery of a pile of bones fragments. It required the students to go into role as a group of historians, with me in role as the museum curator. Physical resources were provided as a stimulus for the drama and an outline of the drama structure is provided below:

Table 1 Outline of Bag of Bones

1	Miss Connell (Teacher in Role) Historians (students)	Letter from E Mackie Photographs – originals and copies to share – appear to be from early 1900s	Request for assistance over the discovery of some bone fragments in great-grandfathers possessions. Enclosed with the letter and believed to help with investigation
2	Miss Connell Historians Simon Mackie	Simon Mackie	Came instead of E Mackie. Answered the questions from the historians
3	Miss Connell Historians	Fragments of diary or letter pages Bible page	Fragments mention the land as being un-used and resentment over it Mention of the marriage of Stephen This front page has a dedication, which indicates the family tree of the Mackie family. Notable is the name Wiremu which was changed to William
4	Miss Connell Historians		Meant to include a visit to Mackie farm with Simon but instead students recreated a freeze frame storyboard of Mackie family moments.

While I planned the first session's resources and the stimulus of the letter, I redesigned each subsequent session according to the one previous. The historians led the investigation and chose what to study. In the beginning they wanted me to be the teacher and tell them what to do but quickly realised, that in role it was not up to me. As Miss Connell, I met their requests for documents or access to the Mackie family as a member of the team, not its leader. They chose what to investigate and while I made dramatic offers had no way of knowing how they would be received or controlled the outcome of the inquiry.

Findings

There were three major themes to the findings these were; the altering of the teacher/student relationship, the effect of reconstructing identity through the drama and the importance of fun to the learning.
The two main factors impacting upon student engagement appeared to be, the opportunity for students to take agency and consequently direct the learning and the collaborative teacher/student relationship.

BEING SOMEONE SMART

"It was nice to pretend to be smart" (Henry, 28th August, 2009) was [1]Henry's response when asked about working in the process drama. Here the student explains how role enabled him to see himself as intelligent. As Neelands (2010) reminds us we "may develop empathy and understanding from our experiences of 'playing' others but we cannot in actuality walk in shoes other than our own. I suggest that drama may offer students a chance to experience agency and offer a space in which they may take actions and be selves unavailable to them within the real world (Boal, 1979; Gallagher, 2006).
When in role the actions, decisions and emotions are authentically experienced. If all participants have an equal ability to act, they can take a more active role in the learning (V. Aitken, 2009). This personal, active experiential learning allows for the production of meaningful learning moments (Urciuol cited in Hull & Zacher, 2007) During the process drama students relished the chance to rename themselves and create fictional characters for themselves. (Research journal, 28th August, 2009). Naming themselves and others as subject specialists and endowing each other with particular skills and knowledge. As illustrated when a student nominated Olive as the Maori cultural expert:

You're the expert I know in real life, but also in the acting

---

[1]Pseudonym

Shifting the balance of power away from the teacher, they began listening and responding to Olive's contributions and knowledge. Here students recognised their own agency to create and share knowledge. When asked about what they felt they had learnt when working in the drama the students said;

Fleur   Yeah asking questions not being afraid to ask questions

They explained they felt and viewed themselves differently when taking on the role of the historian.

Henry   You can try sound brainy

Miss C   Why did you enjoy going into role?

Henry   You don't wanna be yourself

Henry   Probably eh, I think it was like expressing...

Tyler   yeah acting as someone else, but feel different compared to acting as yourself.

This suggests a disconnection between the students' sense of self and the selves they deem possible and a subsequent desire to "be" someone else. The simple shift of operating through the different lens of "expert" and in a position of responsibility created a significant shift in behaviour as acknowledged by the students themselves.

RUNNING THE SHOW

Students happily took on the responsibilities of their new identities as demonstrated when they vigorously questioned Simon Mackie. Working harder and being more involved as described below.

Henry   yeah that I can do more, instead of like, playing around

Tai   That there were more things we were capable of doing rather than how we are now and I think that we can go further and yeah

Miss C   How do you think you acted differently

Ricky   Oh

Sarah   got to act brainy

Many of them also expressed surprise at the skills they demonstrated while acting in role, skills they did not recognise as their own. They reinforced the beliefs Pasifika students have about themselves as low achievers (Samu, 2006) and difficulty they have in recognising themselves as smart. This suggests that the use of role allowed them to reconstruct and raise their expectations of themselves (Research Journal, 4th September, 2009). As Henry (2000, p. 52) explains, through role, students acknowledged their ability to do more and " discover aspects of selves, not the least of which is the significance of their individual perspectives and participation".

PART OF THE CHORUS

Being part of the group, rather than outside of it, with the same information, questions and goals allowed me to really walk beside the students. Our roles within the drama led to more collaborative teacher-student relationship, a significant factor in engagement (G. Aitken & Sinnema, 2008). As a member of the group, I sat amongst them deferring to their expertise.

"They were working happily with me in role and I was having a lot of fun – asking questions that just naturally occurred to me and trying to empower them further by asking if anyone was a particular expert/ The students were happy to join me in this and experts popped up!"

(Research journal 2nd September, 2009)

While working in role I felt released from playing "teacher" and able to join with the students to find and create the knowledge. This liberated me into genuine dialogue with students working as a group of people with similar aims. As noted by one student;

Phoebe   "You didn't seem like a teacher to us, you just seemed like one of us

(Group Interview, 4th September, 2009)

As discussed above the students responded positively to the use of role and revealed how even small changes in their positioning within the inquiry changed their experience. They appreciated the collaborative relationship and seemed to enjoy the process. Startling to me was how the students had internalized perceptions about themselves as unintelligent and their reluctance to accept praise for their work when out of role. This research suggested the way in which dominant ideology can embed itself not only in teachers' perceptions of students but also students' perceptions of

themselves. These internal "voices" providing an effective method of maintaining and replicating the status quo.

How Does Role Encourage Engagement?

Role offers an opportunity for significant engagement because participants are required to engage on some level in order to be in role. The use of the fictional realm is made explicit to students beforehand and their willingness to enter into the fiction along with you is vital (Neelands, 2008) . The smallest act of being in role; using a new name, talking differently or behaving differently demands some level of engagement. There willingness to suspend belief and "play" was essential to the drama.

As the creators of the drama, students had to engage in order for the drama to progress. Creating their own roles, the narrative and owning each task ensured everything was relevant to them. In *Bag of Bones* they decided what to do at each stage of the process. They were aware of this maintaining and developing their roles in the drama as it went along. Even a reluctant *historian* justified his lack of prior knowledge by saying he was new to the *historical society*. While not engaging as a well-informed *historian* he still engaged in the role-play by upholding his fictional identity (Research journal, 2nd September 2009).

Managing two identities; historian and students and two worlds; fictional and classroom provides a good level of challenge which contributes to successful engagement. Students had to negotiate between identities and reflect on experiences both in and out of role (Boal, 1979).

Working together in close physical proximity was materially engaging. Students moved, interacted and interrupted one other and freely, which kept things active. Attention quickly shifted around the room allowing little opportunity for passive spectators. As a teacher working in role I was also mindful of the effect my physical position might have. A teacher moves closer to students to ensure "on-task" behaviour, but in role that isn't my concern, instead going to the participants only when I have a reason to talk to them.

Perhaps role offered students an identity excluded from them in real life allowing them to behave, question and act in new ways (Gallagher, 2006, p. 74). Engaging them "to create an identity of someone who is able to achieve meaningful success" (Davis, 2007, p. 6). Offering the students a more authentic and personally relevant voice than in their day to day lives where they perceive themselves as "relatively powerless or insignificant" (Wagner, 1999, p. 122). When students don't think of themselves as capable or having the agency to act, how can we expect them to be engaged?

Finally role gave participants an opportunity take a break from the pressures of maintaining their daily selves. Relieving them from the responsibility of being the self

closely monitored by teachers, peers, parents and family. Maybe acting in role engages participants because it holds no direct consequences for their real world identities and allows them to play with that identity. Paradoxically while these experiences may lack direct consequences they still provide meaningful personalised knowledge that participants can incorporate into there developing worldview.

Critical Reflection

Since completing this research I have further questions about process drama and whether it really satisfies its lofty ambitions of an emancipatory praxis. Chiefly these are; how useful role-play really is and whether Teacher In Role really offers participants the freedoms it claims to.

In reconsidering engagement as participatory and dialogic (Coates, 2006) perhaps as Cahill (2010) cautions the use of role may not be sufficient to counter hegemonic stereotypes. She suggests that a reliance on naturalistic role-play only allows students to play within a bounded frame of what they know.

In Bag of Bones students were able to "pretend to be smart" because they were not themselves. They accepted that 'smart' was the domain of 'historians'. Naturalism requires participants to be believable, drawing on knowledge of how a historian behaves which in turn may limit participants from real change (Cahill, 2010).As Cahill asserts " rule play runs the role play" (2010, p. 161) whereby the players understanding of appropriateness influences what is done and said in role. Perhaps more abstract drama activities– some of which I used in my PhD offer more scope for transgressing stereotypes. Greater reflection out of role may allow students to acknowledge their beliefs, questioning rather than replicating dominant views (Friere, 2005).

As a reflective practitioner I reviewed and negotiated my own performance in and out of role. This was a difficult as I operated throughout in the roles of teacher, researcher and museum curator. It would also be naïve to suggest that the simple act of going into role removed all hierarchical structures or completely negated my institutional authority as "teacher". Participants remain conscious that despite the fictional realm and my best efforts to embody my character, I was still the teacher and they were still students in the classroom. However this offered another opportunity to consider how that relationship could be renegotiated or aspects of it incorporated in a traditional classroom environment. Whether roles are naturalistic or not I do feel that a fictional realm provides different opportunities for engagement.

Rethinking Engagement – Ripples/Questions

Historically engagement was thought of in three main ways; behavioural, emotional and cognitive (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Gibbs & Poskitt, 2010). Asserting that students need to be present in class (behaviourally engaged), and experience a

degree of emotional comfort and connectedness (emotionally engaged), before they can become cognitively engaged. More recent understandings reflect a broader understanding of engagement and its multidimensionality.

Though much research considers a more holistic view of engagement, primary focus is still on how that translates into academic achievement (Willms, 2003). Linking achievement directly to engagement does not consider the impact of ethnic, social or cultural factors (Samu, 2006; Zyngier, 2008). Certainly students who are identified as disengaged are also linked to higher incidences of social problems. I question the problematic nature of the term "engagement" and its wide acceptance as a focus point for educators. Many people, in my view are disaffected more broadly from society and their own lives.

Getting students to "engage" may just distract from a greater issue if teachers are uncritically encouraged to just find ways to make curriculum more enjoyable for students. Rather than focusing on how to make students engage with schooling perhaps the question should be, why don't they? Inviting a critique of politics, school organization, curriculum, pedagogy and purpose of schooling. Repeated calls for engagement seem synonymous with the goals of a neoliberal agenda preoccupied with educating for our present economy of social inequity. Perhaps privileging Eurocentric concepts while demonizing other cultures. Who identifies engagement? Surely there is much to learn from what students are already invested in rather than trying to shoe horn "appropriate" curriculum content into engaging activities? Is it enough to have students engaging with the subject or do students need to be aware of pedagogical practices being used in order to fully engage with their education?

If we extend engagement to include a critical awareness of the process of schooling then educators need to be prepared for opposition as a form of engagement. Can a student refusing to participate be engaging by means of protest?

One student comment, that Bag of Bones was "more open about teaching", seems to reflect the transparency of a process drama. He knew we were genuinely working towards some unknown discovery instead of trying to meet a required learning outcome. All elements of the enquiry were clearly visible. The drama stimulated students' curiosity, it not only invited participation but also relied upon students to create, manage and engage themselves.

Useful is Barnett and Coate's (2004) reflection on the importance of being to engagement and creating space where participants negotiate that sense of being. They cite the value of an individual possessing a sense of self and engaging in personally meaningful tasks. Contending that this occurs only where the participant has space to have their own experiences and a desire to incorporate those experiences. This space is– epistemological, practical and ontological. A place to widen their understanding, accomplish something and develop self awareness through critique and reflection (Coates, 2006). Incorporating a concept of

engagement that is "participatory, dialogic and leads to not only to academic achievement but success as a an active citizen" (Barnett & Coate, 2004, p. 164). The use of role and fiction in process drama may provide such a space. It offers participants an opportunity to explore outside the position in the world that they already recognize and provides them with the possibility to move beyond that (Freebody & Finneran, 2013).

References

Aitken, G., & Sinnema, C. (2008). *Effective pedagogy in social sciences/tikanga a iwi: Best evidence synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education Retrieved from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/32879/35263.

Aitken, V. (2009). Conversations with status and power:How Everyday Theatre offers 'spaces of agency' to participants. *Research in Drama Education, 14*(4), 503-527. doi: 10.1080/13569780903286022

Barnett, R., & Coate, K. (2004). *Engaging the Curriculum in Higher Education*. Berkshire, GBR: McGraw-Hill Education

Boal, A. (1979). *Theatre of the oppressed*. New York: Theatre Commuications Group.

Cahill, H. (2010). Re-thinking the fiction-reality boundary: investigating the use of drama in HIV prevention projects in Vietnam. *Research in Drama Education, 15*(2), 155-174.
Coates, H. (2006). *Student engagement: The specification and measurement of student engagement.* Paper presented at the Student engagement: Measuring and enhancing engagement with learning, , Lower Hutt, New Zealand.
Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The pyschology of optimal experience* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Introduction: The discipline and practise of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd Edition ed., pp. 1-32). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications

Ellingson, L. L. (2009). Engaging crystallization in qualitative research : an introduction. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Fredricks, J., Blumenfeld, P., & Paris, A. (2004). School Engagement; Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research, 74*(1), 59-109.

Freebody, K., & Finneran, M. (2013). Drama and Social Justice: Power, Participation and Possibility. In D. M. Anderson & J. Dunn (Eds.), *How drama activates learning*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic

Friere, P. (2005). Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Gallagher, K. (2006). *Touchstone - conference issue*. Paper presented at the Touchstone.

Gibbs, R., & Poskitt, J. (2010). Student engagement in the middle years of schooling (Year 7-10): A Literature Review. New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

Gorinski, R., & Fraser, C. (2006). Literature review on the effective engagement of Pasifika parents & communities in education. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Harris, L. (2008). A phenomenographic investigation of teacher conceptions of student engagement in learning. *The Australian Educational Researche, 35*(1), 57-79.

Heathcote, D. (2008). Mantle of the Expert: a Further Paradigm for Education. New Zealand Journal of Research in Performing Arts and Education: Nga Mahi a Rehia.

Heathcote, D., & Bolton, G. M. (1995). Drama for learning : Dorothy Heathcote's mantle of the expert approach to education. Portmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Henry, M. (2000). Drama's ways of learning. *Research in Drama Education, 5*(1), 45.

Hull, G. A., & Zacher, J. (2007). Enacting identities: An ethnography of a job training program. *Identity: An internation journal of theory and research, 7*(1), 71-102.

Libbey, H. (2004). Measuring student relationships to school: attachment, bonding, connectedness and engagement. *The Journal of School Health, 74*(7), 274-283.

Ministry of Education. (2009). The New Zealand Curriculum 2009, from http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum/Vision

Neelands, J. (2010). Mirror, dynamo or lens? Drama, children and social change. In P. O'Connor, Dr (Ed.), *Creating Democratic Citizenship through Drama Education: the writings of Jonothan Neelands*. Stoke on Trent:: Trentham Books

O'Connor, P. (1994). *Jacob's Secret*. Auckland: Reta Publishing.

O'Neill, C. (1995). *Drama Worlds: a Framework for Process Drama*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

O'Toole, J. (2006). Doing drama research: stepping into enquiry in drama, theatre and education. City East, Qld.: Drama Australia.

O'Toole, J. (2008). Process, dialogue and performance: The dramatic art of english teaching. In M. Anderson, J. Hughes, & J. Manuel (Eds.), *Drama and English teaching: Imagination, action and engagement* (pp. 13-32). South Melbourne: Oxford University Press

Ponterotto, J. G. (2005). Qualitative research in counselling psychology: A primer on research paradigms and philosopy of science. *Journal of Counselling Psychology, 52*(2), 126-136.
Samu, T. (2006). The 'Pasifika umbrella' and quality teaching: Understanding and responding to the diverse realities within. . *Waikato Journal of Education*(12), 35-49.

Schwandt, T. A. (1994). Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 118-138). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications

Shernoff, D., & Schmidt, J. (2008). Further evidence of an engagement-achievement paradox among US high school student. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 37*, 564-580.
Shernoff, D. J., Csikszentmihalyi, M., Schneider, B., & Shernoff, E. S. (2003). Student engagement in high school classroom from the perspective of flow theory. *School Psychology Quarterly, 18*(2), 158-176.
Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Swain, A., & Palgrave Connect (Online service). (2005). *Education as social action knowledge, identity, and power*   Retrieved from http://ezproxy.library.usyd.edu.au/login?url=http://www.palgraveconnect.com/doifinder/10.1057/9780230505605

Wagner, B. J. (1999). *Dorothy Heathcote : drama as a learning medium* (Rev. ed.). Portland, Me.: Calendar Islands Publishers.

Willms, J. D. (2003). *PISA Student Engagement at School: A sense of belonging and participation*   Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/programmeforinternationalstudentassessmentpisa/33689437.pdf
Zyngier, D. (2008). Re)conceptualising student engagement: Doing education not doing time. . *Teaching and Teacher education,*(24), 1765-1776.

Philosophy *of* **Education Society** *of* **Australasia**

PESA CONFERENCE 2014

Author name: Cristiane Maria Cornelia Gottschalk
University/institution/affiliation: University of São Paulo, Brazil
Email address: crisgott@usp.br

Title: Teaching critical thinking: the struggle against dogmatism[1]

Abstract:

From a Wittgensteinian point of view, my goal is to argue against the idea that teaching critical thinking should have as one of its aims the possibility of changing or adapting our deeply held beliefs. As pointed out by the Austrian philosopher in *On Certainty*, we have a world-picture which is neither true nor false, but above all, 'it is the substratum of all my enquiring and asserting' (*OC*, §162). Besides that, in his remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*, Wittgenstein insists on the idea that different communities have their own rituals that express ways of acting, which become crystallized in their customs and institutions, similar to the magical rituals described by Frazer. The degree of similarity among them is greater than we suspect, and what interested Wittgenstein was to understand how we see things by looking for the *links* between the various ritualistic events. Based on these remarks, I argue that, if our deeply held beliefs are a source of necessity, instead of aiming to change/adapt them, teaching critical thinking should – by showing the links between diverse cultures – essentially avoid employing them in a *dogmatic* way, since our own deeply held beliefs could have been different ones.

Keywords: critical thinking, belief, ritual, Wittgenstein.

How are our most deeply held beliefs constructed? What are the processes that lead us to them? What would be the role of these propositions in the ways we think? These questions interest not only epistemologists but also educators, who have been investigating the possibility of teaching how to think not merely in a pertinent way in the various domains of knowledge but also in a critical and autonomous way. With the purpose of developing a philosophical and educational investigation about the nature of thinking that takes into account the role of language in this process, some researchers have drawn upon Wittgenstein's reflections on 'following rules' and his criticism of the existence of a private language, among them mathematician Charles D. Hardie[2], who attended Wittgenstein's lectures in the nineteen-thirties in Cambridge. In this essay, I intend to initiate with some of Hardie's reflections on the nature of thought, in which he seeks, through a linguistic approach, to free himself from the mentalist positions prevalent in his time as he, however, dangerously approaches behaviorist theses. My goal is to overcome this epistemological difficulty by using the observations of the second Wittgenstein on the role of certain propositions of language in thought processes, and thus contribute to the clarification of issues regarding the teaching of critical thinking. For example, *how* some of these propositions are incorporated in the context of school, constituting critical thinking.

Hardie begins his article 'Thinking' (1967) with the following epigraph attributed to Wittgenstein: *'Thinking is essentially the activity of operating with signs.'* Then he presents some linguistic forms that work as rules, reminding us that we are taught to follow them since the time that we are introduced to our first language, and that they are not limited to common grammar rules: they cover all propositions which define what makes and what does not make sense to say. Thinking would be, therefore, being able to follow these rules. Among these rules, those governing certain words are particularly important, since they allow us to make the transition from a proposition or a group of propositions to another, constituting a fundamental way of thinking: the deductive one. For example, in the classic syllogism 'All men are mortal,' 'Socrates is a man,' therefore, 'Socrates is mortal,' this inference becomes possible due to the *use* we make of the words 'all', 'not', 'therefore', 'and' etc. Thus, regardless of the empirical content of this syllogism, it is its *shape* that determines the transition from certain propositions to others: 'If all x is y and z is x, then z is y'. This would be the rule we follow to confidently state, for example, that Socrates is mortal[3]. He raises, however, a caveat: the rules based on which we infer are not laws of thought that govern certain *mental processes* seen as something mysterious and unobservable. Rather, they have to do with a 'verbal behavior in which symbolic expressions are manipulated according to certain rules.' Even the meaning of the word 'thinking', like the meaning of any other word, should be explained by means of rules that are agreed upon and expressed in *public* and *observable* terms.

However, the deductive way of thinking seemed not to be able to explain the issue of legitimacy of the knowledge thus produced. Since it relied on consensus, one could not *demonstrate* its validity. Thus, still according to Hardie, there would be another even more fundamental way of thinking, the inductive one, which occurs when we generalize from particular cases, and which makes up the foundation of the deductive reasoning itself. For example, when we use the major premise, 'All men are mortal', to confidently conclude that 'Socrates is mortal', we forget that the major premise itself is the result of inductive reasoning. In this sense, according to him, both types of reasoning would be very close to each other[4]. He then solves the issue of validity and justification of these different thought processes by challenging the position of philosophers who claimed that the validity of inductive reasoning was not possible either:

> If it [the major premiss] is an inductive generalization obtained from observation of particular cases, then it itself would need some more general truth to justify it, and so on. Russell takes the heroic line of saying that unless one is willing to make certain assumptions about the universe, then he cannot justify this kind of thinking at all.
> This is a strange situation. Inductive thinking is not only characteristic of all the sciences but is part and parcel of our everyday life. We not only think that the sun will rise tomorrow, that the kettle of water on the fire will boil, that our food will nourish us (…) (1967, pp. 110-111)

To Hardie, such thinking should have a justification. The meaning of words such as 'food' and 'water' are in large part a result of the role that 'inductive thinking has played in the experience of our forefathers' (1967, p.111). He seeks to circumvent this 'strange situation' of a lack of justification of inductive reasoning by looking for its foundations in the experience of our ancestors, which would have been accumulated over the centuries due to their empirical needs. According to him, this kind of thinking leads to the discovery of 'useful rules' which are followed in the application of words such as 'food' and 'water', among others. This is how we organize our experience, as long as these rules are not refutable by this very experience. So one of the differences between the deductive and the inductive modes of thought would lie in the fact that in the former we occupy ourselves with exploring the consequences of certain symbolic rules, while in the latter, we are especially concerned with finding *useful* rules. Based on these observations by Hardie, one concludes that the desired justification of our everyday inferences as well as the validity of our reasoning in various areas of knowledge are both anchored in exclusively utilitarian criteria.

My hypothesis is that the introduction of the criterion of utility as the ultimate foundation of thought (since, according to Hardie, induction logically

precedes deduction) attenuates an essential difference between the two ways of inferring, disregarding the specific role each of them plays in the constitution of the senses of our empirical experience. Indeed, we now have no doubt that the sun will rise or that water will boil, even if we do not find absolute principles that accurately justify these conclusions. But though the justification for these rules is not strictly of logical nature, it is also not, in my view, an empirical process, ultimately based on the principle of utility. There is a transcendental aspect[5] in the construction of these certainties that I would like to stress in this paper, that may elucidate the above difficulty. Let us look at this a little more closely, resuming some of Wittgenstein's ideas[6].

The transcendental aspect of the gramatical propositions

Opposed to the use of the utilitarian criteria as a basis of our reasoning, I would like to emphasize Wittgenstein's recurring observation: whereas all empirical knowledge is refutable, there is other linguistically expressed knowledge that plays a unique role in the system of our empirical propositions, constituting what he calls *grammatical propositions.* These propositions are characterized by Wittgenstein as our most fundamental beliefs employed in language as rules that we follow blindly, because denying them would endanger the whole system of propositions we believe in. Hence Wittgenstein's undeniable interest in mathematics, an area of knowledge in which *all* propositions are employed in a peculiar way, unlike the use of propositions made by the empirical sciences (descriptive, hypothetical). What characterizes them is essentially their normative function, even if they have been obtained through an inductive process. Once demonstrated, they are not falsifiable. In this sense, the propositions of mathematics are not hypotheses about the world, but forms of representation that play the same role as those forms of logical inferences: they state what thinking correctly is.

Both in the form of theorems and of axioms or postulates, the mathematical propositions exert a similar function to a rule: two plus two *must* equal four, a triangle *must* have three sides, there is only a single straight line between two points etc... Furthermore, we state these propositions with a tone of certainty, and use them to produce other statements that are expressed in the same tone. However, according to Wittgenstein, this conviction is no guarantee of the correctness of what is being stated:

When someone has made sure of something, he says: 'Yes, the calculation is right', but he did not infer that from his condition of certainty. One does not infer how things are from one's own certainty.

Certainty is *as it were* a tone of voice in which one declares how things are, but   one does not infer from the tone of voice that one is justified. (OC, §30)

The reason comes from a consensus about the rules that we *publicly* follow (for example, the algorithm of a calculation). This is not about subjective processes, anchored in mental structures or in an allegedly private language, that are gradually translated into our ordinary language. In mathematics, these rules are axioms and postulates of a given system.   In other language games[7], however, our most fundamental beliefs are the ones that play this role, as in 'the sun rises every morning' or 'water boils if heated sufficiently' and so on, which are enunciated with the same conviction as that of the mathematicians. Thus, this voice, this attitude of belief that is typical of mathematics, is also present when certain expressions of our ordinary language are enunciated. With the same certainty we follow the rule of sum to conclude that 'two plus two equals four', we follow the rule 'all men are mortal' to then confidently conclude that 'Socrates is mortal'. Thus, beyond the syllogistic form, what is at stake here are the different functions of our statements. The justification for this inference comes not from the tone of certainty we use to state the conclusion of the syllogism, but from a consensus shared by a particular community, namely, the rule that 'all men are mortal.' Even though this rule may have been built over time through inductive processes, when applied to conclude that 'Socrates is mortal', we are making a *normative* use of this premise, it is no longer a hypothesis repeatedly confirmed. At some point in our history, that statement was crystallized as a norm, as so many propositions we learn throughout life:

> I am told, for example, that someone climbed this mountain many years ago. Do I always enquire into the reliability of the teller of this story, and whether the mountain did exist years ago? A child learns there are reliable and unreliable informants much later than it learns facts which are told it. It doesn't learn *at all* that that mountain has existed for a long time: that is, the question whether it is so doesn't arise at all. It swallows this consequence down, so to speak, together with *what* it learns. (Wittgenstein, OC, §143)

And some passages later, Wittgenstein insists on the non-inductive nature of these beliefs:

> In general I take as true what is found in text-books, of geography for example. Why? I say: All these facts have been confirmed a hundred times over. But how do I know that? What is my evidence for it? I have a world-picture. Is it true or false? Above all it is the substratum of all my enquiring

and asserting. The propositions describing it are not all equally subject to testing. (Wittgenstein, OC, §162)

As Wittgenstein points out, our most fundamental beliefs are *not* obtained inductively (are not subject to proof). These beliefs are 'swallowed down' in the midst of everything else we are told, they are part of our *Weltbild* (world-picture). I did not have to observe several particular cases of mountains or other geographical facts to conclude that they exist. The belief that the mountain in question has been there for a long time is one of the certainties that we share, that is, one of the *criteria* we use to make statements that make sense about this geographical formation. Anyway, this belief is not a hypothesis to be verified, nor is it acquired through inductive processes. Rather, it is a rule that *we learn* to follow and that we will use as a *criterion* of the meaning of mountain, that is, it is constitutive of its meaning. This is not a quality or a characteristic of a mountain, like, for example, the measure of its height or its geological composition etc., which are in fact hypothetical knowledge subject to refutation. In other words, the belief that mountains have long existed is of a criterial nature, and not hypothetical. It is a grammatical proposition in the sense given by Wittgenstein, that is, it is a condition of sense for us to make several empirical claims about it, but the proposition itself is not challenged. Similarly, we do not learn by induction that 'all men are mortal,' this is a shared or 'swallowed' certainty as the philosopher says, amid many others that are part of our different language games: 'I believe what people transmit to me in a certain manner. In this way I believe geographical, chemical, historical facts etc. That is how I *learn* the sciences. Of course learning is based on believing' (OC, § 170).

Thus, the grammatical sentences of different areas of knowledge tell us what does and what does not make sense to say, i.e., they play a *transcendental* role. However, it is not due to their *form* (as Hardie affirmed) that these limits are established, but how *we use* certain linguistic expressions that confer a transcendental role to them: they express *conventions,* inventions of men, and could have been others. When the Pythagoreans, for example, realized that it was not possible to measure the hypotenuse of a right triangle of side 1, this type of impasse forced mathematicians many centuries later to invent new numbers, and irrational numbers were created. So what was a secret kept by Pythagoras's followers gave rise to a new kind of number, a new rule of a conventional nature to be followed, which went on to establish a new field of meaning.

In general, not only in the field of the exact sciences, when facing some kind of impasse one *imagines* other ways of organizing his/her formal or empirical experience, creating new rules which crystallize *in the language.* The grammar we 'carry within us,' as Wittgenstein says, is so constituted. The usefulness of these grammatical utterances is contingent: there are multiple criteria we generate to justify their application, where utility itself can be seen as a basic convention, since

our grammar also includes mundane elements (Moreno, 2011). In this sense, grammar is distinguished both from logic (not being reduced to it) and from empirical processes. Although the propositions that constitute it are not necessary (they are conventional), they are the source of need[8], expressing our deepest beliefs.

From this Wittgensteinian perspective, my hypothesis, unlike Hardie's, is that thinking would be a process that dispenses with inductive mechanisms governed by utilitarian criteria. Reversing Hardie's logical order, the aforementioned reading of Wittgenstein's remarks points to another direction: instead of inductive processes, it is our grammatical propositions of a *conventional* nature that allow us to pass from an empirical proposition to another. Thinking would, therefore, mean to be able to move from one proposition to another, guided by grammatical rules, i.e., with *transcendental* function, regardless of what actually occurs in our empirical world. Hence, our *conventions,* accepted *in the language*, are what justify the validity of our reasoning in general. Returning to our central theme, what would it mean to think *critically*, then?

If learning, as Wittgenstein affirms, is based on believing (OC, §170), and thinking is being able to follow these beliefs (rules), and many of them are just like those 'swallowed down' with what you learn, then teaching to think would have, therefore, paradoxically, an uncritical character, in the sense that one teaches students to follow rules, such that, although they are not always explicitly stated, they are learned somehow in the *praxis* of a classroom. *Would thinking be, then, merely being trained[9] to follow rules?* What would, then, thinking as expected in different areas of knowledge be? When avoiding a mentalist conception of thought, are we inexorably led to some form of behaviorism?

Noticing an aspect

According to Wittgenstein, our certainties are built within a certain *way of life,* 'Whether a proposition can turn out false after all depends on what I make count as determinants for that propositon' (OC, §5). Saying 'I know this is my hand'[10] is a certainty about which I do not see any reason for doubt, as Wittgenstein says, 'Everthing speaks in its favour, nothing against it'. Even assuming that such a statement ('I know this is my hand') has been obtained inductively, the *conviction* with which we state it does not necessarily result from this process. These beliefs are not hypothetical (not submitted to proof), but *criteria* to assert other propositions. They are rules we follow with conviction, allowing us to move from certain empirical propositions to others. They are, therefore, conditions under which thinking can take place. Such thinking would not be only in the sense described by Hardie, as an activity of essentially observing rules and gradually establishing relationships between them through inductive and deductive processes. Thinking, here, also presupposes a distinct *use* of statements involved in these processes: as

a criterion or as a hypothesis. The assertion that 'I know this is my hand', which sounds like a hypothetical knowledge about the outside world, is effectively employed with a normative function, as a *criterion* of meaning for other propositions, such as, 'My hands are freezing in this cold weather,' 'Your hand is bigger than mine', and other hypothetical propositions that can be verified as true or false. Returning once more to the Aristotelian syllogism initially presented, 'All men are mortal' is also *one* of the criteria for the meaning of the empirical proposition (hypothetical) 'Socrates is mortal'. Being mortal is a constitutive aspect of the concept of 'man', it is *a criterion* for its application. Parodying Wittgenstein, we do not cast doubt on the mortality of man, 'everthing speaks in its favour, nothing against it'. Now, if Socrates is a man, a Greek god, or an invention of Plato and therefore has never existed, these are *hypotheses* to be verified by historical documents. Which are, then, the implications of this distinction between criteria and hypotheses for the learning processes, in particular, when one of the goals of the teacher is to teach how to think?

Since thinking requires an immersion into our most fundamental beliefs, which are conditions for thought to take place, what would critical thinking mean? A recurring answer to this question is that critical thinking would be the ability to raise objections to certain beliefs, and thus we would not be limited to merely mechanically reacting to learned rules, consequently confronting behaviorist theses. This is a solution that, at first, seems to solve the paradox above. But as Wittgenstein shows us, the question is not that simple... Critical thinking cannot be reduced to a mere refutation of isolated rules, which would be analyzed and confronted one by one.

Even before going to school a child learns to believe in a lot of things. For example, that the objects we see actually exist, that she/he has never been to the Moon, that she/he has two legs and two hands, that her/his feelings are private, that the Earth has existed for many years, that her/his name is 'X', that eggs are lay by chickens, and so forth. These beliefs will gradually form a *system* of what she/he believes. Some of these beliefs are stronger than others, but not because they are more obvious than others. They are simply more convincing because of everything that surrounds them, other beliefs are what give them consistency:

> I do not explicitly learn the propositions that stand fast for me. I can *discover* them subsequently like the axis around which a body rotates. This axis is not fixed in the sense that anything holds it fast, but the movement around it determines its immobility. (OC, §152)

So when we believe in something, this belief extends to a complete system of propositions. Wittgenstein uses a beautiful metaphor to express this idea: 'Light dawns gradually over the whole' (OC. §141). We form certain images without

doubting them. Challenging one would undermine the entire building of beliefs that we have acquired. Conviction is not something learned, it is something we accumulate. Even in mathematics, in which certainties seem to proliferate, at first one only learns rules. The conviction that follows is only acquired insofar as mathematics plays a role in culture, transcending the role of mere rules.

Thus, an image of the world is formed, which is neither true nor false, it simply is 'the substratum of all my enquiring and asserting', as Wittgenstein observed in the aphorism quoted above (OC, §162). When a child says to another that she/he knows that the Earth has existed for billion of years, she/he is just communicating that this was *learned*, and probably learned by 'swallowing down' this statement. Saying this does not mean that she/he is describing anything, although it sounds like a description. It has to do with a grammatical proposition, which is used, as I have said, as a descriptive norm, allowing us to organize the empirical world in certain ways. As the philosopher observed soon after his return to Cambridge in 1929, 'If there were only an external connection no connection could be described at all' (PR, III, 26). In other words, grammatical propositions establish relationships of *meaning* (internal connections) that enable the description of causal relations (external connections) among facts in the world. Although the beliefs of ordinary language do not necessarily have the same degree of accuracy as the statements of mathematics, since they are rules of a more fluid nature that allow for a certain degree of vagueness, this does not prevent clear communication. Rather, in most cases, it is this vagueness that makes it possible for one to understand what is being said. We have a whole set of criteria that can be applied, not always as necessary as in mathematics, but sufficient to determine the correctness of the rule.

What is 'learning a rule'? – *This*.
What is 'making a mistake in applying it'? – *This*. And what is pointed
to here   is something indeterminate. (OC, §28)

Perhaps it is the vagueness in the application of rules, emphasized above by Wittgenstein, that allows, not the objection to certain core beliefs, but, fundamentally, the establishment of unusual relationships between seemingly contradictory beliefs among themselves. In his comments on Frazer's *The Golden Bough*[11], Wittgenstein insists on the idea that different communities have their own rituals that express ways of acting, which become crystallized in their customs and institutions, similar to the magical rituals described by Frazer. The degree of similarity among them is greater than we suspect, and what interested Wittgenstein was to understand how we see things by looking for the *links* between the various ritualistic events: 'A hypothetical intermediate link, however, should (…) direct attention to the similarity, to the [*formal*] link between the *facts*' (BFGB, pp. 16-7).

These comparisons between different habits and customs throughout history may eventually give rise to new rules, when one notices new aspects in the technical sense attributed by him in Part II of his *Philosophical Investigations:* 'I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I see that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience "noticing an aspect" ' (Part II, PI, p.193). The emergence of a new aspect does not lead us to abandon any previous beliefs. On the contrary, they make up the *background* that allows us to weave new connections, invent new rules, and eventually acquire new certainties. Finally, the condition for the construction of a new certainty is rooted in many others, among which, the ones that assert that every man is mortal, that this is my hand, and so on. It is the image of the world we share that permits the different modes of inference involved in reasoning, regardless of what actually occurs and, at the same time, it allows us to establish new internal relations, which, in turn, generate new needs. In this language working process, another key psychological concept emerges to clarify the development of critical thinking, laying to rest the ghost of behaviorism: imagination. Is this a return to mentalism?

Criticizing the dogmatism of others without being dogmatic: that is the question

As previously mentioned, critical thinking is commonly understood as the ability to raise objections, but if one looks for examples of this mode of thought in the most diverse fields of knowledge, one would agree with the following remark by John Passmore[12]:

Critical thinking as it is exhibited in the great traditions conjoins imagination   and criticism in a single form of thinking; in literature, science, history, philosophy or technology the free flow of the imagination is controlled by criticism and criticisms are   transformed into a new way of looking at things. (1967, p.201)

In his text 'On Teaching to be Critical,' Passmore points out a fundamental element that surfaces in this process: the ability of the imagination, as it enables a new way of looking at things without necessarily giving up our most fundamental beliefs. It is enough to remember a few moments in the history of science, in which epistemological obstacles required the invention of new paradigms, or when two very different cultures were confronted, leading to deadlocks that required new behaviors or actions, or resulted in new theoretical perspectives. Using these facts of our cultural heritage, a teacher could help to avoid, above all, her/his own dogmatism, when she/he recognizes that certain beliefs of our *Weltbild* could be different. The role of the teacher in the classroom would then be to present different perspectives that confront each other, not in the Sophistic way, as a clash

of theses, or with the purpose of refuting them; but in the Socratic way: questioning our certainties followed by dogmas, about which we have no doubt, defying them by presenting other certainties that are as fundamental as our own. Thus, it becomes possible to criticize the dogmatism of others without being dogmatic[13] and, at the same time, without incurring the fallacy that everything is reduced to hypothetical beliefs of an inductive nature, naturalizing knowledge (which also expresses a form of dogmatism).

So from this Wittgensteinian perspective, critical thinking in the sense proposed here can be succinctly formulated as follows: far beyond raising objections, critical thinking should be able to introduce new paradigms, new rules to be followed, *imagining* other possibilities, other possible and even unexpected aspects of our most fundamental beliefs. Hence, if our deeply held beliefs are a source of necessity, instead of aiming to refuse/change/adapt them, teaching critical thinking should – by showing the links between diverse cultures – essentially avoid employing them in a *dogmatic* way, since our own deeply held beliefs could have been different ones. In other words, criticism presupposes a *therapeutic approach* to our beliefs, in the Wittgensteinian sense[14] of comparing their different modes of application amongst each other, and even imagining unusual applications, in order to combat the dogmatism of some of them. It is, therefore, about imagining in the sense of being able to see new publicly expressed aspects, and not in that of a solipsistic mentalist position.

It is from this therapeutic perspective that we glimpse the possibility of a pedagogy that will awaken the students to consider other rules to follow, thereby expanding the range of possibilities for organizing their empirical world, and providing the conditions to fight their own dogmatism and consequently that of others as well. In this critical pedagogical perspective, one would begin with epistemological obstacles or any other impasse, aiming at the mobilization of ethical and aesthetic values, such as the struggle against dogmatism and undue generalizations, as well as at the creation of new aspects in different areas of knowledge. That is, a pedagogy that is not merely confined to the pursuit of utilitarian purposes, but that aims to give rise to a critical and combative spirit, capable of imagining and reflecting.

[1] This paper is based on part of my research on the formation of concepts in the school context, presented at the III International Wittgenstein Colloquium - Certeza?, in September 2009, at the University of Campinas, Brazil. Some ideas presented at that event were taken up and developed in this paper so as to focus on the teaching of critical thinking.

[2] A mathematician, *Magdalene College* graduate and student of Wittgenstein in Cambridge in the 1930s, Hardie was also a professor of Education at the University of Tasmania, New Zealand, and one of the founders of the Philosophy of Education

Society of Australasia. Influenced by the ideas of the Austrian philosopher, he wrote an article entitled, 'Thinking' (1967). He also has published articles on the nature of scientific theory (1938) and on the philosophy of educational research (1971), having elaborated his own epistemology under the influence of logical positivism and Wittgenstein. See Redpath, 2001.

[3] Other examples of deductive forms of thought given by Hardie are the *modus ponens* and *modus tollens* in symbolic logic.

[4] This approach is quite similar to David Bloor's empirical sociology, which proposes a new program for the sociology of knowledge inspired by Wittgenstein and by the ideas of the logical Stuart Mill.

[5] The transcendental aspect of language as constitutive of the senses has been greatly emphasized in the writings of Arley Ramos Moreno, among which we highlight the set of articles published in the book *Introduction à une epistemologie de l'usage* (2011). According to him, empirical fragments are used in language as standards for the use of words, such as paradigms of what it is like to be something within a form of life. In other words, these aspects of the empirical transformed into rules of language are the *conditions* for the construction of sense, analogous to the roles that the forms of sensibility and understanding play in Kant's theory of critical reason. It is this pragmatic use of Kant's transcendental concept that we will be referring to throughout this text.

[6] Expression used to differentiate his mature reflections published in his first major work, the *Tractatus Logical-Philosophicus.*

[7] The term 'language game' is a key theoretical tool in Wittgenstein's philosophy. He uses it to designate the activities involved in language such as gestures, tables, paradigms, among other fragments of the empirical world that acquire the function of a rule.

[8] This does not mean that Wittgenstein can be considered a conventionalist in the sense that the rules could be any, regardless of what happens in the world. Of course, if the world were different, we would formulate other rules to organize it, but what remains the same is the autonomy of these rules in relation to the empirical, as Wittgenstein pointed out in the *Tractatus.* It would be strange if in the transition period (early nineteen-thirties, when Hardie attended his classes) Wittgenstein had broken with this idea of autonomy of the rules to take on an empiricist position, even though he started to employ the concept of *use* as constitutive of sense at that time. Still, he uses this concept in the sense of establishing a norm, which, in certain contexts, can even be used as a hypothesis, but it is not the result of an inductive or deductive process, it is a human creation, an *invention.*

[9] For Wittgenstein, it is during the *usage* of a rule that a mistake in its application is demonstrated. One demonstrates how to add by giving several examples, including (and perhaps mostly) by giving examples of incorrect applications of that rule. (OC,

§29). These examples are the key to learn a rule because, according to Wittgenstein, our rules have loopholes and the practice has to speak for itself. (OC, §139). As of a certain moment, not previously determined, the learner starts to act correctly, i.e., as expected within a given language game. So, it is during the *use* of our linguistic expressions, in certain circumstances, that one learns to follow rules. Rules that do not refer to anything, they just indicate a mode of representation of the empirical world, and which are always likely to be incorrectly followed. Hence the importance of training and practicing, to establish the foundation of a correct application of the rules.

[10] This is one of the expressions used by Moore, a philosopher, contemporary and friend of Wittgenstein, in his defense of common sense, as an example of a proposition that would prove the existence of an external world. According to him, our certainties are rooted in evidences like this. See GE Moore, 'Proof of an External World' and 'A Defence of Common Sense'. In: *Philosophical Papers*, London, 1959.

[11] *The Golden Bough* (1890) was written by Scottish anthropologist James George Frazer (1854-1941), one of the founding fathers of the modern studies of mythology and comparative religion.

[12] Considered an analytic philosopher of education, John Passmore, like Hardie, had also been influenced by the ideas of Wittgenstein, but he incorporated the reflections upon 'following rules' in a different way.

[13] Remember that Wittgenstein's assumption is that for you to give therapy to someone else, you must have previously undergone self-therapy yourself.

[14] Note that the Wittgensteinian therapy is different from the Kantian critique of reason, since Wittgenstein does not intend to formulate new theses, but to compare different points of view in order to *show* a new aspect and thus to dissolve any confusion of a philosophical nature.

REFERENCES

HARDIE, C. D. 'Thinking'. In: Komisar, B. P.e Macmillan, C. J., B. (eds). *Psychological Concepts in Education*. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967.

MORENO, A. R. *Introduction à une épistémologie de l'usage*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011.

PASSMORE, J. 'On Teaching to be Critical'. IN: *The Concept of Education*. London:Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967.

REDPATH, T. *Wittgenstein à Cambridge – Souvenirs d'un disciple*. Paris: Science Infuse, 2001.

WITTGENSTEIN, L. *Philosophical Remarks*. London: Basil Blackwell, 1975.

Philosophical Investigations. Translated by G.E.M.Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.

Über Gewissheit/*On Certainty*. G. E. Anscombe e G. H. Von Wright (eds). Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.

Bemerkungen über Frazers 'The Golden Bough'. German/ Portuguese bilingual text. http://www.unicamp.br/~joaojose/observacoes_ramo_de_ouro.pdf.

Philosophy *of* Education Society *of* Australasia

PESA CONFERENCE 2014

Author name: Dr. Chi-Ming Lam
University/institution/affiliation: The Hong Kong Institute of Education
Email address: chimingl@ied.edu.hk
Title: Philosophy as Engagement for Rationality

Abstract:
Despite the apparent ample justification for teaching children to be rational, there is considerable controversy among philosophers over whether rationality is worth defending as a basic educational ideal. For instance, while some critical theorists assert that the extraordinary success of reason, in the form of scientific rationality and means/end calculations, in offering mankind domination over nature leads inexorably to domination of humans over humans, many feminist philosophers argue against rationality on the grounds that our traditional ideals of rationality are often modelled on stereotypically masculine traits (e.g. being dispassionate) and then used to denigrate the stereotyped nature of women (e.g. being emotional). In this paper, I first argue that, following Nicholas Rescher, rationality should be conceptualized as comprising cognitive, practical, and evaluative rationality. For one thing, this conception is comprehensive and thus able to remedy the defects of the popular means/end theory. For another, the ideal of rationality implicit in this conception is an inclusive rather than an exclusive one: not only does it not force us to choose between the cognitive and emotional components of our nature, it actually forbids nothing that is *good* for us. Based on this tripartite conception of rationality, I then advance an argument founded on pragmatic considerations for rationality as a fundamental educational ideal. Finally, in order to promote the development of rationality in children, I suggest that teachers should engage them in doing philosophy in the classroom, especially by means of Matthew Lipman's Philosophy for Children programme.

Keywords (Limit 6 keywords): Conceptions of rationality; development of rationality in children; philosophical inquiry; Philosophy for Children

Introduction

Many philosophers of education seem to feel fully justified in teaching children to be rational. For instance, Scheffler (1973) claims that the importance of rationality as a fundamental educational ideal lies in its contribution to not only the intellectual but the moral life of students, and Greene (1984) points out that some philosophers of education stress the centrality of critical reflection in lived situations when they speak of rationality as fundamental to the literacy sought by means of education: "For them, this type of reflection constitutes the most productive mode of rational action; they view it as a way of transforming the lived world" (p. 547).

However, not all philosophers regard such capability of "transforming the lived world" as a blessing. Just as Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) assert that the extraordinary success of reason, in the form of scientific rationality and means/end calculations, in offering mankind domination over nature leads inexorably to domination of humans over humans, Niznik (1998) criticizes rationality for creating an illusion of controlling the world and thus failing to secure not only human solidarity but even human survival. Besides, many feminist philosophers also argue against rationality on the grounds that our traditional ideals of rationality are often modelled on stereotypically masculine traits (e.g. being dispassionate) and then used to denigrate the stereotyped nature of women (e.g. being emotional). As Ruddick (1989) puts it, "Reason, at least as Western philosophers had imagined Him, was infected by - and contributed to - the pervasive disrespect for women's minds and lives ... For a woman to love Reason was to risk both self-contempt and a self-alienating misogyny" (pp. 4-5).

In the face of these contrary views on rationality, a question arises whether rationality is really a good thing and worth defending as a fundamental educational ideal. In the following discussion, I first make a careful analysis of the concept of rationality and then examine how to justify teaching children to be rational. Finally, I explore how rationality can be promoted in children through engaging them in doing philosophy in the classroom.

Rationality as a Tripartite Concept

According to Rescher (1988), rationality consists in the appropriate use of reason to resolve choices in the best possible way. Corresponding to three major contexts of choice (i.e. those of belief, action, and evaluation), there are three types of rationality, viz. the *cognitive / theoretical* (reasoning about matters of information), *practical* (reasoning about actions), and *evaluative* (reasoning about values, ends,

and preferences) rationality. Here, despite the very different contexts within which rationality operates, it demands a common task of resolving choices in accordance with the best reasons. While the best reasons refer to those whose guidance can optimally serve our real or best interests in the matters at issue, rationality is basically a matter of seeking to do our very best to work *cost-effectively* towards the realization of our cognitive, practical, and evaluative goals. As a result, rationality in all its forms calls for the comparative assessment of feasible alternatives and thus five faculties: the faculties for contemplating alternatives, determining what can and cannot be done, appraising alternatives, effecting a choice between alternatives, and implementing choices.

Additionally, owing to its systematic nature, rationality demands five other things whether in matters of belief, action, or evaluation: consistency (to avoid self-contradiction), uniformity (to treat like cases alike), coherence (to ensure that our commitments hang together), simplicity (to avoid needless complications), and economy (to be efficient). The systematic character of rationality inheres in its drive for intelligibility, or in its demand for ways of proceeding whose appropriateness other rational agents can in principle perceive. Indeed, Rescher (1988) claims that it is in this sense alone that one can maintain the universality of the force of rationality: "Whatever considerations render it rational for someone to do A will *ipso facto* render it rational for anyone 'in his circumstances' to do A - anyone placed in conditions sufficiently like his" (p. 17).

However, there exists an awkward predicament of rationality every rational agent needs to face. While rationality is information-sensitive in the sense that exactly what qualifies as the most rational resolution of a particular problem of belief, action, or evaluation depends on the precise content of our information about the situation at issue, our information in the real world is always incomplete. Since mere additions to our information can always disprove the initial optimum decision, there is no guarantee that what *seems* the best thing to do actually is so. This reflects an important fact that rationality is always a matter of optimization relative to constraints like imperfect information, of doing the best one can in the prevailing circumstances (Rescher, 1988).

In spite of its inherent predicament, this rather comprehensive tripartite conception of rationality appears reasonable and acceptable. More importantly, it can effectively remedy the deficiencies and mistakes of the means/end conception that an action is rational if it is the act most likely to produce consequences the agent desires (Nathanson, 1994). Admittedly, the means/end conception has been a very widely held view of rationality among philosophers all along. For instance, Aristotle (1984) asserts that "We deliberate not about ends but about what contributes to ends" (p. 1756) in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and Russell (1962) states even more unequivocally that "'Reason' … signifies the choice of the right means to an end that you wish to achieve. It has nothing whatever to do with the choice of

ends" (p. viii). Important as they are in the history of philosophy, Aristotle and Russell are mistaken as they focus exclusively on cognitive rationality that relates to the choice of means without paying attention to the role evaluative rationality plays in the choice of ends. In other words, the means/end theorists' grievous error lies in their mistaking a part of rationality for the whole of it. Indeed, such preoccupation with means in preference to ends has been criticized by many critical theorists for bringing disastrous consequences for both individuals and society. In Gibson's (1986) words, "It is a kind of intellectual activity which actually results in the decline of reason itself, and it therefore stultifies, distorts and malforms individual and social growth" (p. 7).

Accordingly, rationality as a whole must care for the worth of ends as well as the efficacy of means. After all, if our ends are themselves inappropriate, or if they run counter to our real interests, then we are not completely rational, no matter how wisely we cultivate them. But a question arises here: what is it that is in a person's real interests? Is it just a matter of what one simply happens to want as those means/end theorists imagine it to be? For Rescher (1988), the answer to the latter question is definitely negative because any want-related interest of a person is valid as such only if it can be subordinated to a *universal* interest: the fact that X wants A remains a mere motive (as opposed to a reason) for his or her action in pursuing A until such time as it is rationalized through the fact that X recognizes A to have the desirable feature, which is not just something that X wants, but is something that *any and every reasonable person would want*. Obviously, what rationality demands in this process of interest validation is an assessment of preferability rather than a mere expression of preference - that's where evaluative rationality comes in while the means/end conception comes to grief.

A Pragmatic Answer to the Question "Why be Rational?"

Apart from remedying the deficiencies of the means/end theory, the tripartite conception of rationality suggested above is also conducive to justifying a commitment to rationality. Indeed, it is the emphasis of this conception on the quest for optimality that underlies a *practical* justification for why we should be rational. This can be understood in two ways. First, although rationality does not afford assurance of success due to its own "predicament", its demand for adopting the overall best available alternative (i.e. the apparent optimum) does afford the best overall chances of reaching our goals and thus makes following the path of rationality the rational course. Second, the demand of rationality for "the best available" leads one to fix on that alternative at which others could also be expected to arrive in the circumstances so that they are able to explain, understand, and anticipate one's choices. Here, rationality is justified in the sense that it provides a principle for the guidance of action that can achieve the crucial requisites of social co-ordination - mutual predictability and mutual understanding - in the most efficient and realizable way (Rescher, 1988).

However, in the face of such practical line of argumentation, a sceptic may seem to be correct in objecting that it actually conforms to the *circular* pattern: "You should be rational just because that is the rational thing to do!" After all, is it possible to justify *rationally*, if not practically, a commitment to rationality? Many eminent philosophers are pessimistic about the possibility of doing so. For instance, just as O'Hear (1980) claims that since it is logically impossible to provide a noncircular justification of rationality the demand for such a justification is false per se, Popper (1966) also admits to the impossibility of rationally justifying rationality and suggests that what he calls critical rationalism should be based on an irrational faith in reason. Despite these rather pessimistic views, I think that an illuminating point made by Siegel (1997) can help resolve the problem. Siegel maintains that the aforementioned circularity - establishing the jurisdiction of reason by appealing to the judgement of reason itself - is not problematic at all because a justification of rationality must be self-reflexive. As he puts it,

> To ask 'Why be rational?' is to ask for *reasons* for and against being rational; to entertain the question seriously is to acknowledge the force of reasons in ascertaining the answer. The very raising of the question, in other words, commits one to a recognition of the epistemic force of reasons. To recognize that force is to recognize the answer to the question: we should be rational because (for the reason that) reasons, as the rationalist holds, have force. (Siegel, 1997, pp. 82-83)

Persuasive as Siegel's *rational* justification is, it appears hard to meet another *practical* challenge of the sceptics that rationality is not realizable at all. The rationale behind this sceptical challenge is that we can never accept anything which does not come with ironclad proofs. As the apparent optima pursued by rationality are not necessarily the real ones, according to the sceptics, the products of rationality (i.e. beliefs, action recommendations, and evaluations) are all unacceptable. Admittedly, if what the sceptics insist is correct, rationality is really not realizable. However, judging from the fact that the object of rational endeavour is not just to avoid error but to achieve our cognitive, practical, and evaluative goals, the sceptics' policy of systematic avoidance of risk – and hence avoidance of acceptance - is basically insensible since it blocks from the very beginning any prospect of realizing these goals. To be sure, the policy of rationality to accept the apparent optima is a risky one, for it cannot guarantee they are the right choices, let alone the best choices. But I agree with what Price (1996) holds that it is reasonable to take this risk and unreasonable not to take it: "If we refuse to take it, we have no prospect of getting answers, not even the most tentative ones, for many of the questions which interest us" (p. 128).

After all, we as rational animals have questions and want, nay need, to have answers to them. We cannot feel at ease in situations of which we can make no cognitive sense. And such a feeling of discomfort caused by lack of knowledge or

understanding is of practical significance to humans from an evolutionary point of view. As James (1956) points out perceptively, "The utility of this emotional effect of expectation is perfectly obvious; 'natural selection', in fact, was bound to bring it about sooner or later. It is of the utmost practical importance to an animal that he should have prevision of the qualities of the objects that surround him" (pp. 78-79). Moreover, since the sceptics refuse to accept the ground rules of our reasoning as appropriate, and hence the ground rules of communication, they are also blocked from the enterprise of communication, thereby leading to a withdrawal from the human community (Rescher, 1988). A question arises here whether it is humanly possible to lead such a sceptical life, as even the founder of the sceptical tradition, Pyrrho, admits that it is difficult to rid oneself completely of one's humanity. In a famous reply to his critic, Pyrrho says that "it was not easy entirely to strip oneself of human weakness; but one should strive with all one's might against facts, by deeds if possible, and if not, in word" (Laertius, 1950, p. 479). Owing to the high price we must pay for being a sceptic - the collapse of the prospect of rational inquiry and effective communication - a commitment to rationality is obviously preferable to adopting a sceptical lifestyle.

Fostering Rationality Through Philosophical Inquiry

Human life has philosophical dimensions, including epistemological, metaphysical, ethical, and aesthetic ones. It is revealed by the following sample of perennial philosophical questions that are typically raised and found intriguing: What is knowledge? Does God exist? How should I treat others? What makes somebody beautiful? Our capacity and inclination to reflect on such philosophical questions of human existence arising from our own experience, as distinct from those posed to us by the philosophical tradition, Fisher (2009) calls "Philosophical Intelligence". Although this intelligence requires the exercise of certain habits of rational behaviour, like using reasoning and argument to justify views, it is possessed not only by adults but by children. Indeed, research on cognitive development has shown that children, even by the age of 4 or 5, have reasons for their beliefs and actions, and routinely draw logical and reasonable inferences (Moshman, 2009). In other words, young children are rational agents in the sense that they have reasons, and often logical ones, for what they believe and do. Accordingly, the fostering of rationality in education must recognize that students as early as kindergarten are already rational agents, and thus that it should not consist of the transformation of irrational or non-rational beings into rational agents, but, at its core, the promotion of development of rationality in students.

Here, it is worth noting that there are intimate connections between the development of rationality and key concepts of philosophy. For instance, as a discipline that seeks to examine the criteria for making and evaluating judgements as well as to search for meaning by connecting thoughts and experiences into a coherent and cohesive world view, philosophy can meet the aforementioned

demands of rationality, especially for faculties of appraising alternatives and effecting a choice between alternatives. Moreover, philosophy is also conducive to the development of two other faculties demanded by rationality, i.e. the faculties of contemplating alternatives and determining what can and cannot be done. The reason is that philosophy is characterized by the asking of open and creative questions, which encourage one to constantly probe deeper into the implications of one's own thinking and to imagine new alternatives and possibilities, respectively. As for the remaining action-oriented faculty of implementing choices demanded by rationality, philosophy has a lot to offer those who are developing it, considering that one's motive for acting in a certain way is based on one's values, a study of which is the focus of philosophy.

Perhaps more importantly, it is arguable that, in the context of education, philosophy can foster children's rationality more effectively than the traditional subjects of the school curriculum. On the one hand, owing to flexibility of thought and openness to new ideas presupposed in philosophical questioning, philosophy gives children the courage and opportunity to think for themselves. This capacity for independent thinking is a prerequisite for the comparative assessment of feasible alternatives demanded by rationality, whether cognitive, practical, or evaluative. Yet, the emphasis on closed questioning in schools, as Murris (2009) asserts, has a damaging effect on children's ability and courage to question and think for themselves: "Slowly, and from an early age, children's confidence as independent thinkers disappears under the waves of closed questions asked by teachers and assumed by curriculum materials, whatever the subject" (p. 115). On the other hand, critical thinking, which is arguably conceived as "the *educational cognate* of rationality" (Siegel, 1988, p. 32), is promoted more effectively through philosophy than through traditional school subjects during classroom discussion because philosophy is not determined by a substantial empirical knowledge base (Winstanley, 2009). Specifically, in contrast to knowledge-based subjects in which the discussion is usually skewed in favour of those having the most facts, thereby discouraging children who have limited subject knowledge from participating; philosophy enables children to participate with confidence without fear of making embarrassing factual errors in that it is ideas rather than facts that are under discussion in philosophical inquiry. And ideas are potential sources of truth to which all children have ready access.

One of the most successful attempts to establish a coherent curriculum for teaching philosophy in schools is the Philosophy for Children (commonly known as P4C) programme. Devised by Matthew Lipman and his colleagues at the Montclair State University, the P4C curriculum is composed of philosophical novels for students and instructional manuals for teachers, aiming to engage students from kindergarten to 12th grade in exploring the philosophical dimensions of their experience (Lipman, Sharp, & Oscanyan, 1980). In a typical P4C session, students

first read an episode from a philosophical novel, then suggest questions for discussion after pondering on what is puzzling or interesting about the episode, and lastly discuss the questions as a community of philosophical inquiry. The success of P4C lies in its use of *community of inquiry* as the methodology of teaching and *logic* as the purpose of learning, apart from *philosophy* as the subject matter for inquiry (Lam, 2013). Two features of the community of inquiry, viz. deliberation and questioning, are particularly important to the development of rationality in children. As Lipman (2003) explains it,

> [Deliberation] involves a consideration of alternatives through examination of the reasons supporting each alternative. Since the deliberation usually takes place in preparation for the making of a judgment, we speak of the process as a "weighing" of the reasons and the alternatives. … [Questioning] is the leading edge of inquiry: It opens the door to dialogue, to self-criticism, and to self-correction. Each question has a global potential of putting a portion of the world in question, and this helps pave the way to fallibilism, the practice of assuming one's incorrectness in order to discover errors one did not know one had made. To question is to institutionalize and legitimize doubt and to invite critical evaluation. (pp. 96 & 99)

With regard to logic, it has two main meanings in P4C, viz. formal logic and good reasons logic (Lipman, Sharp, & Oscanyan, 1980), the learning of which can meet such systematic demands of rationality as consistency, uniformity, coherence, and simplicity. While formal logic, as a system of rules governing sentence structure and connections between sentences, is characterized by consistency, uniformity, and coherence; good reasons logic, as a process of giving good reasons, uses simplicity as one of the criteria for evaluating reasons.

Conclusion

To sum up: the preceding argument founded on pragmatic considerations has demonstrated that rationality is a good thing and worth defending as a fundamental educational ideal for children. Here I suggest, following Nicholas Rescher, construing rationality as a tripartite concept comprising cognitive, practical, and evaluative rationality, and base the argument on this conception. For one thing, this conception is comprehensive and thus able to remedy the defects of the popular means/end theory. For another, the ideal of rationality implicit in this conception is an inclusive rather than an exclusive one: not only does it not force us to choose between the cognitive and emotional components of our nature, it actually forbids nothing that is *good* for us. In order to promote the development of rationality in children, I suggest engaging them in doing philosophy in the classroom, especially by means of Lipman's Philosophy for Children programme. After all, children have the capacity and inclination to reflect on various philosophical questions arising from their own experience.   And such reflection is effective in fostering children's

rationality if it is done with community of inquiry as the methodology of teaching and logic as the purpose of learning.

References

Adorno, T. W., & Horkheimer, M. (1972). *Dialectic of enlightenment.* New York: Herder and Herder.

Aristotle (1984). *The complete works of Aristotle: The revised Oxford translation* (Rev. ed., Vol. 2, J. Barnes, Ed.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Fisher, R. (2009). Philosophical intelligence: Why philosophical dialogue is important in educating the mind. In M. Hand & C. Winstanley (Eds.), *Philosophy in schools* (pp. 96-104). London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Gibson, R. (1986). *Critical theory and education.* London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd.

Greene, M. (1984). Philosophy, reason, and literacy. *Review of Educational Research, 54* (4), 547-559.

James, W. (1956). *The will to believe and other essays in popular philosophy and human immortality.* London: Constable & Co. Ltd.

Kohli, W. (1995). Educating for emancipatory rationality. In W. Kohli (Ed.), *Critical conversations in philosophy of education* (pp. 103-115). New York: Routledge.

Laertius, D. (1950). *Lives of eminent philosophers* (Vol. 2, R. D. Hicks, Trans.). London: William Heinemann Ltd.

Lam, C.-M. (2013). *Childhood, philosophy and open society: Implications for education in Confucian heritage cultures*. Singapore: Springer.

Lipman, M. (2003). *Thinking in education* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Lipman, M., Sharp, A. M., & Oscanyan, F. S. (1980). *Philosophy in the classroom* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Moshman, D. (2009). The development of rationality. In H. Siegel (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of philosophy of education* (pp. 145-161). New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Murris, K. (2009). Autonomous and authentic thinking through philosophy with picturebooks. In M. Hand & C. Winstanley (Eds.), *Philosophy in schools* (pp. 105-118). London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Nathanson, S. (1994). *The ideal of rationality: A defense, within reason.* Chicago & La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company.

Niznik, J. (1998). The idea of rationality and the contemporary status of philosophy. In D. R. Gordon & J. Niznik (Eds.), *Criticism and defense of rationality in contemporary philosophy* (pp. 7-15). Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi B. V.

O'Hear, A. (1980). *Karl Popper.* London: Routledge.

Popper, K. R. (1966). *The open society and its enemies: The high tide of prophecy* (5th ed., Vol. 2). London: Routledge.

Price, H. H. (1996). *Belief: The Gifford Lectures delivered at the University of Aberdeen in 1960.* Bristol, England: Thoemmes Press.

Rescher, N. (1988). *Rationality: A philosophical inquiry into the nature and the rationale of reason.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Ruddick, S. (1989). *Maternal thinking: Toward a politics of peace.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Russell, B. (1962). *Human society in ethics and politics.* New York: New American Library.

Scheffler, I. (1973). *Reason and teaching.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Siegel, H. (1988). *Educating reason: Rationality, critical thinking, and education*. New York: Routledge Inc.

Siegel, H. (1997). *Rationality redeemed?: Further dialogues on an educational ideal.* New York: Routledge.

Winstanley, C. (2009). Philosophy and the development of critical thinking. In M. Hand & C. Winstanley (Eds.), *Philosophy in schools* (pp. 85-95). London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Philosophy *of* Education Society *of* Australasia

PESA CONFERENCE 2014

Author name: Diana Prokofyeva
University/institution/affiliation: Bashkir State University
Email address: Janis-Lsfloyd@rambler.ru
Title: Man's Engagement as an Effort of Overcoming Social Types of Estrangement.

Abstract:

The article is devoted to the phenomenon of Estrangement and Engagement as its alternative. I would like to offer my own classification of Estrangement which is divided into "existential" irresistible type and "historical" type which has its historical implementations. "Historical" types are closely connected to social life and have historical modifications during the history. To those types I refer political, economical and technological estrangement. I made a hypothesis that historical estrangement could be overcome and put forward Estrangement as an effort of its overcoming. I also give an example of social Estrangement in modern Russia which is Estrangement from values of education and culture.

Keywords: estrangement, engagement, historical estrangement, political estrangement, economical estrangement, technological estrangement.

The philosophy of Engagement is first of all the philosophy of human being, philosophy of a Person and of involving into different aspects of society and its life. Engagement is a process and it implicates active participation of a person in a surrounding life. For some people being involved into the life and different processes of this life is perfectly natural. But for most people an Engagement into political, economical, social or cultural life of their country is not a usual practice needless to say about whole world's life. That is why, for my opinion, it is very important to talk about Engagement as an alternative to Estrangement in our modern society.

The problem of overcoming Estrangement doesn't loose its sharpness. On the one hand, technological advances make the quality of people's life higher, and the life itself easier. But on the other hand people become alienated from their natural habitat, this progress puts them into a world of artificial and synthetic. The World Web connected people and made them closer to each other. But at the same time youth prefer internet communications to the real "live" relations. The other point is that we live in the consumer society now and almost every person is going round in circles of production and consumption. And the last one is that governments still use political ideologies as a covert form of violence against a person. All this bring person to Estrangement from his inner circle, from himself, to loosing the interest to life and other negative reactions.

The term "Engagement" was introduced by French philosophers-personalists and especially by Emmanuel Mounier [Mounier, Emmanuel. The Personalist Manifesto. Moscow: Respublica, 1999]. They appealed to the practical aspects of human's life and called for active political and civic position, to economical activity and to spiritual awakening.

Personalists proclaimed a Person as a highest value from which the upbuilding and learning of this world begins. The Person combines material and spiritual aspects and has a real freedom to choose. Personalists taught that the crisis of a man is the consequence of the crisis of Civilization which was pronounced in Europe in 20-30th. But we can say that in particular the Person is a creator of history, so human's activities and evolvement in some special way brought to different forms of Estrangement and the whole Civilization to the crisis. So we appeal to the philosophy of Human because only sane and well-oriented persons could come out of the crisis.

When we learn literature about Estrangement we can see that different thinkers highlight different aspects of Estrangement. For some of them the main aspect of this problem is economics, for others – politics, etc. But in consequence they all arrive at a conclusion that Estrangement presence in all spheres of the man's life. That is why I don't take one aspect of our life and don't investigate just one type of Estrangement.

In my concept I divide the Estrangement into two types: Historical and Existential. The Existential Estrangement, according to my hypothesis, in principle is irresistible. It is closely connected with human existence as being "free", but at the

same time – of an "absurd", "abandoned" and "disturbed". At all times religious quest, the discrepancy actually practiced moral norms to moral ideals, constant reflection were the manifestation of this kind of Estrangement.

The second Estrangement – historical – has historically modified manifestations, which I conventionally called forms. The bases for the allocation of these forms are such aspects of society as politics and economics. Separately, I have identified technological Estrangement, becoming increasingly prominent in the post-industrial society. As history has shown mitigating contradictions of these forms of Estrangement in the historical process, I put forward a hypothesis that we can overcome those manifestations of Estrangement.

At the same time I would like to underline that all kinds of Estrangement are closely interrelated. Together they resemble a prism, which can be viewed from any angle and every kind of Estrangement can be derived from any other. Overcoming the Estrangement of the man is only possible in a complex approach that will cover the main areas of life – moral, political, economic. Changes only in one aspect of life will only reinforce the heel and show us that the other aspects are not covered.

I would like to set apart Existential type of Estrangement which might be a theme of another big philosophical discussion. Now I would like to stop at the discernable types of "Historical" Estrangement and Engagement.

Reasoning about problems of the Political Estrangement Erich Fromm wrote: "The very fact that we are governed by laws which we do not control, and do not even want to control, is one of the most outstanding manifestations of alienation" [Fromm, Erich. Sane Society. Moscow: AST: Khranitel, p. 187]. Political Estrangement is the feeling of man's exclusion of the power. It appears because of dissatisfaction and disappointment of the actions of political forces and of the political system itself. In consequence we can see the estrangement of people from the political life, their passivity and their indifference to all political possesses going around. Another logical result is rejection of electoral participation. People think that their electoral participation is useless and will change nothing. All this is enhanced by the knowledge that the government agencies look like abstract shapes pursuing only their own interests, which are far from the people interests.

At the same time our historical experience shows us that orientation on the overcoming of man's Political Estrangement could bring us to new forms of the Estrangement. For example in the Soviet period there were a lot of people who were living in the best interests of the country and for the idea of "bright future". They sacrificed their interests for those ideas. It was man's Estrangement from himself for the communistic ideals and for collective values.

The overcoming of the Political Estrangement on the base of the Engagement is an active civic position. It is coming from the realization that the main value is the human person and it is impossible to build a happy and sane society ignoring this fact.

Personalists suggested building society of free, responsible and engaged individuals. And of course they understood that this transformation cannot happen in one moment as a miracle.

Nowadays in the Russian society we can see the tendency when people don't dissemble their dissatisfaction of the government. They try to avow their position and agitate for the electoral participation. More and more people including youth are urging for the fight against corruption. They maintain permanent efforts of "average citizens" to breakthrough into this system will be successful and we will get a chance to change this system. Some people are trying to organize the political parties which can become real opposition. Unfortunately it is still not an easy task but the fact of the awakening of people tells us about gradual Engagement into the political life. Most importantly, entering the power structures, these people should choose the right course to improve the live of the population, to strengthen the position of Russia as a whole, rather than their own enrichment. We can also find an active agitation for electoral participation to change the situation in the country. More people are coming to the conclusion that active citizenship can change something for the better. And the number of people who believe that they can get into the political system without money or protection is growing.

The appearance of new liberal, democratic and socialist parties which can become a real opposition to acting government is necessary for Russian politics. They should involve more people into the political life and prove by their activities and steps that they are not indifferent for the future of the country.

Another type of the "Historical Estrangement" is Economical Estrangement. The detailed analysis of it we can find in the writings of Karl Marx. According to Marx, the man is more alienated from the other and from his human nature the level of exploitation is higher in the society. It becomes the most noticeable in the age of development of the capitalism. The labour loses its inner meaning for the man and getting the economic value becomes the main goal. Money become the measure of man's success and getting money one feels comfortable and confident.

Man is also estranged from the heads of big enterprise which became a norm of capitalist society. Administration here is something far and abstract. For administrative staff workers are just faceless units which are useful for getting profit only. Trade-unions soften this situation but they should be more involved into the cooperation of workers to help them to feel that they are participating in the enterprise's life. Each person needs to recognize that he or she is not just a cog in the soulless machine but a person and individual whose rights and interests are important.

According to Marx, private property was simultaneously the reason and the result of labour's Estrangement. Because of the appearance of the private property and division of labour people start to perceive this world as one-sided. The feeling of

possession became a fundamental and replaces many other physical and spiritual requirements.

The main consequence of those is the man's Estrangement from other people. A desire of economical benefit makes people to use each other and come to each other consumer.

Our modern society is characterized as "consumer society" in which aspiration of getting profit leads to a full depersonalization of the man and the society in common. This society inculcates to man its standards and dictates him what to want and what needs to fill. It always presses the person and this pressure makes the man "feverish thirsty for activity" by van den Haag [Ernest van den Haag, "Of happiness and Despair We have No Measure"]. The main criteria of the value of labour now is getting a profit not a satisfying the requirements in creativity and self-realization. All this leads to the feeling of anxiety.

The same thing was mentioned also by Erich Fromm. He said that the principle of capital accumulation dominates in our society [Fromm, Erich. Escape From Freedom. Moscow, Progress, 1989]. That means that man works for getting profit, but most of the people don't spend this profit but invest it to get more profit endlessly. Man in capitalistic society being an employee perceives himself as a thing that should be rented. If his quality is not attractive enough at the market a person looses confidence and feels an inconsistency.

According to personalists in divided industrial society the labour should help people to bring up the true love between each other. Mounier perceived the labour as a creativity act and he said that only during the labour process the man could find himself. So on the one hand the man will find self-realization in labour and on the other hand he will overcome the Estrangement of the results of his labour, because he will work for the sake of the other person.

Personalists stressed that to make the exterior revolution it is necessary to make the interior revolution – in human's soul and views first of all. And the labour here should be an instrument of self-improvement and self-realization. Spiritual and economical revolutions should make a whole.

The technological Estrangement is the problem of the second half of the XXth century and the beginning of the XXIst century. The growing temp of life stimulates supply demand for everything that could save our time which is considered the most valuable resource nowadays. Internet which bands people together all over the world solves this task perfectly. We don't need to wait for a postman with a letter or be nervous about undelivered letters. In few minutes someone on the other side of the world might read your email. Internet definitely connects people. In social networks you might find a friend whom you have lost many years ago or you might find new people with similar interests or just in order to improve your foreign language. In the internet there are answers for almost all questions, thousands opportunities including work search in any corner of the world.

The man saves his time sitting in the fast food cafe which is provided with Wi-Fi. There is everything for the comfort. The man snakes and checks his e-mail, news, updates on Stock exchanges; he shares his latest news with his friends in Twitter which widely used. The main characteristic of modern gadgets is their multi-functionality. "To get the maximum result in the minimum time" – might be a slogan of the modern person.

There is a so called substitution: when the man tries to save his time, asks for more, he looses something important and special. The atmosphere of the big city with its rush and vanity makes the man loosing skills of life estimation. He has no time for thinking and admiring and sometimes even for true filings and emotions. There is a real danger of loosing oneself and ones face between hundreds of masks which we used to try every day. We try to correspond to the standards of the society and escape from self. Internet and mass media fasten us the models of behavior and trends of beauty, moral and values. Someone tries to correspond to those trends and fits these frames. And someone just replaces real life and emotions by endless TV-series, reality shows, talk shows ant others. All these give the person possibility to fill emotions which he doesn't get in the real life because of the scheme "home-work-home".

Among public people of art there are lots of those who not only gain the money but try to bring some ideas to make a man to think or to act. Such TV programmes, movies, etc. show sharp problems standing in front of people and society. They usually use rigid forms to shock person and to take him/her out of the routine in which he/she occurred. The author who can see these problems, social isolation and man's estrangement and tries to bring it up to all the people who take above as a norm. Authors consciously do not give the answers to questions or intentionally show everything in negative colour. They show us what might happen if we ignore these signals of spiritual crises.

So we say that technological progress brings us a lot of positive moments and makes our life more comfortable and much easier. Internet gives us communication, books, on-line shopping, conferences, job, self-realization etc. But over-interest in it leads to the person's estrangement from self and from the others, and to the "loneliness in the crowd". This is a very thin borderline and we should learn how to discern when technologies are good for us and when they are bad. Probably in our real life we have to overcome more barriers and it is more difficult but that is why our life is interesting. Engagement into a real life not into a virtual is an answer to the technological estrangement.

As an example of the social estrangement I would like to illustrate the estrangement from the values of education and culture in modern Russia. There is a point of view that it is difficult to get higher education in modern Russia. The reasons are: the growth of number of commercial schools and universities, low salaries of teaching staff, low scholarships. That is why young people have to find a job after

finishing school or continue their education at universities they do not prefer. It leads to individual characteristics abuse and to individual estrangement. But the main reason of these is in imperfection of the educational system at all. Firstly, it is a very rare situation when a 17 years old school graduator could exactly know what does he want from his life and to what sphere he wants to belong. We do not have enough carrier-guidance at schools and school-graduators are not mature enough. Secondly, there is a cult of higher education which invaded Russia. Nowadays there exists an opinion that a man without higher education is considered "a man of low caste". This cult is enforced to children by their parents and society and is offered as necessary and obligatory step of social escalator. But they usually forget about the real purpose of higher education which are: individual development, obtaining special skills and abilities, self-realization, getting the harmony with oneself as a result. Young people get their degrees formally. Very often the university and the specialty are chosen by parents because of the future work prestige, wage rate and the opportunity to get the future job by protection.

The process of child education should start from the very young age. No doubt this is the target for parents and highly qualified teaching personnel who are greatly interested in the process and results of their work. Educational process should remain its creative features and individual attention to children. Schools and universities are very important in the process of Human progress; they will help to find right self-orientation in all social spheres of life such as politics, economics and virtual space as well. They are directed to engage young people to the social life and to overcome the estrangement.

References

Fromm, Erich. Escape From Freedom. Moscow, Progress, 1989.

Fromm, Erich. Sane Society. Moscow: AST: Khranitel, 2006.

Mounier, Emmanuel. The Personalist Manifesto. Moscow: Respublica, 1999

Van den Haag, Ernest. "Of happiness and Despair We have No Measure"
http://scepsis.net/library/id_963.html

Philosophy *of* Education Society *of* Australasia

PESA CONFERENCE 2014

Author name: Luke Strongman
University/institution/affiliation: Open Polytechnic
Email address: Luke.Strongman@OpenPolytechnic.ac.nz
Title: Factors in Educational Engagement in Distance Learning

Abstract:
What is 'engagement' in an educational or learning context? For Austin (1984), more involvement in the education process results in 'better learning and development', while for Pace (1982) 'quality and effort' lead to improved educational outcomes. For Kuh, (2001) student engagement is defined by "students involvement in activities and conditions that are linked to high-quality learning" (p. 12). Thus engagement is a form of 'taking part,' paying attention, participating, and transitioning from a state of ignorance to one of knowledge, or up-skilling.

There are a plethora of ways in which educators engage with learning and teaching. Engagement can be measured (as in performance indicators). It can be inspired or motivated (as in attitudinal shifts). It can be debated and discussed (as in dialectal exchange). Engagement is a form of 'becoming' in an educational context, a transition from one state of knowledge to another state. The transition from one learning state to another affords a state of mind or an ability, or a potential for achievement, that wasn't previously possible. Drawing on a range of philosophy of education ideas and concepts, and a variety of learning contexts, this paper will explore the motivational dimensions of educational engagement (with a particular focus on the distance learning context) and try to understand how engagement informs retention. This paper will discuss how engagement may be affected through technology; how a sense of well-being influences engagement; the effect of information overload on engagement and retention; and how some generational differences might reflect different attitudes towards engagement in education and workplace contexts.

Key words: Educational engagement, motivation, distance learning, retention and attrition, well-being, information overload, generational differences.

Motivation and engagement

The motivation for engagement in learning is as complex as the issue of motivation in any other facet of life. One useful way to understand the need for educational engagement is through self-determination theory. There are two branches to this theory. The first involves intrinsic motivation – which holds that people perform learning tasks through inner pleasure and satisfaction, and secondly, it advances the idea of extrinsic motivation, in which people perform tasks either for reward or punishment (Park, 2013, p. 47). For Park, there are two main types of extrinsic motivation: Firstly, introjected motivation in which behaviours are performed to avoid guilt or attain self-worth (2013, p. 48); and secondly, integrated motivation in which an identified activity is integrated into a concept of the 'self' (2013, p. 48). Underpinning self-determination theory (SDT) is the understanding of three psychological needs. These are: autonomy, competence and relatedness. Autonomy involves control of one's behaviour, whereas a sense of learning competence involves receiving positive feedback from others and knowing how to support one's own perceptions through an ability to perceive relatedness with and a sense of belonging to, others (Park, 2013, p. 48). Thus educational engagement involves either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation.

Web 2.0 and online engagement

It is a characteristic of modern learning environments that they are technologically enhanced in some form, ubiquitously in the developed world, through the use of Information and Computer Technology or ICT. The current era is seeing a transition from early internet based learning to a second phase in its use and development marked by more specialised usage. The two main features of Web 2.0 technologies are that people become producers of content as well as consumers of information, and this can take place in an asynchronous 24/7 environment. But as Li et al. (2014), reveal, there is no major difference between engagement of active e-Learning in different classroom conditions, the main differences are with the efficacy of higher learning and innovative and critical thinking in contact or online settings, arguably students are better able to engage critically in the former (p. 48). Smith, Salaway and Caruso (2009) surveyed over 30 000 college students in US and found that 90% of college students use SNSs – use Twitter and blog for enhanced engagement. A 'blog' short for 'web log' functions as an online dairy or journal – people have own 'discursive or expressive spaces' and may experience increased learning and motivation after engaging in blog activities (Li, 2014, p. 51).

Furthermore, engagement may be defined by interaction between the environment and individuals working within it. Social, academic exchanges and transactions are carried out which can effect student engagement and perceptions. Engagement may be modified by conduct, by involvement in learning and academic tasks, and by

participation in school related activities (Li, 2014, p. 49). As Robinson and Hollinger state there is no change in higher education larger than that brought about by the internet, and by web and personal computer (2008, p. 101). It has allowed the learning community to widen and increased peoples' opportunities for participation. However, effectiveness of online learning determined by three factors (Robinson and Hollinger, 2008, p. 103):

- Students' outcome focussed on test scores and grades
- Students attitudes of learning
- Overall experiential satisfaction

In using asynchronous networks there is more time for critique and reflection, and for activities such as stimulating analysis, synthesis, judgement, prompt feedback for student who suffers detachment, and for active collaboration across distance. There is some correlation between social engagement and active e-learning, but approximately 20% of students don't communicate with others socially (Robinson and Hollinger, 2008, p. 106). Such learners may be 'silent participants'. Thus, a person's learning experience is defined by the results *and their engagement* with study (Ku, 2001, p. 107).

Technology and retention

It is possible that students who are engaged in mixed-mode courses of blended learning encounter a range of pedagogies in their educational experience. Some use of Virtual Learning environments (or VLEs) is intended to enhance learning in contexts where e-learning materials support face-to-face provision rather than replace it (Heaton-Shrestha, 2009, p. 83), in other environments students use of the VLE may be shaped by curriculum design pedagogy that is influenced by both disciplinary content (Linsey, Katsifli, and Gipps, 2005) and technological features. This is consistent with the use of VLEs in solely dedicated distance learning providers. If the concept of social and academic integration leading to student retention is valid (see Tinto, 1993, 1997) then retentions in distance learning (DL) organisations will to some extent be affected by the extent to which the VLE can deliver these features to the student by offering enhanced communication and interaction. However four factors may be involved: importance of peer interaction to aid retention, through both academic acculturation and social adjustment, and appropriate and accurate information being given to potential students before enrolment. (Heaton-Shrestha et al., 2009, p. 84) To some extent then "combination of flexibility with opportunities for social interaction in 'blended learning'" (ie. Combining face-to-face and electronic media) may lead us to expect higher retention rates on 'blended' – mode programmes." (Heaton-Shrestha et al., 2009, p. 85) The use of the VLE or Learning Management System (LMS) may also make students more confidant and motivated, depending on accessibility of resources (Heaton-Shrestha et al., 2009, p. 89).

Organisations may also look to integrate open source software into the teaching and learning delivery platforms as part of general software digital literacy; these may enhance student's technology competence as well as provide reinforcing inter-connections in their learning. It includes the use of "learning platforms, blogs, wikis, *Elluminate*, podcasts and forums, with increasing interest in using social software (Web 2.0) developments such as *Facebook*, *Second Life*, *Twitter* and so on" (Boyle et al., 2010, p. 115).

Characteristics of retention and attrition in distance education
If new media technologies and virtual learning environments support high retention, or retention that is with some forms of pedagogy and use, comparable to face-to-face learning, then 'retention and attrition' need defining. A student is 'retained' in education when they successfully complete a course and qualification. Attrition, however, may be understood through varying motivational factors. As Schofield and Dismore suggest there are generally thought to be three forms of attrition: firstly, 'voluntary attrition' is when a student chooses to withdraw from a programme of study; secondly, 'failure' results from an inability to meet assessment standards; and thirdly, 'dismissal' is a rare form of failure or involuntary attrition where a student as not met or transgressed organisational regulations (2010, p. 209).

Distance education is also characterised by a higher proportion of non-traditional students. According to Gilardi and Giglielmetti non-traditional students are frequently those who: i.) have delayed enrolment (the transition from secondary school to higher education is postponed), or ii.) attend part-time, or iii.) work full-time, or iv.) are financially independent but who are studying for reasons of personal development, v.) have dependents who require care or maintenance, vi.) are a single parent, or vii.) do not have university entry qualifications (2011, p. 34). Thus, there are large group of learners for whom the flexibility of distance education provides a solution to lifestyle issues, as well as simply geographical distance from a traditional tertiary education organisation.

For this cohort of non-traditional students Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011) have distinguished for main forms of organisational interaction. The first of these is characterised by investing limited time in 'formally appropriate behaviour' (for those in distance educations such as attending lectures and forums online), or secondly in developing non-classroom relationships such as study support groups. This of course excludes a third group of 'silent listeners' who may adopt a strategy of complete retreat but whose learning may not be completely inactive. Conversely, those students in a the traditional group who may have made an easy transition from secondary education to tertiary education, attribute 'less meaningfulness' to their learning experience as one of the causative factors and surprisingly may claim to have less difficulty than those who re-engage enrolment (Gilardi and Guglielmetti,

2011, p. 45). Of course in the longer-term view, these students may be transitioning from conventional to non-traditional learning patterns of engagement.

The reasons that students do not complete studies in tertiary education are manifold but primarily reasons are given by the following factors: i.) wrong choice of course, ii.) the demands of the course, iii.) the nature of the student experience, iv.) social factors, v.) financial problems, vi.) personal problems, vii.) institutional deficit (Davies and Elias, 2003, p. 47; Yorke, 1999, pp. 39-46). The main pattern of student non-completion occurs within the first year of study (Bunting, 2004, p. 22; Smith and Naylor, 2001, p. 395; Van Stolk, 2007, p. 9). Of those students who disengage in the first year most do so in the early weeks of the Trimester (Prescott and Simpson, 2004, p. 250). For students themselves, Bryson identified several factors of influence. These include: Aspirations and expectations; challenges of difficulty level and workload; difficulties of choice/autonomy and/or limitation; trust in relationships; communication and discourse; support and social network opportunities; belongingness and community; opportunities for participation and self-efficacy (p. 8).

Fitzgibbon and Prior identify four time zones when engaged students are at risk of non-engagement throughout the academic year (2003, p. 7). The first of these is upon enrolment and prior to teaching, the second is late enrolment and during early teaching (it is not always straightforward to identify these students); the third is during the main teaching period (where comprehensive feedback rather than encouragement is needed) and the fourth is during final assessment (2003, p. 7). As Buglear relates, departures in the first and second zone are more easily identifiable than those in the third, from an administrative viewpoint (2009, p. 389). Similarly he comments on the rates of attrition of 'TRILL' enrolments – that cohort of students characterised by transfers, repeats, international, late enrollers and locally-based (2009, p. 389). The Beatty-Guenter retention strategy model seeks to remediate this through a series of inter-linking interventions of "sorting, supporting, connecting and transforming" (1994, pp. 114-5). Furthermore, Buglear suggest that "electronic footprint analysis" which measures the timeframes of student engagement with online campus in distance education is a good method of "review" rather than an ameliorative device with the rider that last logins may occur closer to the point of withdrawal than may be detected by administrative procedures within the organisation (2009, p. 390).

Enhancing retention and minimising attrition

According to Fincher, student retention can be enhanced in four primary ways. These methods are: i.) Raising entrance standards, ii.) decreasing academic rigour, iii.) decreasing the pace of learning, and iv.) learning enhancement (2010, p. 14.). For students making choices in their program of study there are a range of factors which may influence their choice (which in turn may impact on their future retention,

progression and/or completion). These factors include: previous knowledge, last type of course (academic or vocational), and academic success (Schofield and Dismore, 2010, p. 210). If a student's course and their intended qualifications are directly inter-related it is more likely to affect their retention positively (2010, p. 210). Successful students may have developed advanced study skills through formal education, better subject knowledge, deeper learning foundation, or increased levels of confidence but this does not preclude the influence of new media and relating to others through technological use as influencing some forms of education in a positive way (Schofield and Dismore, 2010, p. 218).

Mature students who are more likely to be retained at entry level – due to the opportunity to apply learning from 'real world' may be inspired by the determination to succeed. As Schofield and Dismore suggest, "[m]any jobs will require the organisation, planning and execution of even the simplest projects, as well as the consequences of not doing this efficiently to be established. These are the types of skills that may help students with an untraditional learner background to become more successful than their younger counterparts" (2010, p. 218). Age and gender may be reflected in retention analysis – with older students and females slightly more likely to be retained than younger students and males (Schofield and Dismore, 2010, p. 219).

As Gilardi and Guglielmetti state, social integration and the persistence of students in a course of study may be correlated (2011, p. 35). Building relationships with faculty members and other students plays a role for retention of non-traditional students (2011, p. 48) although relationships with faculty are understood to be more important for employed students than non-employed students (2011, p. 48). These factors can be distinguished from enhanced support in learning. Furthermore the type of employment contracts students may have also impacts on retention – those with temporary contracts are more vulnerable and employment instability can lead to insecurity which can negatively impact on either study motivations or time for personal growth (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011, p. 46). Consequently financial support can impact retention – certainly in terms of access and continuation to education (Baker, 2010, p. 217).

Moreover uniformity of corporate messaging and course design may impact on retention. Tait argues that, "[s]tudents learning at a distance (whether or not motivated by rewards) are entitled to expect clear and coherent guidance on the outcomes of their learning that 'tells the same story' through the course materials, the tutorial guidance and advice from generic staff" (2004, p. 107). For Gilardi and Guglielmetti, participation in classroom activities is most common protective strategy (2011, p. 47). Other protective strategies for non-traditional students are use of learning services and higher levels of perceived social integration (2011, p. 48).

There are other 'collateral effects 'of organisational structures and hierarchies that have been observed to affect engagement and retention of students, particularly those students among marginalised groups. These are explained by four concepts – commodification, exploitation, reproduction, and passivity (Skorobohacz, 2013, pp. 205-206). In consideration of the first concept 'commodification', it is possible that an organisation which is focussed on revenue rather than on looking out for students or the student experience, may lead to less than fulfilling student experiences for students which may affect retention. Secondly, 'exploitation', whereby staff and students are simultaneously consumers and employees (Rhoads and Rhoades, 2005, p. 251), leads to the perverse market model in which students are paying for services which they themselves deliver. Thirdly, some higher education organisational structures are viewed as reproducing class differences and increasing the socio-economic divide between already established socio-economically different groups – that is, meritocratic achievement and upward mobility through organisational structures is limited (Greenwood and Levin, 2005, p. 44). Fourthly, there is 'passivity' whereby the organisational structure has a tendency to reinforce obedience and concentrate energies away from "external relations or responsibilities of professions" (Greenwood and Levin, 2005, p. 46).

Models of retention

There are several models of student retention. Currently one of the best known is that of Tinto. Tinto posits the 'interactionalist model' which involves levels of student engagement in the learning experience (1993, 1997). Tinto acknowledges that student commitment to learning may involve a period of emotional separation from the "values, principles, and habits of his or her reference groups and the adoption of the new principles, values and habits of the University environment" (Gilardi and Guglielmetti, 2011, p 35). However, criticism of this model involves the fact that it may assume a single mode of adaption and identification with dominant norms that is not borne out by individual experiences or which does not account for the diversity of student learning experiences. As Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011) point out, "dual socialisation" on the part of the student may be possible, the diversity and pluralism of which in itself is a valuable learning experience (p. 36). Nevertheless behavioural social interaction – the extent to which the student engages in building social relationships with staff and students within and outside the classroom is important (2011, p. 43). Thus there are three levels of behavioural interaction: Firstly, those of participation in formal process (attendance of lectures/classes, use of online campus learning pages), secondly, interaction with faculty and students outside of formal learning, and thirdly, the degree of use of services. However, as Gilardi and Guglielmetti point out, there is a fourth level, a psychological register of the perceived quality of experiences which include i.) student perception of integration, and ii.) the meaningfulness of the learning experience (2011, p. 37). As Heaton-Shrestha, May, and Burke suggest, retention

likely to be aided by ways in which students can enhance their confidence and provide a sense of control and ownership of their learning experience (2011, p. 83).

A further model of student retention is Cross's (1981) Chain Response Model which explores barriers to mature-ages students' participation in tertiary education. These are viewed as being situational, institutional or dispositional in nature (Carroll, Ng, and Birch, 2009, p. 198). For a more detailed view of these please see Fig, 1. Factors contributing to retention and attrition. This three barrier structure was used by Gibson and Graff in an investigation into mature-aged student retention in an undergraduate distance education context (2009, p. 198). Other barriers may be those resulting from perceived isolation. The intensity of the experience of these barriers is understood effect retention or attrition (Carroll, Ng, and Birch, 2009, p. 198).
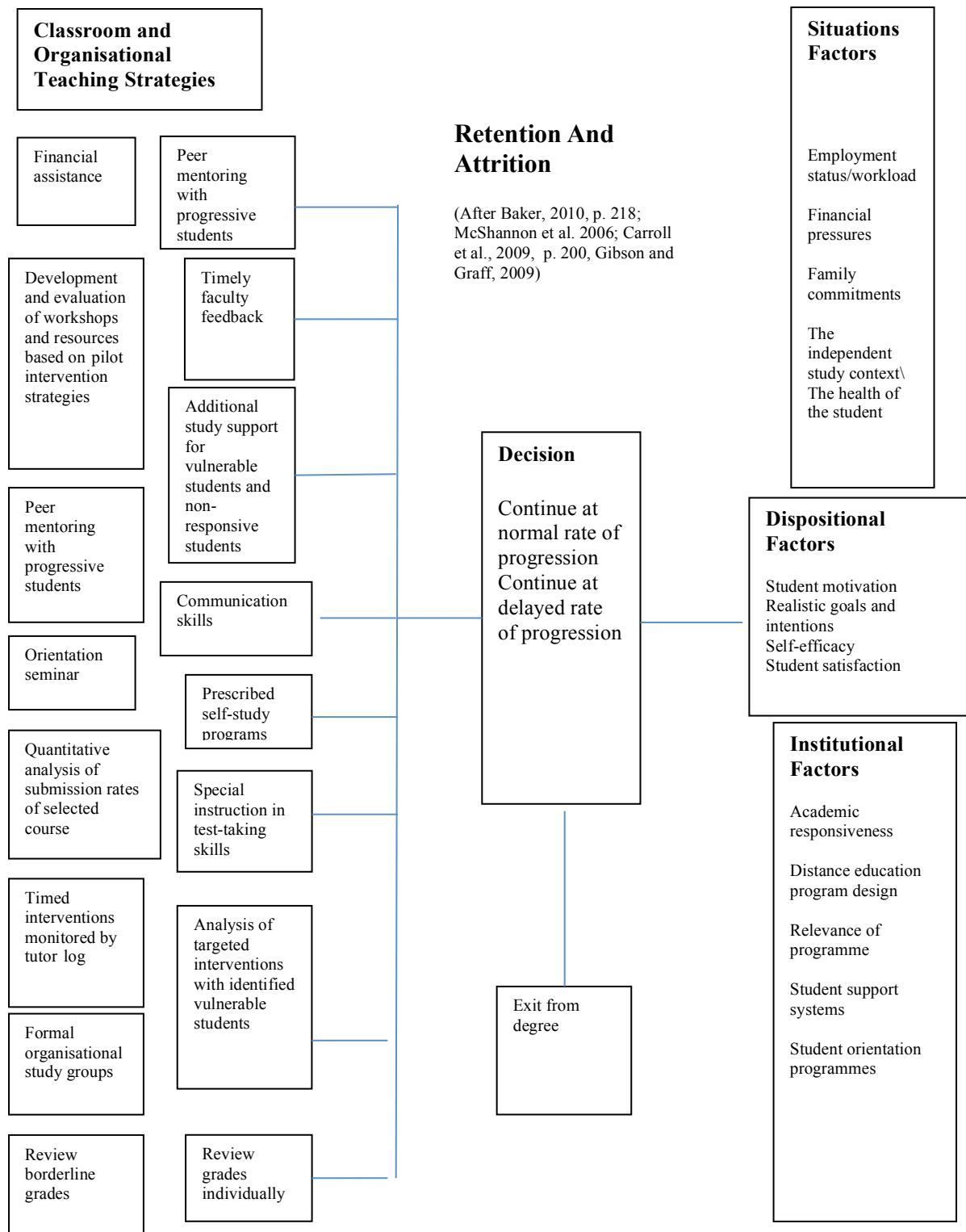
Classroom and Organisational Teaching Strategies

Financial assistance

Development and evaluation of workshops and resources based on pilot intervention strategies

Peer mentoring with progressive students

Orientation seminar

Quantitative analysis of submission rates of selected course

Timed interventions monitored by tutor log

Formal organisational study groups

Review borderline grades

Peer mentoring with progressive students

Timely faculty feedback

Additional study support for vulnerable students and non-responsive students

Communication skills

Prescribed self-study programs

Special instruction in test-taking skills

Analysis of targeted interventions with identified vulnerable students

Review grades individually

Retention And Attrition

(After Baker, 2010, p. 218; McShannon et al. 2006; Carroll et al., 2009, p. 200, Gibson and Graff, 2009)

Decision

Continue at normal rate of progression
Continue at delayed rate of progression

Exit from degree

Situations Factors

Employment status/workload

Financial pressures

Family commitments

The independent study context\ The health of the student

Dispositional Factors

Student motivation
Realistic goals and intentions
Self-efficacy
Student satisfaction

Institutional Factors

Academic responsiveness

Distance education program design

Relevance of programme

Student support systems

Student orientation programmes

Figure 1. Factors contributing to retention and attrition.

Well-being and engagement

The well-being movement defines engagement as a measure of a learner's resiliency and flourishing. As Schubert-Irastorza (2014) suggest there will be a link between

increased job satisfaction and productivity, with satisfied workers being generally happier, in better health with fewer accidents or injuries. Engagement may embody the positive psychology focus in creating health and well-being, rather than during illness or fixing dysfunction (2014, p. 43). According to Spector (1997) job satisfaction consists of an intrinsic (affective) and extrinsic (cognitive) satisfaction dimension (p. 38). For, Van Saane (2003) et al., there are eleven most frequently mentioned work-related factors. These are:

- Work content (nature of the job)
- Autonomy (individual control, decision making)
- Growth and development opportunities (training, mentorship)
- Financial rewards (pay, benefits, job security)
- Promotion opportunities (upward mobility)
- Supervision (behaviour and relationships
- Communication (internal and external)
- Co-workers (behaviour and relationships
- Meaningfulness (perceptions and significance and value)
- Workload (time and resources)
- Work demands (requirement and expectations)

The opposite of engagement is 'burnout'. The term was coined by Freudenberger in 1974 to describe the condition of being overworked, of having exhaustion, of being fatigued, or of having reduced performance. Burnout may also encompass the condition of distancing or depersonalisation, cynicism, or lack of empathy with others, or a lack of self-efficacy (Van Saane et al., 2003, p. 40). For Maslach and Leiter (2008) a learner is more likely to experience burnout if they have a 'tipping point' in the area of fairness. Workload, fairness and control of the workplace are stress points in burnout conditions. Good combinations of work and personal resources create positive reinforcement that helps employees develop the resources to cope with more stressful conditions:

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UTWES) is defined by measures of (Schubert-Irastorza, 2014, p. 46):

- Dedication
- Absorption
- Job demands – nature of work
- Job resources – interaction with colleagues, support from supervisors, performance feedback, skill variety, autonomy, opportunities for training and professional growth.
- Personal resources
- Self-efficacy (belief in own competence)
- Self-confidence (work – related)
- Optimism

- Hope
- Resilience

Thus the work-engagement scale is a measure the demands of a particular task, combined with an attitudinal ability to perform a task. Engagement in education is consequently a complex amalgam of variety of factors including: behaviour, attitude, workplace expression and organisational resource. Whilst it is tied to motivation, it also may be a social activity and dependent on individual cognitive differences. It behoves educators to think about the sustainability of their engagement, both the intensity and duration of teaching and research – to maintain optimal working conditions, pedagogical technique, and for the best use of organisational resources. If the measures of the work-engagement scale are positive, then increased productivity and well-being may be achieved.

Information overload and retention
An individual student's performance will generally improve with the amount of information received but reaches a critical level where more information produces a decline in processing ability – as the information load and cognitive complexity increases integrative complexity decreases. Idea generation and information load also reach a critical point after which idea organisation decreases as information overload increases. For Klapp (1978) and Blumler (1980), the main impacts on information overload are:
- Time sensitivity – the limitation of time in which to complete a task
- Decision requirement – the time constraints of decision making
- Structure of information – the amount is less critical than extent to which information is structured – retrieving information is what is judged relevant
- The quality of information - signal to noise ratio

Information overload is remediated by the three 'Fs' – *Filter, Focus, Forget.* But these may be difficult to implement because of norms about corporate teamwork, and/ or lack of organisational protocols for dealing with electronic communication and new media in the learning environment. The aim of the 3Fs is to lighten the burden of information overload, and to increase productivity, creativity, morale and business outcomes. Thus in order to avoid information overload, information filtering is needed, along with information retrieval, information customisation and email management.

Generational differences in attitudes to quality of work life
Maslach and Leiter (2004, pp. 92-100) use the 'Areas of Worklife Scale' to identify the characteristic dimensions of engagement in learning or the workplace. There are six factors on this scale. The first is work life – balance – that between job demands and worker capacity (avoiding overload); the second is 'control,' which is a measure

of the degree of autonomy and participation in job-related decisions-making; thirdly, there is 'reward,' which is a measure of the financial, institutional or social compensation (intrinsic or extrinsic) received for work; fourthly there is a 'community' measure which assesses the overall quality or social interaction and relationships in the workplace; a fifth measure is 'fairness,' which involves the notion that perceptions of work-related decisions are equitable and fair; and sixthly, there are values which are encapsulated an organisations goals and objectives.

Moreover there may be generational differences in workplace engagements as well as functional and motivational drivers that impact on the 'Area of Worklife Scale'. For example some attitudinal differences among different generations of learners may affect the quality and kind of workplace engagement. A summary of generational attitudinal differences is provided below (after Lai, S. L., Chang, J., and Yin Hsu, L., 2012, p. 439):

Baby Boomers (1946-1964):
- Competitive
- Diligent
- Result-orientated
- Stable working environment
- Employer loyalty
- Team work
- Commitment
- Step-by-step promotion
- Organizational loyalty

Gen Xs (1965-1981):
- Early years day care/ later years home alone
- Freedom/individualism
- Balance between work and family life
- Motivated by quality of life
- Work to live
- Emphasize personal satisfaction of hard work
- Won't always make sacrifices
- Loyal to skill, career, and themselves
- Work alone, value flexibility
- Learn new knowledge
- Ideas heard and challenged
- Meaningful and fun contribution

Gen Ys - Millennials, Net Gen, Gen Y, Generation Me, Gen Net, and Digital Natives (1975-1999):
- Work personal fulfilment

- Less external rewards
- Diversity – addicted to motions, changes and frequent activities
- Time more important than money
- Flexibility and leisure time
- Loyal to relationships and development plans
- Measure personal performance

Thus from the characteristics above, generational differences in the quality and kind of engagement with work are discernible. As Lai, Chang, Yin Hsu, (2012) state 'baby boomers' perceive that quality of work life may come from an increased workload, whereas generation X's believe in 'working to live' with an adjustment between work and family life. Generation Y people place more importance on leisure time, and time is prioritised over money (Lai, Chang, Yin Hsu, 2012, p. 440). Thus there are differences in styles of work-life engagement may be manifested in different ways in an educational context, by the different age groups by the time they participate in tertiary learning.

Conclusion:

In conclusion a primary theory of motivation in engagement is self-determination theory and involves the complex motivational interaction of the learner with intrinsic and extrinsic stimulus. E-learning and information and computer technologies have broadened the market for learning and extended the notion of 'classroom' activities, resulting in greater scope for engagement. Retention and attrition is caused by a variety of personality, environmental, and organisational factors which may interact in complex ways but which are controllable. For learners who are upskilling, there is a link between job-satisfaction and productivity. Performance in a specific learning task can be improved by good quality information but the processing of such information reaches a critical level from which integrative complexity decreases. Attitudinal differences are observable within differing sociological generational frameworks of typified behaviours that are applicable to the concept of engagement in learning and workplace development.

Engagement in education is the shared experience of learning through the classroom context either in a virtual learning environment or the face-to-face context. As Checkoway (2013) states, engagement is different from, although may be related to, the scholarship of discovery, from pushing back the frontiers of knowledge, the integration of knowledge across disciplines and fields, or the application of knowledge to address societal issues (p. 9). As Kasworm and Abdrahim (2014) state engaged scholarship may take a variety of forms which include: service or eLearning, civic or community engagement, civic empowerment, public collaboration, the generation of knowledge, or meeting the needs of the community. Checkoway (2013) points out, that democracy requires citizens who have competencies which

include the acquisition of knowledge of public issues, civic values, the ability to think critically and to communicate effectively, to demonstrate cultural awareness, and to show responsibility toward society as well as for themselves (p. 10). Therefore, classes in technical education need a combination of factors to influence the development of new skills amongst learners. These include transitions through life phases, exploration of curricula and other work experience, including task related training, and throughout emphasising the benefit of student engagement (Loera et al., 2013, p. 175). As Loera suggests, predictors of engagement include: educational aspirations, perceived quality of academic program of study, the assessment of enrolment factors, and satisfaction with student life (2013, p. 177). Thus, according to Park it is not sufficient for Colleges and Universities to train students for technical competence, but rather what is required for personal and professional success is attention to the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes which support them throughout their lives also (2013, p. 46). The kinds of intellectual abilities (such as inquisitiveness, curiosity, patience) that permit people to become thoughtful members of society require a broad range of attitudes towards learning experiences (Park, 2013, p. 46) and these abilities should be encouraged to engage learners.

References:
Astin, A. (1984). ''Student involvement': a developmental theory for Higher Education,' *Journal of College Student Development*, 40 (5), 518-519.

Baker, B. H. (2010) 'Faculty Ratings of Retention Strategies for Minority Nursing Students.' *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 31 (4), 216-220.

Blumler, J. G. (1980). 'Information overload: Is there a problem?' *In Human aspects of telecommunication*, edited by E. Witte, (pp. 229–63). New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate.* Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Boyle, F., Kwon, J., Ross, C., and Simpson, O. (2010). 'Student–student mentoring for retention and engagement in distance education.' *Open Learning,* 25 (2), 115-130.

Brammer, L. R., and Morton, A. (2014). 'Course-based Civic Engagement: Understanding Student Perspectives and Outcomes.' *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 8 (1), 1-22.

Bryson, C. (Ed.) (2014). *Validating and Developing Student Engagement.* New York: Routledge.

Carroll, D., Ng, E., Birch, D. (2009). 'Retention and progression of postgraduate business students: an Australian perspective.' *Open Learning*, 24 (3), 197-209.

Checkoway, B. (2013). 'Strengthening the Scholarship of Engagement in Higher Education'. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement,* 17 (4), 7-21. Cross, P. (1981). *Adults as Learners.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Davies, R. and Elias, P. (2003). *Dropping out: a study of early leavers from Higher Education*. London: Department for Education and Skills.

Freudenberger, H. J. (1974). 'Staff burn-out'. *Journal of Social Issues*, 30 (1), 159-165.

Gilardi, S. and Guglielmetti, C. (2011). 'University Life of Non-Traditional Students: Engagement Styles and Impact on Attrition'. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 82 (1), 33- 53.

Greenwood, D. J. and Levin, M. (2005). 'Reform of the social sciences and of universities through action research'. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 43-64). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Heaton-Shrestha, C. (2009), 'Student retention in Higher education: What Role for Virtual Learning Environments?' *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 33 (1), 83-92.

Kasworm, C. E., and Abdrahim, N A B. (2014). 'Scholarship of Engagement and Engaged Scholars: Through the Eyes of Exemplars'. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 18 (2), 121-148.

Klapp, O. E. (1978). *Opening and closing: Strategies of information adaptation in society*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Kobeleva, P. and Strongman, L. (2012). *Research, Teaching and Learning: Pedagogy and Practice in the Open and Distance Learning Paradigm.* Florida, USA: BownWalker Press.

Kuh, G. (2001). 'Assessing what really matters to student learning'. *Change*, 33, 10-17.

Lai, S. L., Chang, J., and Yin Hsu, L. (2012). 'Does Effect of Workload on Quality of Work Life Vary With Generations?' *Asia Pacific Management Review*, 17 (4), 437-451.

Li, F., Qi, J., Wang, G., and Wang, X. (2014). 'Traditional Classroom VS E-learning in Higher Education: Difference between Students' *Behavioural Engagement*. *iJET*, (9) 2, 48-51.

Linsey, T., Katsifli, D. and Gipps, C. (2005). 'The costs and benefits of implementing a university wide VLE: some real data'. *Journal of Science Education* 6, 27–9.

Loera, G., Nakamoto, J., Joo Oh, Y., and Rueda, R. (2013). 'Factors that Promote Motivation and Academic Engagement in a Career Technical Education Context'. *Career and Technical Education Research*, 38 (3), 173-190.

Maslach, C., and Leiter, M. P. (2008). 'Early predictors of job burnout and engagement'. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93, 498-512.

Pace, R. (1982). 'Achievement and the Quality of Student Effort,' *Report of the Department of Education*, Washington, DC.

Park, S. W. (2013). The Potential of Web 2.0 Tools to Promote Reading Engagement in a General Education Course. *TechTrends*, 57 (2), 46-53.

Rhoads, R. A. and Rhoades, G. (2005). Graduate employee unionization as a symbol of and challenge to the corporatization of U. S. universities. *Journal of Higher Education*, 76 (3), 243-275.
Robinson, C. C., and Hullinger, H., (2008). New Benchmarks in Higher Education: Student Engagement in Online Learning. *Journal of Education for Business.* 84 (2), 101-108.

Schofield, C., and Dismore, H. (2010) 'Predictors of retention and achievement of higher education students within a further education context'. *Journal of Further and Higher Education.* 34 (2), 207-221

Schubert-Irastorza, C., and Fabry, D. L. (2014) Job Satisfaction, Burnout and Work Engagement in Higher Education: A Survey of Research and Best Practices. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching.* 7 (1),1-167.

Schullery, N. M. (2013). 'Workplace Engagement and Generational Differences in Values'. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 76 (2), 252-265.

Skorobohacz, C. 'Intersecting Roles: Tensions of Employee-Graduate Students' in Michael Kompf and Pamela M. Denicolo. (2013). (pp. 199-224). *Critical issues in Higher Education.* Dordrecht: Springer.

Smith, S. D., Salaway, G., and Caruso, J. B. (2009). 'The ECAR study of undergraduate students and information technology'. *Educause Center for Applied Research*, 6, 1-13.

Spector, P. E. (1997). *Job satisfaction: Application assessment, causes and consequences.* Thousand Oaks, CA; Sage Publications.

Tait, J. (2004). 'The tutor/ facilitator role in student retention'. *Open Learning* 19 (1), 97 - 109.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities: Exploring the educational character of student persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education, 68*(6), 599–623.

Van Saane, N., Sluiter, J. K., Verbeek, J. H. A. M., and Frings-Dresen, M. H. M. (2003). 'Reliability and validity of instruments measuring job satisfaction: A systematic review'. *Occupational Medicine*, 53 (3), 191-200.

Philosophy *of* Education Society *of* Australasia

PESA CONFERENCE 2014

Author name: Glenn Toh
University/institution/affiliation: Tamagawa University
Email address: glenn@lit.tamagawa.ac.jp
Title: Deconstructing Narratives of Acrimony as Acts of Resistance in Japanese Educational Institutions

Abstract:

In recent times, resistance narratives by non-Japanese educators registering opposition to inequitable or contradictory institutional practices involving Japanese educational establishments have actively sought to question: (1) institutional decision making and administrative (in)competency; (2) discrimination in the employment and deployment of non-Japanese educators; and (3) outmoded curricular and pedagogical practices. While these narratives engage dialogically with unfair, illogical, mendacious or even counter-educational practices, this paper addresses the worrying manner in which what may be called a discourse of acrimony appears to be emerging from them on a regular basis. To better understand the nature of this palpably combative form of engagement with the Japanese educational establishment, I will examine the published work of non-Japanese educators capturing the way they engage with issues arising from discriminatory policies and inequitable practices on the part of institutions concerned. In my discussion, I will note that such resistance narratives are not simply expressions of opprobrium to how ambivalent bureaucratic behavior can create an overall erosion of dignity through the dehumanization and disenfranchisement of those marginalized, but are also legitimate forms of democratic participation where the space for such participation continues to remain severely limited.

Keywords: Openness, Closedness, Discrimination, Dialogization

Knowledge of reality is essential for developing self-consciousness and a subsequent increase of knowledge. But if it's to be authentic, this act of knowing always requires the unveiling of its object. (Freire, 1985,   p. 168)

Openness has application in multiple areas of educational life and can serve as a principle for both lifelong learning and social organization. The optimal pursuit of openness in pedagogical settings…can be contrasted with various forms of closure, including dogmatism, excessive certainty, and an unreflective rejection of either the "old" or the "new". (Peters & Roberts, 2012, p. 44)

'[I]n seeking to preserve the past – retain cultural well-established cultural practices – there is never a "pure" reproduction of what has been learned from one generation to the next…[E]ven if we are closed in our attitudes, that which we preserve and transmit to others will always be "tainted" – mediated by the actions, words, thoughts, and social relations of those who participate in creating the present. Change, then, is a constant, but the question of openness arises when we examine the dispositions, practices, and structures that facilitate or impede certain kinds of change' (Peters & Roberts, 2012, p. 85)

INTRODUCTION

References to the importance of internationalization among Japanese politicians time and again draw attention to the presence of non-Japanese people who live and work on Japanese soil. Among this growing number of foreign residents often referred to as *gaikokujin* (literally, 'outsiders from other countries') are the non-Japanese educators working in Japan's educational institutions ranging from the ubiquitous English conversation schools to some of the country's most revered universities.

As one of these non-Japanese educators, I take and stake an interest in the ways non-Japanese educators have engaged with the cultural-political realities of their work situations alongside the way they negotiate the heavily ideology-laden foreigner subjectivities in the discursive spaces available to them. In this paper, I will explore the nature of these ideology-laden foreigner subjectivities through an examination of recurrent discourse patterns emerging from the published work of non-Japanese educators. In so doing, I hope into bring to greater prominence the nature of the struggles that these non-Japanese educators routinely face in their quest for equal treatment in terms of employment and deployment, which is in turn a part of a larger endeavor for human dignity and professional recognition as aliens making a living in a foreign country. In my time in Japan as an English teacher born

and bred in Southeast Asia and married to a Japanese national, I have, as part of my professional praxis, sought to think reflexively about the lived-realities of non-Japanese educators, many of whom have been in the country for much longer than my own eight years.

A DISCOURSE OF ACRIMONY

By discourses, I refer to the performative and socially contextualized ways ideologies and power relations are enacted, signified or materialized in textual and rhetorical practices (Edwards & Usher, 2000; Scollon & Scollon, 2003; van Leeuwen, 2008). Following van Leeuwen (2008) moreover, discourses provide an inroad to understanding social beliefs and practices through the way they are represented in text, suggesting that 'it is possible to reconstruct discourses from the texts that draw on them' (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 6). With regard to the present discussion, the discourses I seek to examine are necessarily critical ones in the way they set out to engage with dominant ideologies and institutionalized inequalities (Fairclough, 2012). To the large extent that these ideologies and inequalities impinge on matters concerning race and racism, my approach will also bear the elements of a critical race methodology (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Parker, 2003) that strategizes resistance to discrimination through counter-story writing (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). My discussion will also cover ideologies and histories behind non-Japanese educators' experiences of marginalization and alienation – particularly in how these ideologies and histories trace a discourse of acrimony.

What I call a discourse of acrimony (hereafter 'Acrimony') is characterized by the prevalence of dissent, pessimism, cynicism, adversarial narratives or renditions of resistance in the writings and counter-stories of non-Japanese educators. Uncovering the inner workings of Acrimony will help explain the ontological realities and subjectivities of these non-Japanese educators as well as the prevailing ideologies that lead to their marginalization and silencing. To do this, I will examine the published works of four non-Japanese educators (Worthington, 1999; Murphey, 2004; Rivers, 2013; McVeigh, 2003 & 2006) who have written (auto)ethnographies and autobiographies of their work experiences in Japanese institutions. Their works have been chosen for their different instantiations of Acrimony spanning a time period of some ten years. My intention is to surface for commentary instances of dissent, resistance, pessimism or even cynicism before making observations on how as enactments of Acrimony, they should also be understood as legitimate attempts to engage with prevailing institutional and societal beliefs and practices.

WHY FOREIGNERS?

The proverbial *gaikokujin* is both an Othered entity and an ideological project in Japan. By Othered entity, I mean that an overseas person living on Japanese soil is viewed not just in terms of her being an individual human being but also as a persona invoking and evoking presentiments of non-Japaneseness (McVeigh, 2003; Rivers, 2013; Worthington, 1999). Such a form of Othering is in turn part of a larger exclusivist-culturalist project of reifying 'Japaneseness' particularly through a popular genre of writing called *nihonjinron* which seeks to legitimate the Japanese as a pure, homogenous and unique race of people (Befu, 1984 & 2001; van Wolferen, 1993). The word 'foreigner' both carries racialized meanings and nationalistic antipathies in Japan where clear distinctions are made between people on the basis of whether they are local or foreign, Japanese or non-Japanese (Worthington, 1999; Befu, 2001; Masden, 2013). *Nihonjinron* writing as an expression of Japanese culturalism has commanded large followings especially in times of economic prosperity when Japan Inc. became symbolic of the stellar achievements of the nation's strongly symbiotic relationship between state and private business (Dower, 1999; van Wolferen, 1993).

For adherents of *nihonjinron* cosmology, to be Japanese is to have 'descended from "genetically" Japanese people who have lived on the Japanese islands and practiced Japanese culture' while 'those who have practiced Japanese culture are native speakers of Japanese' (Befu, 1984, p. 68). Thus, Befu (1984) notes that 'in the minds of Japanese the following equation holds: Japanese archipelago = genetic Japanese = Japanese culture = Japanese language' (Befu, 1984, p. 68). It has, however, been observed that such heightened feelings of uniqueness can be 'expressed in a very negative manner' in the way 'Japanese have…used their perceived uniqueness to justify all kinds of discrimination against both foreign nationals and products' (de Mente, 2005, p. 12). More importantly, *nihonjinron* beliefs in Japanese uniqueness have also been seen to have an insular effect on education policies and practices (Worthington, 1999), a matter I next explore.

THE ACRIMONY of EQUIVOCATION (or DUPLICITY): Worthington (1999)

'th' equivocation of the fiend that lies like truth' (Macbeth, V.v. 43-44)

Description of Situation

Worthington (1999) provides a counter-story that tells of different employment conditions for Japanese and non-Japanese educators in a prefectural university in Kyushu. It engages with matters arising from concerns over: (1) employing local and foreign educators under different contractual terms – where the locals were given tenure and full-time status but not the foreigners; (2) submitting an accreditation

application to the Education Ministry to seek approval for a new faculty using documents that led the Ministry into believing that the foreign educators were full-time staff when they were in fact employed as part-time irregular workers; (3) continuing to allocate full-timer workloads to these foreign educators while keeping them on part-time irregular contracts; (4) dismissing the foreign educators by terminating the one-year positions in which they were incumbents.

In response to (1), the foreign educators took legal advice which led to the formation of a union (Masden, 2013; Worthington, 1999) which subsequently fought (unsuccessfully) in the courts for the reinstatement of the non-Japanese educators affected by the termination of the positions. Moreover, when queried about (2), university administrators redefined the meaning of 'full-time' to mean that the non-Japanese educators were physically based 'full-time' at the university. Worthington (1999) called this an act of linguistic contortionism in their bid to explain away an act of misrepresentation. Subsequently, the issue of race also surfaced when the administration admitted to judging the teachers based on their un-Japanese looks (Worthington, 1999). This revelation came to light during a meeting between the aggrieved teachers and the university administrators, when similarity was drawn by the administrators between the un-Japanese looks of the foreign teachers and the Latin features of Wagner Lopes, a player on the Japanese national soccer team. Even though Lopes was a Japanese national, the administrators considered him un-Japanese on account of his facial features.

Acrimony

The non-Japanese teachers registered their objection to the following issues, as reported in Worthington (1999): (1) discriminatory employment practices including the way foreigners were, to use Worthington's term, 'ghettoized', through inferior employment conditions and replaced regularly with younger and fresher foreign faces; (2) the submission of documents that did not correctly represent the employment status of the non-Japanese teachers to obtain accreditation from the Ministry, in effect exploiting their qualifications and professional credentials; (3) the manipulative, equivocal and condescending manner of the university administrators including the university president and the casually dismissive way in which matters of racism were treated.

Bitter and acrimonious though the engagements were, important issues came to light in the throes of the court battle against the university and the prefecture. Worthington (1999) points out that up until the time of her writing at least, the laws of the land could not be totally depended upon by aggrieved parties like the teachers to seek redress. Their Japanese attorney advised them as early as 1996 to

put aside any hopes of relying on the law for relief from discriminatory employment practices, as the courts were known to be reluctant to challenge existing bureaucratic power structures and were in fact hostile to individual assertions of their rights to protection. Education bureaucracies were at the same time revealed to be unused to taking foreigners seriously as professionals or to being held accountable for their actions, whether reasonable or unreasonable. The 'good' coming out of the legal battle was that many Japanese people stood on principle and rallied behind the foreigners. Worthington (1999) notes that these were people who did not want to be implicated in the kind of injustice that involved what she termed as a sclerotic bureaucracy acting unfairly against vulnerable foreigners. Moreover, for these Japanese people, the shabby treatment of foreign teachers was also a matter that affected their children's education for internationalization and the promoting of a kinder discrimination-free environment.

Ending her article on a positive note, Worthington (1999) reports that at least one university responded positively to the publicity of the legal battle by deciding to employ foreign teachers on better terms. Writing some years later, McVeigh (2003) notes similarly that not all foreigners were hard done by inferior employment conditions. Some had in fact been given the opportunity to participate in administrative and committee work and some did get to attain fairly high positions with tenure, although not without other manifestations of Acrimony – as we will learn from Murphey (2004) in the following description.

The ACRIMONY of DISIDENTFICATION: Murphey (2004)

Indeed, to transform organizations that seem to have created their own worlds of meaning, unexpectedly critical and non-conformist points of view need to be recognized (Shahinpoor & Matt, 2007, p. 38)

Description of Situation

Murphey (2004) relates the writer's experience working in an entrance examination committee at an unnamed Japanese university. Unlike the situation described in Worthington (1999), the writer held an academic position at this particular university and taught Second Language Acquisition and Communication Psychology apart from doing teacher-training. Murphey (2004) mentions how many in-service teachers enjoyed his interactive classes but admitted that they could not use his methods because students had to be drilled for entrance examinations. Finding himself nominated to work on entrance examination committees for English, the writer's relates how he repeatedly attempted to suggest changes to the item banks. In particular, he had noticed that discrete point grammar and vocabulary items

compared badly with reading comprehension and listening items in terms of index of facility (IF) and index of discrimination (ID). The IF measured the number of correct responses to each question while the ID measured the number of top-scoring and low-scoring students who answered the questions correctly. Together, the IF and ID provided information about good and weak items. Murphey (2004) relates how he lobbied unsuccessfully to the administration to factor in IF and ID into the setting of entrance examinations.

Acrimony

After repeated occasions sitting on entrance committees where his suggestions for change were ignored, Murphey eventually retreated into a state of dis-identification, disillusionment and non-participation. Not wanting to compromise between what he saw as the discrepancy between good test-writing practices and institutional intransigence, he tendered his resignation when he was asked to chair an examination committee, registering his objections to practices he 'perceived as grossly unjust to Japanese youth, anti-educational, and damaging to Japanese society' (p. 707). The final resort to resignation came after the administrators refused to allow changes to the examination format or to disseminate valuable IF and ID data to other committee members. The reason given was that high schools had to be notified of changes to examination formats. Since examination committees were reshuffled every year, year-to-year changes in format were alleged to be 'impossible'.

Before finally accepting Murphey's resignation, however, the university introduced a new rule that excused foreigners from sitting on examination committees – and in so doing missing (actually dissimulating) the more fundamental problem of the quality of test items. The matter was instead treated reductively as one to do with the foreignness of the person who lobbied for the changes, ironically with the intention of promoting more valid testing practices to benefit Japanese test-takers.

The ACRIMONY of SILENCING: Rivers (2013)

Organizational fabrications are a way of eluding or deflecting direct surveillance.
(Ball, 2003, p. 225)

Description of Situation

Writing almost a decade later, Rivers (2013) problematizes similarly oppressive practices, this time concerning research and pedagogy. Rivers (2013) describes the situation in an English language center (the 'EC') of a Japanese university employing

native-speaker English teachers that enforced a strict English-only environment for its students and teachers. He relates how he and another colleague were advised by the center director to change their area of research interest because it questioned the fundamental assumptions behind an English-only teaching approach, something regarded by the EC administration as undermining institutional interest. They were also told by the EC director that they 'had overstepped the boundaries' of their native-speaker role (p. 85), which was interpreted monolithically to mean teaching using an English-only approach and being representatives of a foreign native-speaker culture. Rivers (2013) also took exception to the practice of using native-speakers as promotional tools, opportunistically exploiting the slippage between 'white native-speaker of English' and 'foreigner' to create a 'fashionable exotica' (Hall, 1998, cited in Rivers, 2013, p. 82) to attract students.

Acrimony

Native-speaker teachers were exploited for their foreignness and supposedly exotic looks. During promotional photo-taking sessions, they would be asked in an email to 'introduce more color into their shirts, ties, blouses and dresses' (Rivers, 2013, p. 81). For Rivers (2013), this demonstrated ignorance of 'the dehumanization of the process' that ultimately reduced the teachers 'to the role of designer mannequins' (p. 82). Moreover, when it came to academic matters, there were concerted attempts by the EC administration to censor creative research. Teachers who questioned the English-only policy and believed that the students' first language (i.e. Japanese) served as an effective tool to help them learn English were told to refrain from doing so. Rivers (2013) relates how he and his colleague, 'Steven', were asked to stop gathering data from EC teachers about the role of the students' first language in the English classroom. Rivers (2013) cites what 'Steven' had to say of their meeting with the EC director, whose ethical position is seriously called into question given the threatening manner of his warning:

> He…asked why I, with two young children and about to start a new position at a sister university, would want to publish this research and risk being fired for it. He said there were Japanese faculty members who would read the published paper and alert the chairman [of the university] and that as a result I could very well lose my job. ('Steven' cited in Rivers, 2013, p. 86).

Still more insidious was how the pressures applied by the EC director eventually meant that only a diluted version of the research findings were allowed to be published. The director's instructions were that the number of participants within the study had to be omitted in case it tallied with the staff numbers at the EC. The

researchers also had to include a decoy third author from a different university to reduce chances of the research being traced back to the EC (Rivers, 2013).

Bueno & Caesar (2003) make a relevant observation when they note that 'native English language teachers, foreigners all, can only comprehend themselves and their whole experience teaching…within the framework of a Japan that ultimately…imperils them…to explore the borders of shame when they try to speak of their experience' (p. 21). Rivers' (2013) account shows that threat and coercion can be resorted to as weapons to police conformity.

The ACRIMONY of TOKENIZATION: McVeigh (2003 & 2006)

The heart of the education project is gouged out and left empty. Authenticity is replaced entirely by plasticity (Ball, 2003, p. 225)

A dominant motif characterizing the experience of non-Japanese educators in Japanese tertiary education in the works of McVeigh (2003 & 2006) is that of playacting or theatricality. McVeigh (2003 & 2006) uses this motif to draw attention to irreconcilable differences between appearances (what is purported or pontificated as desirable for education or educational reform) and reality (dubious outcomes of anti-educational or unprofessional bureaucratic conduct). In his critiques, McVeigh describes the manipulative, mendacious and theatricalized behavior of administrators out to frustrate reform and creativity to preserve the status quo, strongly reminiscent of the descriptions of dogmatism, excessive certainty, smugness, closedness and refusal to change captured in the epigraphs (Peters & Roberts, 2012) to this paper.

In the following section, I offer a final example of Acrimony where the foreign educator involved is left powerless when he refuses to playact the para-realities of pretend education (McVeigh, 2006), foisted on him by the system. The difference (and dark irony) here is that the educator involved possesses Japanese ancestry and occupies a high position in the institution concerned.

Description of Situation

McVeigh (2006) relates the case of a Japanese-American specialist in Japanese education. 'Professor Harada' (pseudonym) was appointed to be the Vice-President of a newly configured university, 'Amadera Women's University' (pseudonym), which was once a two-year college that underwent major reform set off by low standards and falling enrolments. As part of the reform initiative, drastic measures were taken. American-style GPA was introduced alongside a new semester system.

Professors from the two-year college were also demoted in a bid to raise professional standards.

An important factor in Harada's appointment was his appearance. Harada's Japanese looks and Japanese ancestry were very important to his color-conscious employers. It signaled to them that 'he was considered "really" Japanese enough' (p. 131) to assume the high appointment and deal with the bureaucrats in the Central Administration, many of whom were resistant to reform. In his second year, Harada was promoted to President. However, by the third semester, Harada had 'resigned'. McVeigh (2006) reveals how Harada was actually forced out of his position 'due to frustration, "bashing" by the Central Administration, and management's constant sabotage of his reform efforts' (p. 131), including ignoring the bylaws that he and some faculty members had written.

Harada's notion of higher education as a genuinely academic endeavor meant to him that the demoted professors who sought reinstatement would have to become more academically productive. The demoted professors (and their union), in contrast, saw things differently. For them, reinstatement was not a matter of scholarship but a matter of entering into negotiations with the administration. Reinstatement was less of an academic matter and more of an administrative or bureaucratic one. Harada refused to go along with the different manifestations of anti or para-real education. His explanation of his resignation invoked the theatricality and para-reality of role playing when he said that he refused to play the role of a 'symbolic president'.

Acrimony

The significance of the motif of playacting – besides sustaining a discourse of acrimony – lies in the way non-Japanese can be tokenized by being forced to play symbolic non-functional roles. Hired as tokenized or commodified forms or as window-dressing for "internationalization" purposes, there is a general disinterest in their potential to contribute professionally (McVeigh, 2006). In Harada's case, the bureaucrats from the university's administrative core were bent on upholding old institutional structures and undermining his efforts: 'More than once, President Harada complained that the Director of Administration was not doing his assigned task for the Strategic Plan' (McVeigh, 2006, p. 135). While we are told that this Director and his Associate 'did at least sit through para-real Planning and Resources Committee meetings', both of them 'ignored the President's repeated request to contribute to the discussion, passively staring down at the table when the President asked for their opinion' (McVeigh, 2006, p. 135).

Despite the fact that his Japanese looks factored highly in his appointment, McVeigh (2006) vividly relates how Harada, gallant as he was in his attempts at reform, was never truly taken seriously by the university bureaucrats. His spontaneity of thought and action was quickly attributed to his Americaness that quickly relegated him to outsider status:

> Innocent, even generous acts were regarded as attempts to undermine the administrative core…when President Harada threw a small cheese and wine party for the faculty and staff an administrator at the Daigaku [university] complained the staff had to "prepare and clean up"…A closer analysis revealed that the real issue was how the President had circumvented the Daigaku's exchange circuitry…by financing the party with his own funds, the President's kindness threatened the administrator's "control over the budget." (McVeigh, 2006, p. 141)

Seeing no way forward, Harada had no choice but to leave.

ACRIMONY AS A RESPONSE TO BULLYING AND SUPPRESSION OF VOICE

The struggles highlighted in the above critiques may not be widely appreciated in circles outside Japan possibly for reasons to do with Japan's skilful management of international relations, public image (Hall, 1998), and its status as a wealthy and gracious country playing lead roles in scientific, entrepreneurial and philanthropic endeavors. Accusations of discrimination are quickly explained away by counter-accusations of arrogance or cultural imperialism on the part of the foreign critics (van Wolferen, 1993). Allegations of unfair actions are cleverly accounted for by culturalist pleadings that such actions are part of Japanese culture which foreigners are said to have no way of understanding (van Wolferen, 1993; Hall, 1998). Such culturalist explanations are mobilized as a power strategy targeted at the silencing of foreign critics: "'Culture' is, in fact, working overtime to explain the motives of every Japanese under all circumstances' (van Wolferen, 1993, p. 322).

Ijime versus Aisatsu

Behind this cultural façade of graciousness and material sophistication, however, are rather uglier aspects of human relations none so well epitomized as in a longstanding culture of bullying (*ijime*) and intimidation (van Wolferen, 1993; de Mente, 2005; Sugimoto, 2010) of the weak or inferior, and those who are deemed not to be in conformity to prescribed majoritarian norms. It has been noted that '[i]ntimidation is an unavoidable and omnipresent characteristic of Japanese society' (van Wolferen, 1993, p. 452) while bullying 'mirror[s] the way in which the pressures

of conformity and ostracism operate in work environments and the community at large' (Sugimoto, 2010, p. 147). The Acrimony in the educators' critiques draw public attention to different manifestations of *ijime* while registering the foreign educators' abhorrence of and dis-identification with such behavior. Their critiques can, in this sense, be also read as conscious acts of engaging with inconsistencies and contradictions lacerating society at large (Mayo, 2008) by '[i]ntellectuals of good conscience' (Peters and Roberts, 2008, p. 112) voicing matters of public and societal interest.

Concerning societal interest, moreover, part of the educators' frustrations (and the Acrimony thereof), can be traced to what McVeigh (2002) highlights as a noticeable absence of a 'culturally sanctioned public sphere where individual's opinions, interests, or self may be expressed readily' (p. 131). Such expressions of opinion would be consistent with the reasonable expectation that 'educational practitioner[s] cannot avoid the exercise of professional discretion, where this may even require refusal to conform to managerial expectations or directives' (Olssen, Codd & O'Neill, 2004, p. 195). Taking the place of this vacuum is a proliferation of politeness practices and civilities observable in *aisatsu* 'which covers an entire range of sociolinguistic practices from perfunctory greetings to complex ceremonials' (McVeigh, 2002, p. 122). According to McVeigh (2002), *aisatsu*, particularly in its effuse and theatricalized forms of politeness, creates a society where people are expected to perform 'social roles enacted through etiquette practices' to the extent that 'politeness erects walls between individuals' (p. 126).

Politetism as Weapon and Barrier

Effuse politeness and the barriers it erects become agents of silencing in intellectual, political and common spaces. From the standpoint of foreign educators, such 'politetism' or elaborate practices of civility can be oppressive in the way they silence genuine bids to engage with institutional and societal realities. At the height of the Worthington court case, the university president is seen coming across nonchalantly as treating the whole debacle as a matter of cultural misunderstanding if only the foreigners could understand the non-confrontatory nature of Japanese culture (Worthington, 1999). 'Politetism' in this sense becomes a politicized inundation and saturation of institutional spaces with strategized and choreographed clichés and civilities devoid of substance or meaning. Such voidance in communication invariably forestalls purposeful dialogue, critique and exploration of meanings, replacing them with hackneyed and scripted form(alities) emptied of any potential to generate deeper thought and shared knowledge creation.

Recalling earlier discussion on *nihonjinron*, politetism as the frontage and *sine qua non* of *ninhonjinron's* culturalist ideology, is a key weapon in any charm offensive aimed at silencing or placating criticism. After all, the flipside of polite ingratiation to one's good books is a sycophantic appeal to one's reticence, not to mention a hidden taunt to withhold one's honest counsel – all in a demeanor of measured bows and exquisite civility. Van Wolferen (1993) notes that:

> [t]he culturalist explanation is found everywhere one turns for enlightenment…In its context, the basic determinants of Japanese socio-political life are implicitly placed outside the boundaries of scrutiny and criticism…And when culture is brought into the discussion, it is expected that all contentious argument should cease. (van Wolferen, 1993, p. 323)

Such an observation is, moreover, corroborated by the fact that *aisatsu* is *not* an innocent depoliticized phenomenon of exquisiteness or time-honored cultural tradition (as might be assumed) but actually a lubricant of politicized socio-economic relations and structures that plug into the country's modernist statist capitalist machinery (McVeigh, 2002) – of which foreigners are given scarcely a part (Hall, 1998). While Japanese cultural commentators continue insisting 'that professional barriers to foreigners…are of a culturally determined and therefore virtually intractable nature', these barriers are in reality the 'product of specific ordinances and historical decisions of relatively recent provenance and consequently reversible, given political will and courage' (Hall, 1998, p. 174). Indeed, the more proficient a foreigner becomes in matters of politetism and *aisatsu*, the more it is viewed as intrusiveness and presumption.

CONCLUSION

Bueno & Caesar (2003) draw attention to the silencing and suppression of non-Japanese voices in Japanese public and professional spaces when they make the following call: 'We don't need more theories. We need more stories' not least because 'the whole of professional discourse is founded upon silence about things that can't be mentioned' (p. 24). In this paper, I have sought to respond to this clarion call, by providing stories that mention the unmentionable given the general lack of amenability to constructive engagement in institutional spaces.

The forms of engagement highlighted in this discussion and the discourses of acrimony they enact are not just remonstrations of objection or opprobrium against unfair practices on the part of the institutions concerned. Seen as appellations of hope for greater openness on the part of the Japanese hosts and employers, they are valid and concerted attempts at engaging powerful ideologies and social

histories that foist upon non-Japanese educators subaltern and marginalized subjectivities from which they must rightly seek some dignity of relief. One can only hope that these appellations will be met with greater openness rather than with platitudes, politetisms, culturalist explanations or equivocating answers.

References

Ball, S. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, *18*(2), 215-228.

Befu, H. (2001). *Hegemony of homogeneity.* Melbourne, Australia: Transpacific Press.

Befu, H. (1984). Civilization and culture: Japan in search of identity. *Senri Ethnological Studies,* 16, 59-75.

Bueno, E & Caesar, T. (2003). Introduction: absence, shame and comedy. In E. Bueno & T. Caesar (Eds.), *I wouldn't want anybody to know: native English teaching in Japan* (pp. 14-29). Tokyo, Japan: JPGS Press.

de Mente, B. (2005). *Japan unmasked: the character and culture of the Japanese.* Tokyo, Japan: Tuttle.

Dower, J. (1999). *Embracing defeat: Japan in the wake of World War Two*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

Edwards, R. & Usher, R. (2000). *Globalization and pedagogy: Space, place and identity.* London, England: Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (2012). Critical discourse analysis. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 9-20). London, England: Routledge.

Freire, P. (1985). *The politics of education: Culture, power, and liberation.* Westport, Connecticut, CT: Bergin and Garvey.

Hall, I. (1998). *Cartels of the mind: Japan's intellectual closed shop*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1999) Just what is Critical Race Theory and what's it doing in a *nice* field like education? In L. Parker, D. Deyhle & S. Villenas (Eds.), *Race is…race isn't: Critical Race Theory and qualitative studies in education* (pp. 7-30). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Masden, K. (2013). Kumamoto General Union vs. the Prefectural University of Kumamoto: Reviewing the decision rendered by the Kumamoto District Court. In S. Houghton & D. Rivers (Eds.), *Native-speakerism in Japan: intergroup dynamics in foreign language education* (pp. 42-59). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.

Mayo, P. (2008). Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire: some connections and contrasts. In C. A. Torres & P. Noguera (Eds.), *Social justice education for teachers: Paulo Freire and the possible dream* (pp. 51-68). Rotterdam, Holland: Sense.

McVeigh, B. (2002). *Aisatsu*: Ritualized politeness as sociopolitical and economic management in Japan. In R. Donahue (Ed.), *Exploring Japaneseness: on Japanese enactments of culture and consciousness* (pp. 121-136). London, England: Ablex.

McVeigh, B. (2003). Performing the part of the English teacher: the role of the anthropologist and the anthropologist of roles in Japan. In E. Bueno & T. Caesar (Eds.), *I wouldn't want anybody to know: native English teaching in Japan* (pp. 134-146). Tokyo, Japan: JPGS Press.

McVeigh, B. (2006). *The state bearing gifts: deception and disaffection in Japanese higher education.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Murphey, T. (2004). Participation, (dis)identification, and Japanese university entrance exams. *TESOL Quarterly*, *38*(4), 700-710.

Olssen, M., Codd, J. & O'Neill, A. (2004). *Education policy: globalization, citizenship and democracy – markets, professionalism, trust.* London: Sage.

Parker, L. (2003) Critical race theory in education: Possibilities and problems. In M. Peters, C. Lankshear & M. Olssen (Eds.), *Critical theory and the human condition* (pp. 184-198). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Peters, M. & Roberts, P. (2008). *Neoliberalism, higher education and research.* Rotterdam, Holland: Sense.

Peters, M. & Roberts, P. (2012). *The virtues of openness: education, science, and scholarship in the digital age.* Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Rivers, D. J. (2013). Institutionalized native-speakerism: voices of dissent and acts of resistance. In S. Houghton & D. Rivers (Eds.), *Native-speakerism in Japan: intergroup dynamics in foreign language education* (pp. 75-91). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.

Scollon, R. & Scollon, S. (2003). *Discourses in place: language in the material world.* London, England: Routledge.

Shahinpoor, N. & Matt, B. (2007). The power of one: dissent and organization life. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 74, 37-48.

Solorzano, D. & Yosso, T. (2002) Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *8*(23), 23-44.

Sugimoto, Y. (2010). *An introduction to Japanese society*. Melbourne, Australia: Cambridge University Press.

van Leeuwen, T. (2008). Discourse and practice: new tools for critical discourse analysis. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

van Wolferen, K. (1993). *The enigma of Japanese power*. Tokyo, Japan: Charles Tuttle.

Worthington, C. (1999). Combating discrimination at a Japanese university. *JPRI Working Paper,* 58. Retrieved from http://www.jpri.org/publications/workingpapers/wp58.html

PESA CONFERENCE 2014

Author name: Raymond Aaron Younis
University/institution/affiliation: University of Notre Dame (Sydney)
Email address: raymond.younis@nd.edu.au
Title: The Eucaimonian Question: Virtue, Ethics, Neuroscience and Higher Education

Abstract:
Many philosophies of engagement build upon pedagogical, metaphysical, epistemological and ethical frameworks, particularly Virtue Ethics frameworks. However, a glance at the literature suggests that there are many debates about the nature, meaning, value and application of such things.

In this paper, I will look at some recent empirical work (particularly in neuroscience) on virtues. I will argue that not only do such (empirical) studies enrich and deepen our understanding of virtues and indeed of virtue ethics; when combined with a reinterpretation of some key parts of virtue ethics, drawn from Aristotle, it may be possible to respond coherently to some well-known "misgivings" about virtue ethics (and indeed its range of possible applications in education), namely that
1)   'the previous history of virtue-educational initiatives does not augur well for the prospects of future ones';
2)   'the study of virtue and character lacks a clear empirical methodology';
3)   'we know very little about the impact of previous interventions in this field.' (Kristjánsson, 2013)

It may also make possible a more cogent explanation of the place of eudaimonia in modern (higher) education.

Keywords: (Limit 6 keywords): Virtue, virtue ethics, compassion, neuroscience, *eudaimonia*

Although the philosophical literature on compassion (that is, in the western philosophical tradition), and especially on the connection between compassion and

virtue, is relatively scant, there has been much work done recently on compassion and its neuroscientific correlates or on neuroscience and various aspects of our affective and rational lives (see, for example, Corn, 2014; Condon, Desbordes, Miller and DeSteno, 2013; Bernhardt and Singer, 2012; Brown, Brown and Penner, 2012; Cozolino, 2012; Della Sala and Anderson, 2012; Brockman, 2011; Porges, 2011; Goodman, 2009; Racine, 2010; and Rolls, 2012; among many others). It will be argued here that compassion can reasonably be numbered among the virtues (for at least three or four reasons); that recent studies in neuroscience focussing on compassion as a virtue raise some significant implications in relation to our understanding of compassion, and by extension, of virtue; and that these approaches can help us to meet some significant reservations concerning virtue ethics and education in the 21st century. Neuroscientists have certainly shown significant interest in compassion, and in compassion as a virtue, recently. These studies have shown some surprising things. But before considering some of these things it is important to clarify the relationship between compassion and virtue.

II

On Compassion

Certainly, we speak conventionally of compassion in terms of a kind of participation in suffering, or in terms of a fellow-feeling or a bond of sympathy. In this sense, compassion awakens in us a sense of sorrow or pity for the suffering or pain or misfortune of another. On these levels it is not obviously a virtue, not in the sense of 'hexis', a robust or relatively stable habit, and certainly not in the sense of virtues as dispositions, or traits, not mere feelings or bonds. We also speak conventionally of sorrowful emotions, even pity that disposes us towards care or succour; and it in senses such as these presumably that experimenters see an analogy between a virtue and compassion, for the latter is a disposition in a sense and it is also a state (one can *be* compassionate, *feel* compassion and be disposed towards *doing* compassionate things, again and again).

Compassion on a conventional understanding refers not just to a moral quality but also to a trait - a quality that may be seen as distinctive, especially in relation to character. So for example, if one regards a person as 'compassionate' in this kind of context, and one is correct, one does not believe that the person is compassionate only when it suits them or their own purposes, or when it serves their own inclinations; one believes that the person is compassionate in numerous situations and at many times – they are not 'compassionate' on Sunday afternoons alone! In other words, a genuinely compassionate person is one who manifests this quality in the same kind of way that a person would manifest a courageous or just disposition; it just helps to make up the sort of character virtue ethicists have in mind when they describe someone as virtuous.

One can extend the analogy (between compassion and moral courage as a virtue, for example) further in at least two ways: like moral courage or justice,

compassion can be regarded reasonably as an expression of moral excellence, or in short as a form of *arete* (even though Aristotle did not include it among the Cardinal Virtues) since it can be construed as a trait or disposition, and since it can be a mark of moral excellence (so, for example, in a state of war, a compassionate response to prisoners of war would conceivably be preferable to a response that is not compassionate, speaking very generally, and in this context it could be argued that the genuinely compassionate soldier - in the sense for example, of a soldier who is acting in ways that express a desire to alleviate rather than multiply pain and suffering - is closer to moral excellence, understood as excellence in performing a function that is associated with a certain activity that us guided by reason and oriented towards some good, such as *eudaimonia)*; in other words, this quality or disposition could conceivably be a mark of excellence or distinction in a moral agent. Further, it is possible to relate compassion to flourishing, if we understand flourishing in the Aristotelian sense, namely as a kind of extended realisation of functions carried out well or excellently and activities which are deliberated upon rationally and carried out in the light of virtue.

After Aristotle and Aquinas, compassion could be considered a virtue in the sense of being also a habit that produces good deeds (where "good" means pursued in the light of reason, ministering to the nobler functions of a being, such as a soldier or a carpenter, and so on, and promotes a humane or *eudaimonian* end). It is a habit in the sense of being not just a relatively stable thing, not just a part of someone's being, but a trait or power that can be converted into or expressed through, activity, and over and over again. So, for example, one might feel pity or a desire to ease another's pain and suffering. One who feels this way, orients their lives in this direction, so to speak, repeatedly, if not always, and on that basis helps the person who is suffering or in pain in a way that helps them to recover, is manifesting a virtue such as compassion. But the crucial point here is that it is compassion and deliberation, or rational reflection on compassion that offers numerous possibilities in the light of the philosophical analysis and evaluation of compassion in relation to virtue.

In this context, there is a teleological point that ought not be forgotten: if we assume that some rational persons, at least, are capable of feeling compassion; if we assume that some such beings, at least, are also capable of reflecting or deliberating upon the idea or concept and the feeling of compassion, and more broadly, the nature of compassion itself, and in turn, on the connection between compassion and activities which are in accordance with such emotions (for example, sparing and/or caring for someone who needs help) then it would follow that compassion and virtue could conceivably be connected in a number of ways - certainly in ways that would be recognisable to the virtue ethicist.

The habit or trait here and the ability to deliberate rationally upon it (and in turn on one's own activity) would be teleological in the sense that it could conceivably

promote flourishing not just in oneself but also in the one who is helped in these kinds of ways (where "flourishing" means in Aristotelian terms, the practise of virtue regularly or repeatedly or consistently, and in deliberative and carefully considered ways). The habit or trait and rational deliberation upon it, could entail an activity that is taken out of the sphere of mere potentiality, that is, if you like, taken out of the sphere of one's own feelings and emotions - or part of the fabric, metaphorically speaking, of one's own being - and one's own affective states, and into the sphere of one's thought, function and activity; and as a corollary, into the sphere of interpersonal relations. (So, for example, a soldier who takes compassion upon an injured, captured, enemy combatant who is also defenceless, and does not stop there, that is, the soldier actively exercises a range of their functions as a soldier, for example, helping the injured or protecting the defenceless, and carry out activities that are rationally considered, or deliberated upon, in this light, in the name of caring for the other, would be manifesting a habit or a trait or, indeed, a form of efficacy, that would not necessarily be inconsistent with the practise of virtue or the function of a virtuous being).

One of the thinkers who defends compassion in relation to virtue is Martha Nussbaum. She recognises its meaning and value within an ethical life (and indeed defends it as an integral part of an ethical vision and as part of the culture of just institutions, so that institutions and states, not just citizens, can help those who are in need, in *Upheavals of Thought)* - in her account, this is part of 'being able to live with and toward others' just as it plays a significant part in 'the social bases of self-respect' (Nussbaum, 1996, p.417) Thinking about compassion as a virtue is important according to her account not just because it promotes a virtuous, ethical life, but also because it highlights the connection between a person and a community. In her words:

> First, compassion, in the philosophical tradition, is a central bridge between the individual and the community; it is conceived of as our species' way of hooking the interests of others to our own personal goods. It would therefore be a good thing to think hard about the structure of this moral sentiment, so that we might understand better how to produce it and how to remove obstacles to it.

> Second, some modern moral theories — liberal and individualist moral theories in particular — have treated compassion as an irrational force in human affairs, one that is likely to mislead or distract us when we are trying to think well about social policy. (I shall give some examples of this below.) Once again, it would behoove us to scrutinize this claim by investigating the structure of compassion. I shall argue that such an investigation will

undermine the simple dismissal of the emotion and will show it to be based on thought and evaluation.

Third, this simple opposition between emotion and reason has also been invoked by communitarian critics of liberalism, who have suggested that if we are to make room for sentiments such as compassion, which do not seem to be much honored in liberal theory, this will mean basing political judgment upon a force that is affective rather than cognitive, instinctual rather than concerned with judgment and thought.2 The analysis of compassion for which I shall argue will undermine that claim as well, by showing that compassion is, above all, a certain sort of thought about the well-being of others. The upshot of this will be to show that a certain type of objection to the project of the Enlightenment fails, and that Enlightenment thinkers (such as Kant and John Rawls) who do not give this emotion a central place could do so without altering very much in the substance of their moral theories. If we want a compassionate community, we can have one without sacrificing the Enlightenment's commitment to reason and reflection—because compassion is a certain sort of reasoning. (Nussbaum, 1996, p.27)

This is an important passage and it deserves careful consideration (though the level of detail required is beyond the scope of this paper); first it should be said that in the virtue ethics tradition which Nussbaum is presumably alluding to as part of the broader 'philosophical tradition', it is not just compassion that 'is a central bridge between the individual and the community'; the possibility of that kind of bridge requires not just compassion as an emotion, but a *rational element* (as Aristotle would have it, for example, in Book 1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*), that is to say, rational deliberation on compassion, its nature, meaning and the possibilities it open up into our understanding of individuals (and their habits, traits and dispositions), not to mention the nature, meaning and the possibilities of communities in themselves and in relation to individuals. This point is not a point of disagreement to be sure; it is a point of clarification and elaboration. If the point is valid, then it would therefore be a good thing to deliberate not just on the structure of such a moral sentiment, but also the structure of its relevance and possible and actual applications to persons, communities, institutions, habits, dispositions and activity, so that we might understand not just how we can better produce it and how better we can remove obstacles to it, but also how we can understand more deeply the vital bond, if that is what it is, between compassion, persons and communities.

     Second, Nussbaum's critique of modern moral theories ('liberal and individualist moral theories in particular') which have represented compassion 'as an irrational force in human affairs, one that is likely to mislead or distract us' when we are 'trying to think well', is a cogent one. It needs to be said however that it is not

sufficient to investigate the "structure of compassion" alone. Nussbaum argues that compassion is 'based on thought and evaluation', but this proposition is not just ambiguous, it is also a little vague. It might mean that thought and evaluation are required at a fundamental level in order for compassion to arise; or it might mean that without thought and evaluation compassion cannot become manifest; or it might mean that compassion *emerges from* (and only from?) thought and evaluation. But even if one grants all of these interpretations, they do not seem to be self-evident or true. For example, if thought and evaluation are required at a fundamental level in order for compassion to arise, how can compassion emerge or be expressed on an affective level (rather that at the level of reasoning or deliberation)? It is *logically* conceivable, at the very least, that we can feel compassion without thought or evaluation. For example, one can reach out to someone else without thinking about this (for example, we just feel for them, so to speak, and we need not know why or how) - in this sense, compassion is a feeling that orients us towards others who are suffering and the relation that emerges can be defined in an affective rather than in a reflective or thoughtful way. (This is not to say that it is thoughtless, to be sure, but it is primarily a matter of feeling not a matter of having ideas or concepts and being conscious of these, or of having these.)

This distinction is important: we can feel compassion in one context (we are just moved to tears, for example, and it is the fact that we are moved in this kind of way that really defines the encounter, at least initially, one that can be authentic and characterised by a visceral or an affective connection with another person). Thought and evaluation, of course, can take place generally and perhaps subsequently, that is, after the initial experience (affective or visceral, for example) but the temporal, logical and empirical order of the elements that comprise such connections or affections would need more careful analysis, elucidation and attention here. One might say that the affective experience occurs and thought and evaluation *may or may not* accompany it (it is sometimes difficult to say, even in controlled conditions) - or these may follow from that experience. In any case, it cannot be assumed logically that feelings and ideas, for example, are the same things. It is important to observe the distinction between the affective or visceral nature of the experience and the nature of the rational deliberation that accompanies or follows; the order in which the elements unfold becomes crucial. Though Nussbaum's attempt to undermine the 'simple dismissal of the emotion' is an important and valid one, strictly speaking, she does not show either logically, temporally or empirically, that compassion is *generally* or *always* 'based upon' thought and evaluation. What is required then is an investigation of the 'structure of compassion' certainly, but also a detailed, nuanced and careful investigation of the structure of the connections between compassion, feeling, reason, thought and evaluation. This point does not require the assumption that there is a 'simple opposition between emotion and

reason' either; it is granted that emotion and reason can be related, possibly or actually.

Three questions arise here though: first, it is important to establish what it means to say that they are related, if they are; second, it is important to establish whether or not they are always related or related generally; third, it is important to establish the nature of this relation or connection and whether or not it is *necessary and sufficient.* The relation itself needs to be set out in various clear ways (for example, logically, temporally and empirically). In other words, Nussbaum needs to show clearly and rigorously that compassion *is* 'a certain sort of reasoning'. It is possible to argue that in some situations and in some contexts compassion, in logical terms, is a feeling and not a 'certain sort of reasoning' (the phrase is vague, it must be said, but in some senses there is an important *logical* distinction between feeling and emotion on the one hand, and reasoning, on the other hand, as for example, the well-known fallacy of appealing to emotion illustrates).

These difficulties can be illustrated in the following way: for example, I may be moved to tears at the sight of a suffering child and I may feel pity or sorrow for them quite intensely; in that moment it is not at all self-evident that I am reasoning about the child who is suffering nor am I reasoning about the fact that I am standing there looking at a child suffering. I weep and the tears just keep falling. In this situation, logical questions arise, for example, concerning the distinction between reasoning and feeling; epistemological questions arise, for example, concerning whether or not we can know for certain that someone is feeling compassion and in some sense going though a 'certain sort of reasoning' (no pun intended!); metaphysical questions also arise, for example, concerning the existence of these putative (interior) states and their specific ontology and teleology. If 'evaluating' means rationally assessing or reflecting upon what is in front of me, it is by no means obvious or clear, in logical terms, that when one feels compassion towards another person there is some kind of identity or relation between this feeling and the process or *activity* of evaluating – there are questions that arise here especially in phenomenological, logical and epistemic terms, among others.

One may say in response that all of this does not mean that I am not drawing on reasoning, in some sense, when I feel compassion; but this counter-claim is open to an objection, namely, that compassion in this context is not (self-evidently at least) presumably the same thing, logically, as thinking about compassion, feeling compassion, thinking about feeling compassion, or evaluating the fact that I am feeling compassion and some sort of connection with another person. In this context, it is difficult to see any kind of (logical, at least) identity between compassion and 'a certain sort of reasoning', in the sense that reasoning involves, generally, such things as propositions, premises and conclusions; syllogisms and chains of inference; deductive, inductive and analogical forms of thinking; and so on. It would sound not a little odd to assert, logically, that compassion *just is essentially*,

or *is fundamentally*, or *is generally*, comprised of such things as propositions, premises and conclusions; syllogisms and chains of inference; deductive, inductive and other forms of rational thinking. (This is not to claim of course that compassion and reasoning are not related at all; as stated earlier, the logical, temporal and empirical elements that comprise the structure of any such possible or actual relation would need to be set out clearly, rigorously and demonstratively.)

III

On compassion, virtue and neuroscience

In an important study, Helen Weng and her team (2013) report that young adults were taught to engage in compassion meditation (a form of meditation derived from an ancient Buddhist technique of increasing compassion, that is, a feeling of care or concern, for others who are suffering). The investigators are interested in the link between compassion and selfless (altruistic) behaviour. They note that relatively little is known about our ability to develop compassion through education or training. They looked at the question of whether compassion can be developed systematically, that is whether or not "short-term compassion training" can increase altruistic behaviour and whether or not individual differences in such behaviour can be linked to changes brought about by training (that is changes in neural responses to examples of suffering).

They found that in healthy men and women, 'compassion training' increased their (altruistic) redistribution of money from an available pool of funds to a person who had been treated unfairly – a 'victim' they encounter after training. The investigators asked participants to think of someone who has suffered and then wish that this suffering is overcome. By repeating sentences (like *may you be free from suffering)* and practising this with people they know and love, friends and family members or colleagues. This 'compassion training' is given to two groups, including a control group that had also been taught 'cognitive reappraisal', a technique which allows them to learn how to alter their thinking so as to generate more positive emotions.

A 'Redistribution Game' is involved in which the subjects can choose to give money to those who need assistance; each plays this game on the World Wide Web with two other unidentified players known as 'the Dictator' and 'the Victim'; 'The Dictator' gives an unjust sum of money (for example, a small fraction of $20.00) to 'the Victim', and the observer would decide how much of their own funds to give (for example, a fraction of $5.00) to 'the Victim', so that the injustice could be addressed. The investigators found that those who had been trained in compassion, so to speak, were actually more likely to give their money and for seemingly selfless reasons (in the sense of not expecting recognition or reward for their activity) to those whom they thought deserved this. The investigators also found that they were

more likely to give this money away than the others who had been taught 'cognitive reappraisal'.

The investigators studied changes, before and after, in the brains of these subjects (for example, those who had given more money in the game) using functional MRI. In other tests, subjects would see images of suffering (such as a distressed child) and feel compassion by making use of the techniques they had been taught. The images would also be shown to the control group in order to try and form positive responses ('cognitive reappraisal'). The investigators found a correlation between unselfish (altruistic) behaviour (after compassion training) and increased changes in the brains of these subjects when they looked upon images of suffering; in particular, they identify increased evidence of activity in the inferior parietal cortex (which they point out is associated with empathy and an understanding of the responses of other subjects), in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, and its connection to the nucleus accumbens (these are brain regions and circuits which they point out are active in the regulation of emotions, such as compassion and the desire to help others).

So, it seems possible to train subjects in compassion; it is possible to make subjects more aware of their own emotional landscape so to speak, to help them regulate their own responses and also be more aware of the suffering of others and the injustice or unfairness that may be part of the witnessed situation. The investigators argue that these outcomes suggest that compassion can be developed through targeted training and that more selfless (or altruistic) behaviour can be brought about by significant changes in neural systems which are associated with our understanding of the suffering of others, the regulation of emotions and the dynamics of reward (and, by extension, punishment). (A logico-critical account of the assumed identity of selflessness and altruism is beyond the scope of this paper.)

In other studies which reinforce or complement such findings (but whose content is outside the scope of this paper), O.M. Klimecki, S. Leiberg, C. Lamm and T. Singer (2013) found that 'compassion training' increases positive emotions even at those times at which subjects witness others suffering. The findings suggest that once compassion is developed or taught (further), new coping strategies become possible that engender positive emotions. In a 2014 study, Klimecki, Leiberg, Ricard and Singer found that 'compassion training' is associated with increased activity in a 'non-overlapping brain network spanning the ventral striatum, pregenual anterior cingulate cortex and medial orbitofrontal cortex' (p.1). In short, it seems that teaching compassion may constitute a strategy of coping in which empathic distress can be overcome by positive affect. Empathy and its neural correlates have been studied by many neuroscientists, including B.C. Bernhardt and T. Singer. (An analysis of the logical and empirical relation between compassion, empathy and deep affect is also beyond the scope of this immediate paper).

_____

IV

Compassion, neuroscience, virtue and ethics: some misgivings addressed

Kristjánsson (2013, p.3) grants, like Nussbaum, that compassion is a virtue. If that is correct, then compassion comes into the orbit of virtue ethics, in the sense that virtue ethics is concerned fundamentally with the question of the relation between virtue, function, activity, reason and *eudaimonia.* Certainly, compassion would meet his criteria for human excellences, namely *irreplaceability* (a person who gives up on compassion may find excellence harder to achieve); *depth*, in the sense that compassion can transform one's relation to another and indeed one's own moral life; and *scope or ubiquity*, that is, such virtues enable us to actualise our ethical function as human beings well or excellently. But he states some misgivings which he argues are 'well founded' (pp.12-14). It is possible to address these if the earlier sections of the argument presented here are sound.

If compassion is indeed a virtue, and if as a virtue, it ought to be included within the orbit of a theory (virtue ethics) which is concerned with the nature of virtues and their relation to habits, dispositions, activity, excellence and flourishing; if neuroscientists manage to establish that teaching a virtue is achievable and by extension, that the teaching of this virtue leads to increased activity of a selfless or altruistic kind (that is, activity in terms not just of brain regions and neural circuits, but also conscious, directed, voluntary behaviour after a course of training or learning), then it becomes entirely possible to meet a number of critiques of virtue ethics (and, more broadly, critiques of appeals to virtue as anchors of our understanding of what constitutes a *eudaimonian* life, in part or as a whole).

The first misgiving he states is that 'the previous history of virtue-educational initiatives does not augur well for the prospects of future ones' (p.12). He notes that Britain has a 'long history' of less than effective attempts at education that aims at character development. He attributes this to 'endless flavour-of-the-month varieties that have been on offer, one after the other – gaining or losing core-subject status on the whims of each new government – which have created a dismissive cry-wolf attitude among teacher as well as simple initiative fatigue' (pp.12-13). He also cites the absence of 'common language in which those efforts could be couched' (p.13); and to educational theories which 'lurch' from one position to another (p.13). What is needed, he argues, is a 'passkey – some sort of a moral GPS – to guide us through the labyrinth of terms, theories and approaches' (p.13). Crucially, he notes that we need urgently an effective theory of virtue that combines social science philosophical virtue ethics, which in turn is grounded 'in the empirical knowledge of how people actually think about virtues and the way virtues actually inform their character' (p.13). Much of this is defensible, but the point about history and failure or frustration is a problematic one: what the first neuroscientific study shows is that virtue, in at least one sense, can be taught effectively (and in a relatively short period of time, in fact, a matter of weeks not months or years). 'Virtue education initiatives'

do not have to repeat this history; there is no compelling reason to assume here that the future will repeat the errors, misjudgements and the ineffective strategies of the past; and 'flavour of the month' varieties also do not have to be privileged, particularly if familiar techniques of training and education can have such significant neural affective and behavioural effects - and in the short term. There is an important pedagogical question too: all the interdisciplinary knowledge and all the well informed theories in the world will not necessarily translate to effective teaching or training, in terms of virtue, increases in selfless activity, significant character development or meaningful change (particularly change which is underscored by correlations in brain regions and neural circuits associated with empathy and positive affect).

     The second misgiving concerns the absence of a 'clear empirical methodology' in the study of virtue. He argues that moral naturalists are 'realists about morality; they believe that such moral properties as honesty or wickedness really exist as parts of the natural world' (p.13) and importantly, that the 'great majority of existing instruments to measure character – for instance the positive psychological VIA-instruments for youth and adults… – are, however, simple self-report questionnaires' (p.13). He does note that the lack of 'tried-and-tested instruments to measure moral character' does raise doubts about the 'idea of virtue-educational projects at school' since ideally, these ought to 'establish their scientific credibility – pre-and-post tests of impact on moral virtue' (p.13). This is an ideal, it has to be noted, since there is no good reason to assume that credibility is only to be found in scientific tests or in scientific forms. And it is, of course, important to remain circumspect, as he notes, but a number of points ought to be made here: at times the argument concerns the study of virtue; at times the argument concerns measurement of 'moral character'; at times the argument concerns the measurement of moral virtue. Now one needs to be very circumspect here: the study of virtue is not the same thing, logically, as the measurement of moral virtue; and neither of these is the same thing, necessarily, as the measurement of 'moral character' in general. All of these are worth studying, to be sure, and ideally their credibility would *also* meet rigorous scientific and empirical standards, but the methodologies would also have to meet rigorous scientific *and logical* standards. It is one thing to show increased activity which can reasonably be called compassionate (and therefore, virtuous) and increased activation in various neural circuits and structures over a short period of time; it is however another thing to measure "moral character" (for much would depend on what all of the constituents of 'moral character', taken as a whole, are). If this point is sound, it is not necessary to call into doubt all 'virtue-educational projects at school' so long, of course, as some of these projects build upon some of the recent breakthroughs in relation to virtue learning in neuroscience. (And of course the limits of these methodologies ought not to be neglected or forgotten.)

The third misgiving concerns how little we know about the 'impact of previous interventions in this field' (p.13). This point applies to 'character education' and its evaluation. He notes that in the 'last few years, meta-analyses of impact have started to appear – some presenting rather positive results and helpful recommendations about "what works" in character education' but again, self-reports and other kinds of reports set a limit. What is required according to this argument, are 'purely objective criteria' ('for example the number of violent incidents in the school yard') (p.14) though problems remain concerning the interpretation of 'positive findings: Do they really mean that there has been an improvement in virtue/character, or only that students have devised better ways of not being found out?' – p.14). Now it is not clear what would constitute 'purely objective criteria', nor is it clear that these sorts of criteria are, in fact, necessary. Much needs to be unpacked, clarified and justified here. The point about the limits of self reporting is well made but the research in neuroscience provides much more than data derived from self-reporting and such things.

Neuroscience is certainly exciting in this respect, though it is of course a very young science, so to speak. Nonetheless, in terms of *its* 'positive findings', and the replication of its results, not to mention the results of studies which are analogous or complementary, it can help us to begin to provide a fuller and more detailed answer, with a scientific basis, to questions such as 'do they really mean that there has been an improvement in virtue?' (where 'improvement in virtue' means improvement in activity which is in accordance with virtue, and more specifically, in accordance with a virtue such as compassion). Much work needs to be done, to be sure, and much more time needs to be given to the analysis, elucidation and evaluation of the methods, studies and results, but if these neuroscientific studies are sound, if virtue can be taught in these kinds of ways, if the virtue learning, so to speak, can lead to increases in selfless or altruistic activity, and if this activity can be related clearly to increased activation of brain structures and neural circuits which are known to be associated with emotions such as empathy and the regulation of positive emotions, more generally, then the future of virtue education may not be nearly as troubling as its recent history in some parts of the world may suggest. And perhaps it is not just the arts and humanities that will help us to develop virtues such as compassion, as Nussbaum argues in *Upheavals of Thought*; perhaps the arts and humanities will find a worthy and substantial ally and platform in the sciences and in particular, in neuroscience.

Bibliography
Biess, Frank.   (2014). *Science and emotions after 1945* [electronic resource]*: a transatlantic perspective.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bernhardt, B.C., Singer, T., 'The neural basis of empathy', *Annual Review of Neuroscience*. 2012, Volume 35, pp.-23. DOI: 10.1146/annurev-neuro-062111-150536. (Available here: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22715878 - accessed August 28 2014)

Birch, Charles. (1993). *Regaining compassion for humanity and nature*. Kensington, N.S.W.: New South Wales University Press.

Brockman, J. (2011). *The mind: leading scientists explore the brain, memory, personality, and happiness.* New York: Harper Perennial.
Brown, S., Brown R.M. and Penner, L.A. (Eds.). (2012). *Moving beyond self-interest: perspectives from evolutionary biology, neuroscience, and the social sciences.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Carmody, Denise Lardner. (1996). *Serene compassion : a Christian appreciation of Buddhist holiness.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Condon, P., Desbordes, G., Miller, W.B. and DeSteno, D. (2013). 'Meditation increases compassionate responses to suffering'. *Psychological Science,* volume 24, Number 10, pp. 2125-2127 (October 2013). Available at: http://pss.sagepub.com/content/24/10/2125.full (accessed August 25 2014)

Corn, B.W. (2014). 'Acquisition of compassion among physicians: why is this rite different from all other rites?'.*Journal of Clinical psychology,* Volume 32, Number 14, pp. 1516-1517 (April, 2014)

Cozolino, Louis J. (2012). *The neuroscience of psychotherapy: healing the social brain*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Decety, J. (2012). *Empathy: from bench to bedside.* Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press.

_____. And Ickes, W. (Eds.). (2009) *The social neuroscience of empathy.* Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press.

Davidson, R. and Harrington, A. (Eds.). (2002). *Visions of compassion : western scientists and Tibetan Buddhists examine human nature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Della Sala, S. and Anderson, M. (Eds.). (2012). *Neuroscience in Education: the good, the bad and the ugly.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Eppsteiner, F. (1988). *The Path of compassion: writings on socially engaged Buddhism.* Berkeley, California: Parallax Press.

Fritz, D. (Summer 2003) 'Review of Conceiving Emotions: Martha Nussbaum's "Upheavals of Thought"', *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Volume 31, No. 2, pp. 325-341. (URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40018171 Accessed: 24/08/2014).

Gilbert, Paul. (Editor). (2005). *Compassion: conceptualisations research, and use in psychotherapy.* New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Gilbert, P. (2004). Editor. *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion.* New York: Routledge.

Goodman, Charles. (2009). *Consequences of Compassion* [electronic resource]. New York: Oxford University Press.

Grinde, Bjørn, (2012). *The biology of happiness*. Dordrecht: Springer.
Hiers, Richard H. (2010). *Justice and compassion in biblical law.* London: T & T Clark.

Hopkins, Jeffrey. (2001). *Cultivating compassion: a Buddhist perspective.* New York: Broadway Books.

Klimecki, O.M., Leiberg, S., Lamm, C., and Singer, T., 'Functional neural plasticity and associated changes in positive affect after compassion training', *Cerebral Cortex* July Volume 23, Number 7, pp.1552-61 2013. DOI: 10.1093/cercor/bhs142. At http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22661409

Klimecki, O.M., Leiberg, S., Ricard, M., Singer, T., 'Differential pattern of functional brain plasticity after compassion and empathy training', *Social Cognition Affect Neuroscience,* June 2014, Volume 9, Number 6, pp. 873-9. DOI: 10.1093/scan/nst060. Epub 2013 Apr 10. At http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23576808

Kristjánsson, Kristján. (2014). 'Ten myths about character, virtue and virtue education - plus three well-founded misgivings'. Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain [selected papers] at https://www.philosophy-of-education.org/uploads/2013%20Conference/Papers/Kristjansson.pdf (accessed August 25 2014).

Kristjánsson, Kristján. (2013). *Virtues and Vices in Positive Psychology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Laden, M.. (2011). 'Nussbaum Explains Her Concepts of Compassion and Justice' October 5, 2011 at http://www.law.uchicago.edu/news/nussbaum-explains-her-concepts-compassion-and-justice (accessed August 28 2014).

Monroe, Kristen R. (2004). *The hand of compassion : portraits of moral choice during the Holocaust.* Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha. 'Compassion & Terror'. *Daedalus* Volume 132, No. 1, Winter, 2003, pp. 10-26.
Nussbaum, Martha. (2003). "Compassionate Citizenship" at http://www.humanity.org/voices/commencements/martha-nussbaum-georgetown-university-speech-2003 (accessed August 25 2014).
Nussbaum, Martha. The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy. Cambridge University Press. 1987, Updated 2001.

Nussbaum, Martha. (2001). *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha. (2001). *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha. (1997). *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Nussbaum, 'Compassion: The Basic Social Emotion', *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Volume 13, Issue 01, December 1996 , pp 27-58 Also here: http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayFulltext?type=1&fid=3094508&jid=SOY&volumeId=13&issueId=01&aid=3094500

Nussbaum, Martha and Sen, Amartya. (Eds.). (1993). *The Quality of Life.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

Peters, R. S. (Richard Stanley). (1972). *Reason and compassion; the Lindsay memorial lectures delivered at the University of Keele,and the Swarthmore lecture delivered to the Society of Friends.* London, Boston: Routledge & K. Paul.

Porges, Stephen W. (2011). *The polyvagal theory: neurophysiological foundations of emotions, attachment, communication, and self-regulation*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Racine, Eric. (2010). *Pragmatic neuroethics: improving treatment and understanding of the mind-brain.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Rolls, Edmund T. (2012). *Neuroculture: on the implications of brain science.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sander, D, and Schere, K. (Eds.). (2009). *Oxford companion to emotion and the affective sciences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sternberg, Eliezer J. (2010). *My brain made me do it: the rise of neuroscience and the threat to moral responsibility.* Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.
Tester, Keith, (2001). *Compassion, morality, and the media*. Buckingham: Open University.

Thiele, Leslie Paul. (2006). *The heart of judgment: practical wisdom, neuroscience, and narrative*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

West, Patrick. (2004). *Conspicuous compassion: why sometimes it really is cruel to be kind*. London: Civitas.

Wuthnow, Robert. (1991). *Acts of compassion: caring for others and helping ourselves*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Weng, H.Y., Fox, A.S., Shack man, A.J., Stodola, D.E., Caldwell, J.Z.K., Olson, M.C., Rogers, G., Davidson R.J. 'Compassion training alters altruism and neural responses to suffering', *Psychological Science,* Volume 24, No. 7, pp. 1171-1180 July 2013. Available here: http://pss.sagepub.com/content/24/7/1171 (Published online before print May 21, 2013, doi: 10.1177/0956797612469537).