Bits, Bytes and Dinosaurs: Using Levinas and Freire to address the concept of 'Twenty-first Century Learning'

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Abstract

'Twenty-first century learning' discourse argues that education should prepare students for successful living in the twenty-first century workplace and society, and challenges all educators with the idea that much contemporary education is designed to replicate an industrial age model, essentially rear-focussed, rather than future-focussed. Future-focused preparation takes account of the startling effect on economy and society caused by rapid technological change, to the extent that the future cannot be accurately predicted. Twenty-first century learning discourse proposals are characterised by a competency-based education that effectively renders knowledge obsolete, and which relies increasingly on communication technologies and on-line pedagogies. This is however an education which in some respects deepens the loss of identity characteristic of contemporary times. It is also an education which has negative implications for face-to-face interactions in community which underpins the development of democratic practices, and finally raises concerns about the hollowing out of curriculum knowledge. Twenty-first century learning discourses and educational practices which are deeply embedded in psycho-cognitivist and technological frameworks of thinking have marginalised critical philosophical thought. This paper considers the Levinasian concepts of the Other and the face, and the Freirean concepts of humanisation and critical education to argue that they offer a discourse of possibility and hope that challenges twenty-first century learning and pedagogy. These thinkers enable the argument that there are certain attributes and dispositions that transcend time and place, which schools have not only a right, but an obligation to develop.

Introduction

Calls on education and educators to prepare students for the twenty-first century and for education to take on the responsibility of twenty-first century learning have been prevalent in policy and political discourse and the media for at least the preceding three decades. In 1993, Dr Maris O'Rourke, then Secretary for Education in New Zealand, introduced the New Zealand Curriculum Framework by referring to the importance of preparing students with the skills required to meet the challenge of the twenty-first century (Ministry of Education, 1993). A decade later, the Curriculum Stock Take Report would make significant reference to 'the future', emphasising a 'future focus' with particular emphasis on issues of sustainability, technology, economic demands and the requirement that future citizens have the capacity to engage in lifelong learning (Ministry of Education, 2002). In 2007, Karen Sewell, then Secretary for Education would write in her foreword to The New Zealand Curriculum that it represents a framework that will prepare young New Zealanders 'to be successful citizens in the twenty-first century' (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 4). The concept of 'future focus' with an emphasis on sustainability, citizenship, enterprise and globalisation forms one of the eight principles on which this national curriculum is based. The vision of this curriculum is of students who are 'confident, connected, actively involved lifelong learners' (2007, p. 8), which is premised on the notion that attaining such a vision will be driven by an educational and pedagogical focus quite different than predecessor approaches.

The notion of 'twenty-first century learning' expresses the dual objectives of developing in students the skills, attributes and competencies that it is thought will equip them for the challenges of future life, and of using tools and strategies that are commonly associated with the twenty-first century, most notably the artefacts and processes of electronic technology. Attaining these objectives requires dramatic change to education and the work of educators. This paper outlines and describes some of those changes, in terms of the future that is proposed, the inability of current educational structures and processes to prepare students

for that future, and the curricular and pedagogical solutions proposed. Those solutions inevitably turn on the increased and creative use of available technological tools, for which there is a potential moral cost. In this regard, the thoughts of Emmanuel Levinas and Paulo Freire are able to guide informed critical and philosophical responses to the claims and propositions of twenty-first century learning, which in keeping with a futuristic theme, will henceforth be referred to as TFCL.

The future can't be predicted

A catch-cry of TFCL is that the future cannot be predicted and that traditional work categories and definitions are undergoing rapid change (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999). Traditional manufacturing is shrinking while high technology and intellectual property activities are ascendant (Giddens 2001; National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education 1999; The World Bank 1998).

The digital communication revolution also impacts traditional work categories by facilitating global economic and financial transactions, which has led to the development of a global 'knowledge economy' (Warner 2006), characterised by a 'knowledge explosion' and growth of multinational creative and entertainment industries. The World Wide Web provides access by millions to '24/7' news, instant messaging and communication through social networking via the internet, closing geographical divides and weakening geopolitical boundaries (Giddens, 1998).

This knowledge economy necessarily leads to a demand for highly skilled workers able to keep pace with the 'codification' of knowledge that is constantly evolving through the interactions between networks of people (OECD, 1996, p. 7). The digitisation of work, leisure and commerce and the requirement for greater consumer responsiveness call for the ability to respond rapidly to change (Gilbert, 2005). This leads not only to enforced upskilling of workers, but also to workplaces that require more independent thinking, and therefore innovative 'risk-taking' (Bolstad & Gilbert, 2008; Gilbert, 2005; Latham, 2001; Warner, 2006).

Furthermore, the knowledge economy is characterised by a marked shift to contract and freelance work in contrast with the stable employment of earlier generations (Lombardi, 2007; National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999). Governments may respond to this challenge by increasing investment in formal education or by providing incentives to business and individuals to engage in lifelong learning opportunities (OECD, 1996, p. 19).

The knowledge society and knowledge age

The knowledge society 'implies a social and economic environment, fostered by the state, which celebrates and rewards the acquisition, generation and application of knowledge by all its members' (Kelsey, 2000, p. 4). The knowledge society arises in a new postmodern 'knowledge age' that rejects universalist, 'one size fits all' approaches to education, favouring instead individualised learning while also ensuring that all students have access to all skills (Gilbert, 2005). Knowledge society and TFCL discourse converge at this point.

It is a discourse that posits 'digitally connected' twenty-first century students who come to school with more knowledge and greater sophistication than did their parents thirty to forty years ago (Warner, 2006). Young people are a critical consumer 'demographic' engaging with the global economy at an early age, growing up freely and rapidly able to access knowledge and information. The techno-digital revolution creates opportunities for flexible and multi-identities to be shaped and reshaped on-line (Gilbert, 2005), in a world that is not easily inhabited by the parents, teachers or other significant adults. Thus pressure is applied to policy makers to reconceptualise students as individuals taking up unique personal identities, becoming young twenty-first century adults.

Despite the efforts of some schools and systems around the world to adapt to these changes, sometimes by providing digital learning opportunities, sometimes by lurching 'back to basics', the essential problem for most schools is their modernist, industrial-age design, emphasising age-cohorts moving lock-step through a hierarchically-organised system (Good & Kalmon, 2008). These 'orthodox schools' that emphasise static

skills and knowledge accumulation are likely to be 'subverted by diverse new learning frameworks' (Giddens, 2000, p. 74).

TFCL discourse demands that schools and teachers will need to change their curriculum and pedagogy, and transform themselves from factories to learning communities (Good & Kalmon, 2008, p. 2). In the knowledge age, schools must focus on 'know how', not 'know that', and they should teach and encourage risk taking, focussing on collaboration over control. The capacity of all students to respond to rapid change must be cultivated (Good & Kalmon, 2008), requiring the collapse of the academic-vocational divide, and development of a range of competencies beyond the academic for all students (Gilbert, 2005; Warner, 2006). Whereas 'industrial-age' schools are locked into contexts of authority emphasising tradition, academic knowledge and assessment, postindustrial ('knowledge age') schools emphasise co-constructive teaching and learning, innovation and digital technology (Bolstad & Gilbert, 2008; Gilbert, 2005; Good & Kalmon, 2008; The World Bank, 2003; Warner, 2006). An emphasis on 'authentic' learning makes explicit links between what is taught and learnt with the 'real world' of work. Teachers become 'learning managers' and guides, assisting their students to work in 'research teams' (Gilbert, 2005), to become lifelong learners and facilitators (The World Bank, 2003).

The organisational culture of schools as learning communities rejects the deeply embedded industrial age hierarchical and authoritarian culture of schooling in which teachers deliver knowledge for students to consume. Instead, schools as learning communities are places where 'all members of the community are engaged in the lifelong work of constructing knowledge' (Good & Kalmon, 2008, p. 3). The tripartite relationship of curriculum, pedagogy and learning community can be seen to be integrated in the concept of 'authentic learning'.

Authentic learning

The notion of authentic learning is central to TFCL because it captures the notion of learning that connects to real people, real events and real situations in a way that the industrial age model of schooling does not. It replaces the idea of knowledge studied and acquired for its own sake or in preparation for some future use with the idea that knowledge requires practical use value in the immediate present in order to be relevant. It focuses on a curriculum that integrates knowledge and moves away from a rigid focus on disciplines.

TFCL discourse emphasises the importance of relevance of school learning to the workplace. Thus teaching should facilitate experiences that closely resemble the workplace, hence the significance of teamwork that conceptualises the individual as one who associates with networks, groups and communities (Warner, 2006). Associated with this conceptualisation of learners is the reconceptualisation of physical school learning space. This discourse translates the notion of the industrial model to the physical shape and configuration of schools, questioning whether locking classes of students into a rectangular room with a teacher is the best way to educate students (Nair, 2009). Instead, multiple smaller and larger spaces are conceptualised that serve multiple functions allowing a variety of private, communal and small group settings which simultaneously serve technology and environmental sustainability purposes.

The place of information communication technology (ICT) is fundamental to TFCL for the reasons expressed—not because the technology represents the marvels of contemporary electronic engineering, but because it enables the recreation and simulation of many real-life situations and problems which students can attempt to solve, in collaboration with others, wherever they may be (Lombardi, 2007). The evolution of ICT from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 has allowed the shift from passive reception (or consumption) of electronic media (like websites) to the active participation of users (prosumers) who are able to generate and use knowledge developed collaboratively with others through such media as social networking. Thus users are able to sense that they 'produce' and 'own' knowledge, making metacognitive reflection a key skill or competency for TFCL (Lombardi, 2007).

A focus on competencies is now evident in many curriculum documents internationally. The New Zealand Curriculum conceptualises key competencies as 'capabilities for living and lifelong learning' (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 12). The list it provides includes various forms of thinking, the ability to

work collaboratively with others, the ability to self-manage, and the ability to decode using essential tools of literacy, numeracy and ICT. In addition to these competencies however, TFCL must also equip students to deal with uncertainty, unpredictability and ambiguity (Lombardi, 2007).

Educators too must come to deal with the uncertainty, unpredictability and ambiguity generated by this pervasive and compelling TFCL discourse. Relevant questions include these: Does philosophy of education have a responsibility to address TFCL discourse? Is there some direction and critique that can be developed by reviewing the work of philosophical thinkers? Have philosophers of education become prehistoric relics in an age of bits, bytes and data?

Levinas and Freire

TFCL discourse presents problematical issues relating to dilemmas of individual identity in both a globalised world and an on-line 'virtual' world, questions of the development of democratic community in such a world, issues regarding the very basis of democratic community, namely our responsibility to others, beginning with one 'other', and questions in relation to the ethical dimension of pedagogy and epistemology. The thoughts of Emmanuel Levinas and Paulo Freire will be reviewed and applied to the questions generated by TFCL discourse. Although Levinas was some fifteen years Freire's senior, the two lived contemporaneously, Levinas passing in 1995, Freire in 1997. Both were influenced by phenomenological philosophy, although Freire's work in adult literacy shifted in the direction of critical philosophy, developing his ideas around what came to be critical pedagogy. His passion was very deeply focussed on present circumstances that could serve to oppress people, and the conditions necessary for people to free themselves, particularly through the power of their developing critical thought and action. In contrast, Levinas did not write specifically for an educational context, but his relevance to the purposes of this paper is his thought in relation to the infinite responsibility each of us has to the other; a responsibility that is provoked by our recognition of the other through the face. Aside from the relevance of these concepts to a consideration of individual identity in TFCL, Levinasian thought is relevant to considerations of pedagogy. As Freire wrote more specifically for an educational context, his thoughts bear relevance not only to these issues, but also to questions of epistemology and globalisation.

Levinas

The concept of 'alterity', referring to otherness, is fundamental to Levinas's philosophy, notably his notion of 'the Other'. The framing of otherness can mean that the other simply reflects the subject 'I', or that others are distinguished in terms of the extent of their similarity to or difference from the subject 'I' (Perpich, 2008). Levinas however rejected such 'formal' alterity as imperialistic:

> The metaphysical other is other with an alterity that is not formal, is not the simple reverse of identity, and is not formed out of resistance to the same, but is prior to every initiative, to all imperialism of the same. (Levinas, 1991, pp. 38-39. Emphasis added).

Levinas sets an exacting standard here by reversing the order of comprehension from the view that I am first, to the view that the Other precedes my entry to the world. A sympathetic reading of Levinas thus places the reader in opposition to the customary Western philosophical and psychological notion that an important life and educational goal is for the individual to move from heteronomy to autonomy. This notion of autonomy is the Kantian one, namely the ability to follow rational rules that all others too could follow. Respect for the other thus grows from the mutual recognition of this ability to act autonomously. However, for Levinas this is not true respect, as it is based on the other being a mirror image of the individual subject (Kodelja, 2008). Instead Levinas conceptualises a moral heteronomy which is connected to his notion of 'the face', to be considered shortly.

Levinasian heteronomy is not the submission to the arbitrary rules of another or one's own weaknesses, but represents instead infinity, the transcendent perfection attained by reaching out to the Other, who

precedes the I. In contrast, Kantian autonomy represents totality by placing the I and the other in an equal relationship, (Kodelja, 2008; Standish, 2008). Levinas challenges the self-realisation and freedom extolled in contemporary capitalist society which prioritises commercial exchange and the totalisation implied by the performativity and quality control that characterises educational policy (Standish, 2008).

The question of 'ethics' in relation to Levinas is problematic and contested (Perpich, 2008). It has been suggested that Levinas offers an ethics (Egéa-Kuehne, 2008a), but not a deontological, utilitarian or virtues ethics (Bergo, 2009). As such, it may be inferred that Levinasian concepts should be applied with care. His concept of 'otherness', with its focus on difference rather than sameness (Perpich, 2008), and in particular his insistence that I am in a relationship of infinite responsibility to the Other, does however suggest an ethical dimension, perhaps calling for a renewal of concepts of moral agency (Kodelja, 2008). For Levinas, real freedom comes from recognising this responsibility, and accepting its non-reciprocal nature (Bergo, 2009; Egéa-Kuehne, 2008b), yet entering into a dialogical relationship with the Other (Bergo, 2009; Biesta, 2008). This has implications for pedagogy, curriculum and knowledge. So too does the notion of the 'third party' ('the whole of humanity' (Levinas, 1991, p. 213)) because it enables the concept of justice and fraternity, mediated by language: 'The third party looks at me in the eyes of the Other—language is justice' (1991, p. 213).

The recognition by the subject of the Other is also mediated through 'the face', which symbolises not only recognition of the Other, but a recognition of the 'interiority' of the other and a recognition of the vulnerability of the Other (Kodelja, 2008). This recognition is beyond mere awareness—the weakness present in the face of the Other is revealed to the subject I and inhibits any attempt by the subject I to impose on or colonise the Other: 'The face in its nakedness as a face presents to me the destitution of the poor one and the stranger… presents himself as an equal' (Levinas, 1991, p. 213). 'The epiphany of the face is ethical' (1991, p. 199), providing further evidence of the level of discomfiture generated by Levinasian ethics, and demanding careful thought in relation to questions of pedagogy, curriculum and knowledge.

When considering Levinasian lessons for these educational issues, it is as well to recall his rejection of the concept of autonomy insofar as this may have implied some individual mastery of the universe (Standish, 2008). By rejecting a Kantian version of autonomous development, Levinas rejected what must be inferred from the Kantian notion—that the child begins in deficit (of autonomy) and must be coached, guided and disciplined to a position of maturity from which the rationality of universal rules become apparent to the child (Kodelja, 2008). Rather, the ethical concept of the face and the responsibility to the other requires teacher and child to be equals. This may explain why Levinas so roundly rejected Socratic pedagogy: 'The height from which language comes we designate with the term teaching. Socratic maieutics prevailed over a pedagogy that introduced ideas into a mind by violating or seducing (which amounts to the same thing) that mind.' (Levinas, 1991, p. 171). This rejection refutes the idea that learning emanates from the learner, calling into question the constructivist faith invested in the concept of user-designed information which is a feature of Web 2.0. Levinas goes on to assert that teaching is not a relationship of domination but one that is based on a 'pacific' relationship with the other, in which learning occurs through the medium of language, 'truth' residing in the transcendence of the I-Other relationship (1991, p. 172), but also in rational thought, which allows contemplation of infinity (Levinas, 1991, p. 204).

Freire

Paulo Freire (1970; 1996; 1998) used the notion of 'ontological vocation' in reference to people in general, who strive to become 'fully human'. This 'ontological vocation' is the point of each person's existence, 'to be a Subject who acts upon and transforms [his/her] world, and in so doing moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively.' (1996, p. 14). On this account, people are called upon to take up a position in the world that enables them to transform the world. Importantly however, the goal of humanisation is never finally reached; rather people can become more fully human, but can never be fully human (Roberts, 2000, p. 41). Freire does not consider that oppression and its outcomes are fatalistic inevitabilities. The option to realising the ontological vocation to become more fully human is therefore not

dehumanisation, which is rather the outcome of oppression (Freire, 1996, p. 26). However, becoming released of oppression requires an individual to realise that state and seek to actively transcend it. It thus follows that Freire's notion of humanisation is a perspective from which the individual interacts with the world in a critical and knowing way, understands sources of oppression and violence in society, relates to fellow humans in a loving and life-giving manner and seeks to make a difference to the world.

Freire reflected on the objective reality of what he witnessed, namely the bitter struggle of Brazilian peasants doomed, it seemed, to a life of grinding poverty and illiteracy (See comments by Richard Shaull in his Foreword, Freire, 1996, p. 12). In later years, Freire commented on the 'scourge of neoliberalism' (1998, p. 22), which he argued was entrenching oppressive socio-economic situations for which education should prepare students as an inevitability (1998, p. 27; 2004, p. 23). This anger and indignation underscored Freire's work. He refused however to accept this situation as given, and thus sketched a vision of a better world, of 'utopia' (1998, p. 74), which he associated with dreams and hope (2004, p. 110). Freire recognised however an imperfect world and understood that knowing subjects exist who set about to make the world such. He thus rejected a metaphysical notion that all that exists is good, otherwise there would be no oppression. For these reasons, he made his partiality known, and urged his readers to negate impartiality and objectivity, but to maintain a rigorously ethical stance (1998).

Applied to education, this oppression can be seen in instances of authoritarian banking education, whereby knowledge is merely transferred to passive objects. Freire argued instead for dialogical, problem-posing education which enables teachers and students to produce and create knowledge as active subjects (1998; 2000). This process is not an individualist effort at attaining critical understanding, but is a dialogical process that must involve an 'other' (Roberts, 2000). For Freire, knowledge, notably critical knowledge, only comes to be held by the Subject after interacting with it, transforming it and then applying it to the world (Freire, 1973). This process, while requiring one to step back from reality, cannot occur while being divorced from the real world.

Education was not considered by Freire to be neutral or indifferent to the reproduction of the dominant ideology. However, he did believe that education could have a liberatory function, especially through the use of technology. He admitted:

> I've never been an ingenuous lover of technology; I do not deify it nor demonise it. For that reason I've always felt at ease in dealing with it. I've no doubt about the enormous potential for technology to motivate and challenge children and adolescents of the less-favoured classes (1998, p. 82).

This (seemingly paternalistic) acceptance of technology is to be balanced by Freire's wariness of 'the excess of a rationality that now inundates our highly technologized world' (1998, p. 38). It is not immediately made clear by Freire what that rationality may be. However he provides clues when speaking out against the doctrine of the 'inevitability of globalisation', which he associates with the so-called 'death of history' symbolising 'the death of utopia, of our right to dream' (1998, p. 103; 2004, p. 110). Continuing in this vein, is his rejection of the inevitability of unemployment as 'an inevitable end-of-the-century calamity… and that it is now the era of the pedagogical pragmatism of the techno-scientific training of the individual' (1998, p. 113).

Earlier it was noted that TFCL discourse speaks of an education that will prepare the youth for a world determined by technology and characterised by a decline of fixed employment options. Here Freire is seen to challenge that perspective. Does this critique imply that the insights offered by Freire and Levinas enable contemporary educators and philosophers of education to inform or critique TFCL discourse?

The Loss of identity

Twenty first century individuals living in postmodern and postindustrial socio-economic contexts have to be self-managing and flexible as they are saturated by choice and live in a period of 'life politics' and increasing moral uncertainty (Driver & Martell, 2001; Giddens, 1998). These developments are generated in part by

rampant capitalist consumerism, encouraged by the globalising effects of mass communications and digital media, challenged by Freire as indicative of a neoliberal global economy. Indeed the positions sketched earlier from both the Levinasian and Freirean perspectives stand in contrast to the loss of identity facing young people in the twenty first century by offering a discourse of possibility and hope.

Increasingly it is the individual and small groups of individuals who must be enabled with the kind of 'life' knowledge and skills that will allow them succeed in an uncertain world. The social costs of long-term unemployment are counted in terms of social dysfunction, criminal, gang and drug activity, and disengagement of many students from the education process, and recognised even by TFCL zealots like the Ken Robinson-led National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1999). Countering these costs account for the role played by 'values' in national curricula such as *The New Zealand Curriculum*, aimed at addressing deficits in civil society and creating social cohesion (Benade, 2011). The requirement however that public education play a role in enabling individuals to cope with the social costs above creates a space from which it behoves moral educators to develop Levinas's concerns with the responsibility of each to the Other. This effort supports too the Freirean concept of the ever-unfinished human subject desiring a fuller humanity, by developing as a critically conscious human being seeking to transform the world. Such notions as the morally heteronomous Levinasian subject or the transformative Freirean subject will however jar with the self-managed, hyper-autonomous (yet dangerously adrift) 'responsible, successful and contributing citizen of the future' (Benade, 2011).

There are other instances of the radical loss of identity which undermine Levinasian and Freirean concepts of self and other, with their attendant implications for responsibility to the other (Levinas) and collective solidarity (Freire). The face to face encounter is now increasingly replaced by opportunities for us to encounter each other through the interface of a keyboard and monitor. From my refuge behind the keyboard, not only is there a loss of sense of responsibility to the Other, but there is a loss of a dialogical community and sense of solidarity. Instead, individuals are endeavour to take up new or imagined identities through participation in the blogosphere, second life or more commonly, social networking sites, where they seek the empty company of 'friends' whom they may never have nor are ever likely to set eyes upon. Little investment of effort or moral purpose attaches to updating one's 'status'. A new 'community' comes to exist—one in which the private self becomes public currency for others to 'follow' or 'like'. As Lee Siegel, in his trenchant critique of the 'electronic mob' suggests, there is no place in this homogenising community for authentic relationships (2008).

Concept of space is re-defined

In 'virtual' space, time collapses. It is possible to be on-line '24/7'. I can maintain my website presence, my Facebook presence, yet not be physically present. This is akin to Foucault's notion of heterotopia as a 'placeless place' (1986), which he likens to a mirror:

> The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.

Do democratic principles apply to invisible, yet visible, on-line 'communities'? In what sense, for example, do distance learners constitute a community? Can I 'connect' with the Other if I cannot see the face of the Other? The loss of face in on-line space of necessity reduces the obligation of the subject I to be infinitely responsible for the Other. The possibilities for dialogical education are mitigated by the awareness of on-line learners that their responses are not only written for all to see (seemingly a good thing) but remain available to on-going surveillance (surely not a good thing), almost certainly resulting in responses that are less than authentic. The loss of the physical classroom represents not only the loss of a dialogical relationship but also the loss of awareness of the face, and its exteriorisation of interior vulnerability.

While both Freire and Levinas appear to lose relevance in on-line and distance learning contexts, the notions of liberated, multi-functional learning spaces holds far greater promise. This is so when considering Freire's abhorrence of 'banking' education that relies on teacher-directed force-feeding of irrelevant facts, and the relationship in Levinas's thought between infinite respect for the Other and recognition of the interior vulnerability of the Other in the external manifestation of the face. Design that incorporates creative arts into the daily curriculum, surroundings that acknowledge students as dignified human beings and which incorporate possibilities for active movement and play alongside serious academic work, and the critically informed integration of technology into learning spaces designed around small communities (Nair, 2009) seem to offer significant possibilities from which to consider Levinas and Freire.

Conclusion

Even some who promote TFCL recognise the likelihood that the pervasive use of electronic information technology in schools and beyond may have negative social effects. This possibility was signalled by the Robinson committee, remarking on the potential damage to the social and emotional development of students, suggesting that schools 'promote other modes of learning and human contact so that the full capacities of young people are developed through and alongside the use of new technologies (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999, p. 22). The image of 'teams' and 'networks' is an outcome of the development of postmodern society prefigured by Lyotard, who suggested that the 'emphasis placed on teamwork is related to the predominance of the performativity criterion in knowledge' (Lyotard, 1984, p. 52). Competent individuals thus come to regard knowledge for its use value, for its ability to be marketed and on-sold in different form, and are able to combine effectively with others, either locally or remotely, to ensure this occurs. By implication, 'competent' individuals must be 'enterprising' ones. This is the spectre of the knowledge economy and the prospect of a life of perpetual learning and training in the knowledge society which attempts to complete globally. Freire lamented this grind as an outcome of obsessive consumption (Roberts, 2010). This must surely have been a situation which Levinas too would have lamented for its erosion of human dignity. However his writing was not action-oriented as Freire's was: indeed, as Gert Biesta poignantly puts it, Levinas seems to offer 'nothing more than a responsibility which does not seem to be grounded in anything but itself… the only thing the reader can do… is respond with empty hands' (2008, p. 207).

What this paper has attempted to do is to clarify that the scope for the development of an ethical educational experience is significantly altered by TFCL discourse. Curriculum is hollowed out and reshaped by shifting the focus from knowledge to information and competencies that will serve their holders as performative and tradable commodities. Economic instrumentalism is driving out of curriculum knowledge understood as a corpus of truths, evidence, understanding, arguments and conclusions pertaining to a particular collected tradition, and the skills related to engaging with that corpus. TFCL discourse argues that those skills encouraged by or which are a prerequisite to serious engagement with traditional knowledge are inadequate to enable the average person to cope in the future (Bolstad & Gilbert, 2008; Gilbert, 2005; Hood, 1998; Warner, 2006). The competencies it seeks include critical thinking, but it remains an untested question as to whether the kind of critical thinking suggested in the context of TFCL is that suggested by Freire, which may transform a world found to be oppressive by some. The pedagogies that involve networks and communities, particularly in reconceived physical learning spaces are potentially promising, but prospects for the development of democratic discourse and dispositions is dimmed by the relative invisibility, yet constantly surveilled, on-line spaces. The obscurity and anonymity encouraged by these spaces nullifies the opportunities for the face-to-face encounter underpinning a moral and dialogical relationship between teacher and student.

In spite of the pervasive discourse of TFCL, reflective and critical educators, recalling the humility of Levinas's 'pedagogy of empty hands' (Biesta, 2008), must continue to seek, as Freire encouraged, 'to make spaces for genuine reflection and debate amid the hustle and bustle of everyday activities' (Roberts, 2010, p. 28). It is the duty and obligation of like-minded scholars to ensure that the discourses of respect, hope and

possibility of thinkers such as Levinas and Freire be both subjected to on-going critical scrutiny and developed to challenge prevailing socio-economic and political trends and fashions.

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