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Contents

Finding a compass in disrupted inclusive landscapes: The role of student agency and voice within the use of gen AI for the implementation of Universal Design for Learning

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Abstract

This paper highlights findings from a study carried out in Canada in 2025, on the way generative artificial intelligence (genAI) can support higher education instructors attempting to deepen their implementation of universal design for learning (UDL). The author, as principal investigator, used gen AI - with reiterative, progressively refined prompting – to seek suggestions on how to further redesign two Masters of Education courses with the UDL principles. He had taught these courses in the past two years and they already contained a degree of UDL implementation. Two research assistants also participated in the project and helped with the prompting. The whole team collectively filtered the AI generated suggestions to select the ones that were feasible in this specific teaching context. A process of triangulation was also used where students who had previously taken these courses were invited, as participants, to evaluate the redesign. The findings suggest gen AI can indeed support instructors as they redesign their courses with UDL. It raises specific concerns, however, in relation to instructors' capacity with prompt engineering and the training this would per se require. More importantly, this paper explores and analyses the key part student voice played in this project and on the central role students must play – more broadly – in UDL implementation as a process of management of change.

Key Words

Gen AI, UDL, participatory action research, student voice, student agency, higher education

Introduction and Context

Universal Desing for Learning (UDL) has gained in momentum over the last decade in most Global North jurisdictions, in the post-secondary sector, as a transformative framework to address learner diversity. It revolutionizes approaches to inclusion, implements the social model of disability into practice (Mole, 2013), and focuses on the role of the educator as designer, rather than on learner exceptionality. While there is a growing range of instructor-led UDL initiatives being documented in the literature, as well as examples of

communities of practice (Almeqdad et al., 2023), there are still few examples of campus-wide implementation or sustainable growth. One of the reasons often cited for this inconsistent development of the UDL framework is instructors' fear about increased workload. Adopting a designer mindset can be daunting for faculty and many will hesitate and be concerned they might be committing to a process they cannot pursue in light of increasing pressures of the neoliberal academy.

Gen AI has, in parallel, grown in popularity and use in higher education, and has had a disruptive impact on its policies and practices. Most of the early focus of scholarship on this phenomenon focused on concerns about student use and examined the implications for academic integrity and assessment effectiveness. A more recent wave of research has begun, however, to now consider the use of gen AI by instructors and the potential benefits this might bring in terms of management of workload (Haroud & Saqri, 2025). It is natural therefore that inclusion advocates and practitioners have begun considering the potential of gen AI to support faculty as they attempt to design learning experiences inclusively (Evmenova et al., 2014) – more specifically, in some cases, through the UDL lens. Chatbots have, in fact, even already been developed to support UDL implementation (Engeness et al., 2025), but these have proved to show little effectiveness and to produce generic suggestions rather than hands-on contextualized tips. It seems likely that prompt engineering, using a large language model, is likely to yield to more credible redesign solutions.

This paper examines an enquiry into the role that gen AI might possibly play in supporting faculty towards the sustainable implementation of UDL, via a process of careful and reiterative prompting. The author, as principal investigator, used gen AI - with reiterative, progressively refined prompting – to seek suggestions on how to further redesign two Masters of Education courses with the UDL principles. He had taught these courses, in the past two years, and they already contained a degree of UDL implementation. Two research assistants also participated in the project and helped with the prompting. It importantly, however, also question the role that learners themselves might play in yielding the power of gen AI to allow for a broader and more authentic UDL redesign of courses.

Overview of the Literature

Universal Design for Learning

UDL is a framework that seeks to shift educators and institutions away from bio-medical or deficit approaches that see the diverse learners as defective or needing interventions (Benedict-Chambers et al., 2025). The framework argues that leaner diversity is a given, and that it must therefore be seen as a constant, not a surprise. If educators know that their classrooms are diverse, they can prepare for this by using inclusive deign principles to address this in all their practices or classroom decisions (Basham & Lowrey, 2025). The key way educators can address this diversity, it is argued, is by injecting choice and flexibility wherever possible and by moving away from unimodal delivery or assessment (Rao & Meo, 2016). Unimodal practices, indeed, often assume that the learners have the same preferences as the instructor, when this may not in fact be the case. Decisions and choices of the instructor can in fact align with their own mindset, world view, preference, or habits,

and unknowingly create barriers for a range of learners. Injecting choice will avoid such friction and reduce learners' reliance on remedial interventions after the facts. There will be less need for retrofitting (Catama, 2025).

UDL supports educators who are involved in this redesign work by breaking down design work into three distinct tasks. The UDL guidelines argue that there are three core dimensions of learning and teaching: representation, action and expression, and engagement (Phelan et al., 2025). The UDL principles guide educators as they inject flexibility progressively, in each of these dimensions (CAST, 2025).

Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education

UDL has developed significantly in the post-secondary sector over the last two decades and is gaining interest. However, despite this progress, there are still considerable hurdles that hinder systemic implementation or sustainable growth (Fovet, 2020; Fovet, 2021). Concerns experienced by faculty may relate to the need for greater training (Moriña et al., 2025); many discuss the lack of resources (Morettini et l., 2025); workload and recognition are ongoing challenges with few instructors feeling their work is acknowledged or embedded in their workplans. As a result, instead of seeing a linear growth of UDL through the sector, there has instead been a pattern of haphazard, unpredictable, and un-sustained initiatives (Fovet, 2025). There is a thirst for organizational solutions that might support UDL integration as a process of change, not just as a pedagogical reflection and it is hoped this study address, to some extent, addresses this need.

GenAI use in Higher Education

GenAI has, in parallel, rapidly and significantly impacted the post-secondary sector (Krause et al., 2025; Xia et al., 2025). It has triggered a reformulation of what represents key skills (Wu & Carroll, 2025), a transformation of evaluation practices, and is beginning to support a reflection on new potentials for the tertiary sector (Ayyoub et al., 2025; Farinosi & Melchior, 2025).   While initial scholarship focused mostly on student use and the risks to academic integrity, there is an increasing volume of research now examining the impact of genAI integration for instructors and their workload (Figueiredo & Schonewille, 2025). It is having considerable impact on preparation time, the integration of resources, and the redevelopment of courses (Khlaif et al., 2024). It therefore seems intuitive to consider and explore whether it might support instructors in areas they currently find challenging or time consuming, and this includes UDL adoption.

GenAI and Social Justice Work

There is particular interest in exploring in the field how genAI might support social justice and transformative pedagogy (Rapanta et al., 2025).   It has been positioned to potentially assist in inclusive design (Buendia-Garcia, 2025; Dumitru et al., 2025; Khlaif et al., 2025).   There have actually been chatbots designed for this purpose (Jaime-Vargas, 2025; Zhao et al., 2025), including one for UDL implementation (Ruiz-Lázaro et al., 2025; Saborío-Taylor & Rojas-Ramírez, 2024; Rostan & Stark, 2023). However, these chatbots have proven so far rather disappointing and they fail to produce authentically innovative redesign solutions.

Instead, they take the user back to the core principles of UDL. There is therefore a need to consider the impact of genAI more broadly, rather than focusing on specific chatbot products.

Theoretical Stance

The theoretical paradigm adopted in this project is the Social Model of Disability (SMD). The SMD positions disability as a social construct, rather than as a individual bio-medical characteristic of the individual (Sofia & Athanasios, 2023). It sees disability as the friction that occurs between individual embodiments and the design of environments, spaces, products, services and experiences, and learning (Oliver, 2013). In this sense, it is powerful in focusing interventions away from learner exceptionality to instead highlight the role of educators as designers (Davies & Soni, 2025; Murza & Buckley, 2024). It can be argued in many ways that UDL is the translation of the SMD into classroom practices (Fovet, 2014). The SMD is therefore a pertinent theoretical paradigm within which to explore the potential use of genAI to support UDL integration.

Methodological Process

The project was carried out using participatory action research as a methodological approach. Action research is generally defined as a enquiry process which is empirical and explores solutions to specific issues in the field, in an organizational or institutional context (Quayson, 2019). Usually, the investigator is not an insider, but rather an employee who experiences the field issue or challenge first-hand (Dusty, 2024). The process of enquiry itself is pragmatic, rather than conceptual, and focuses on matching potential solutions to the challenge in question, in a process that can be reiterative or cyclical (Mertler, 2021); the process continues until an effective solution is identified; the documenting of this match takes place according to commonly encountered data collection and analysis methods. Action research is frequently used within the education sector (Dancis et al., 2023; Hine & Lavery, 2014). Participatory action research offers an additional dimension to this process, as it seeks to engage co-workers, and other stakeholders within the work context, in the enquiry process (Bacquet, 2024). This has meant that participatory action research is often showcased as being a process that empowers, emancipates, and contributes to social justice engagement within organizations (Fahlberg et al., 2025; Nasi, 2024; Spencer et al., 2024). Participatory action research is particularly pertinent as a process in this project as one key objective was to optimize the involvement of students as stakeholders.

The process used in this enquiry focused on using genAI to examine how to deepen their integration of UDL in two MEd courses already designed and taught. The presenter, as principal investigator, used gen AI - with reiterative, progressively refined prompting – to seek suggestions on how to further redesign two Masters of Education courses with the UDL principles. He had taught these courses in the past two years and they already contained a degree of UDL implementation. Two research assistants also participated in the project and helped with the prompting. The whole team collectively filtered the AI generated

suggestions to select the ones that were feasible in this specific teaching context. A process of triangulation was also used where students who had previously taken these courses were invited, as participants, to evaluate the redesign.

Findings

The findings are of two distinct natures; the enquiry process was able to establish the usefulness of genAI in efforts to integrate UDL more deeply in courses. The second main theme emerging from the analysis is the importance of the role of learners in the process of evaluating the pertinence of AI generated solutions and, more broadly, the key pertinence of student voice and agency in reflections around inclusive design.

Usefulness of GenAI in Deepening the use of UDL

The project was successful in establishing that genAI could improve the integration of UDL, even in courses that had already been designed with UDL in mind. It needs to be noted, however, that this process was not simple, fast, or easy to duplicate. The generation of genuinely pertinent UDL tips and strategies was the result of a reiterative process of prompt engineering. This process was collaborative, dialogical, and ecological in nature. In this sense, it would be challenging to model or map for other contexts or environments. It would be challenging to transfer it or to make it generic or sustainable. It represented a rich experience of inclusive redesign but there may be limitations as to the extent it can be used regularly by faculty who may be new to UDL, or unfamiliar with prompt engineering techniques. These limitations are examined in more detail in the exploration of outcomes.

Key Role of Student Perspectives

Although the usefulness of the process which was undertaken here might be limited for faculty who might be new to UDL or progressively gaining confidence in prompt engineering, there remains another key finding; it relates to the role of leaners in the integration of UDL and genAI in teaching and learning, as well as their role in the development of effective inclusive design strategies. The learners played a key part in the process followed by this study. First, they co-designed the prompts which were used to generate AI strategies to improve classroom activities and assessment directives in order to better align them with UDL. Second, the RAs used their own competencies, knowledge, and understanding of UDL to manually assess, in dialogue with the PI, whether the solutions and improvements generated by AI were, in fact, (i) aligned with the UDL framework, (ii) feasible in the context of MEd courses, and (iii) identified as authentic improvement on existing classroom and assessment practices. Third, in the process of triangulation, learners having taken the courses in the past confirmed the RAs' perceptions about the genAI strategies and evaluated independently whether these changes would have made their course experiences more inclusive and likely to lead to optimized learning outcomes. The study documents that the process would not have been possible without these inputs.

Outcomes and Implications

Implications for Faculty PD

The aim of the study was to establish whether the integration of genAI to integrate UDL more authentically into higher education classes was possible, pertinent, and useful. The introduction section of this paper has highlighted, indeed, how the main challenge of UDL implementation in the post-secondary sector is currently a perceived lack of time, support, leadership by faculty members, and a construct perpetuated by these instructors that UDL implementation might be daunting in terms of workload. The project was able to establish that genAI does indeed support a deeper and more authentic integration of UDL across the two MEd courses. However, the process documented was cumbersome, lengthy, reiterative, and complex. It presumes that faculty have a good understanding of UDL in order to evaluate the genAI solutions. The literature review above highlighted that, in fact, the majority of instructors still lack good mastery of UDL as a framework. The genAI process therefore does not represent and shortcut and institutions would still be facing the challenge, in the future, of effectively and systemically creating UDL training.

Second, the process of generating AI solutions for the redesign of these two courses was dependent on a reiterative process of prompt engineering. The literature indicates that many post-secondary instructors do not currently possess the skills necessary to carry out effective and intuitive prompt engineering with genAI (Federiakin et al., 2024; Qian, 2025). The idea of using genAI for UDL integration therefore does not address or solve resource issues and instead creates increased needs in relation to faculty PD.   There is no evidence that post-secondary institutions are currently addressing faculty's PD needs in this area (Lee & Palmer, 2025). For both these reasons, it appears that genAI in this area is perhaps not the revolutionary solution the field is hoping for and conceptualizing as groundbreaking shift. It does not address broader ecological concerns around faculty development.

Role of Students in GenAI Integration

Another aspect of the study, which was perceived as rich and transformative by the PI, was the deep dialogical involvement of learners. It is the leaner voice and agency which made the study meaningful and successful. However, this leaner involvement, from a broader perspective, may also be perceived as a limitation to the notion of using genAI more frequently to widen the implementation of UDL. While authentic and continuous dialogue with learners was maintained throughout the projects, the reality is that the opportunities for such collaboration are usually more limited in the field and in the classroom. Indeed, while co-creation (Omland et al., 2025) and critical pedagogy (Aryal, 2023) encourage such practices, many instructors may also find them challenging. The project has evidenced that using genAI to further integrate UDL in classroom practices necessarily required the input of students. Authentic input from learners is dependent on a broader reflection on power, and on instructors' reflection on dialogue and the sharing of this power (Sedova et al., 2025). Many professionals in the field would have yet to engage with this reflection, and this would be a hurdle in the work contemplated here.

Relevance of Participatory Action Research with Students in UDL Research

The study represents an eloquent illustration of the potential of participatory action research in work with leaners (Yeo & O'Donoghue, 2025). While researchers frequently discuss capacity building among leaners in research projects, the power dynamics are often such that engagement, responsibility, active decision making, and voice are still rarely evident when it comes to leaners (Anderson & Christens, 2025). This project evidenced that a sustained dialogue, throughout a study, is feasible, effective, and rewarding as a process. It contributes to the scholarship on dialogical participatory action research with students, and offers a detailed roadmap in how to implement such a process. This has considerable impact as the scholarship on UDL has characteristically failed to include learner agency and voice to date (Fovet, 2018; Fletcher, 2025). While UDL as a process discusses learn preferences, it fails - to date – to capture learner voice or to authentically involve learners in the process of implementation. This project goes some way to addressing this contradiction.

Importance of Learner Voice and Agency in Design Work

More broadly, while UDL represents a definite gain and an encouraging first step in awareness development, among faculty, of the need to shift away from medical model or deficit model practices, it can also be criticized for the fact that it allows instructors to remain firmly positioned within teacher-centric processes. UDL, indeed, argues that educators can make classroom practices more accessible at the design stage, by simply hypothesizing about the possible barriers leaners might encounter in conventional design. Some scholars have argued that design, and redesign, work can in fact not authentically occur without a dialogue with the learner (Treviranus, 2024). This project echoes these concerns and places the learner squarely back at the centre of design process. This entire reflection on UDL and genAI would not have been possible without the active reflection, engagement, participation, and decisions of learners. Far from evidencing, as originally contemplated, that genAI might accelerate UDL implementation, the paper has reminded the field that inclusive redesign cannot occur without an active participation from learners themselves.

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Philosophy or Liberal Arts?

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Abstract

Moral formation has always been a component of 'education' as broadly understood. Successful induction of individuals into social groups understandably requires some sort of assimilation of shared values. From earliest times the source of the most fundamental values was understood in mythical and religious terms. The vehicle of transmission was the story, a form that engages the imagination and emotions, particularly of children. The process was one of inculcation through both repetition (cyclic presentation of stories) and behavioural reinforcement (role-modelling, reward and punishment).

This paper takes a historical perspective on moral formation in the 'West', the society that emerged from ancient Greece and Rome, spread throughout medieval Europe, and was ultimately transplanted to other parts of the world through colonisation. I argue that philosophy and formal education must be understood in this historical context if we are to evaluate their role in moral formation. Similar points could be made about other societies, although they lie beyond the scope of this paper.

The history of moral formation in the West is best understood in terms of the role played by foundational works, oral and literary, that were transmitted in varying contexts from ancient times to modernity. The pre-classical Homeric epics were an early and enduring source for enculturation (*paideia*). There followed an explosion of literary experimentation in classical Athens and in the 'schools' of the Hellenistic period: plays, dialogues, speeches, histories, memoirs, and expository treatises. The Romans inherited and expanded this literary tradition and bequeathed it to medieval Europe, admixed with values deriving from the Judeo-Christian heritage.

Formal education developed in tandem with the literary canon, although it was reserved for an elite. A system of seven liberal arts evolved: the *trivium* of language arts (grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic or logic) and the *quadrivium* of scientific arts (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy). The intention was to provide a foundation for higher learning in law, medicine, and theology.

Philosophy was never part of the liberal-arts system. Throughout the classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods, the practice of philosophy was a 'way of life' pursued by adults who had already passed through the process of elementary moral formation. Reasoning was not intended to replace existing mores or discover new ones, but rather to explain the necessity and efficacy of such values in non-mythical terms. Medieval Christian monasticism replaced the Hellenistic 'schools'. Dialectics were carried on in the universities, though remaining subservient to theology. Renaissance humanists, by contrast, returned to the ancient authors as their models, disdaining what they took to be the 'logic-chopping' and 'barbaric' Latin of the scholastics.

A fundamental change of thinking occurred during the Enlightenment. A pivotal figure was Rousseau, whose conception of the child differed radically from that of his predecessors. He regarded socialisation as the stifling of instinctual energies, rather than their channelling into prosocial behaviours for the purposes of social harmony. Rousseau's 'nativism' found a home in the child-centred educational theories of Pestalozzi, Froebel, and, later, the pragmatic Dewey, American father of the 'progressive education' movement. Lipman's

Philosophy-for-Children (P4C) pedagogy was one outgrowth of this movement, and thus ultimately an inheritor of the Enlightenment conception of human nature.

Based on this analysis, I suggest that the idea that 'philosophical discussions in education' can 'support young people to form coherent and ethical responses' is unhistorical. I argue that philosophy is best understood, not as a set of dialectical skills, but in its original sense of the pursuit of wisdom through a way of life. Progress in this endeavour is not the same as success in formal education, but the latter can contribute to it through a rich liberal-arts curriculum.

Keywords
'moral formation', 'liberal-arts education', 'progressive education', 'philosophy for children'

Full paper to come

Bildung (self formation) as a second-order phenomenon

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Abstract

Bildung is one of education's oldest and most central concepts. Traditionally it denotes both an ultimate aim of education, associated with development of character, personality and virtues, and the process leading to that aim (Klafki 2001). It is also one of the vaguest concepts we have. Both the concept and the phenomenon it refers to are vague and hard to grasp. While concepts used in academic disciplines over time "get settled" with a reasonably agreed-upon content, but that does not seem to have happened with Bildung. Somehow the concept has resisted definition. I shall not offer a definition of Bildung, but I shall make certain claims about what *kind* of concept it could be, namely a second-order, contextual concept.

The inspiration for my analysis comes from Gregory Bateson's systems theoretical ideas, most notably his hierarchical concept of learning, and his notion of *Learning II,* second-order or contextual learning (Bateson 1972, 1981). This perspective is, presumably, quite unorthodox in the Bildung discourse. I shall, however, argue that it serves to illuminate at least some opaque sides to Bildung. I shall also argue that the systems perspective, in all its abstractness, makes a sound foundation for teachers' concrete actions in practice.

At the outset, a systems theoretical understanding of Bildung tells us that it is not the content (the knowledge) of what we learn that yields Bildung. Content is Learning I in Bateson's system. It is the *context* in which we acquire knowledge that is important, because this context itself teaches us something, and this something is Learning II, second-order learning. My claim in this paper is that Bildung fruitfully can be understood as Learning II.

However, I shall begin my analysis closer to home, by looking at Swedish reform educationalist Ellen Key, who defined Building as "that which is left after we have forgotten everything we know" (Key 1912). While Key has been criticized for making a mystery of Bildung, I shall argue that her phrase makes perfectly good sense in a systems theoretical perspective.

What can possibly be left when we have forgotten everything we know? Key apparently envisioned some sort of "effect" of things learned that remained, put its mark on you, even after what you had learned had long since been forgotten. And she does not mean skills or practical knowledge. Key's phrase is reminiscent of what we now call "content transcendent aims". For example, a learning outcome might specify that students should learn about the authorship of William Shakespeare. A content transcendent goal could be that the students, *by* learning about Shakespeare, *also* learn to appreciate literature, become adept readers, or some such thing. Learning I is knowledge about Shakespeare that can be measured. Appreciation of literature is hardly Learning I. It is something else, because it happens as a "side effect" of the acquired knowledge. And thus, we are en route to a second-order understanding.

I shall in my analysis unfold a series of systems theoretical concepts such as punctuation, context, context markers, relationship, and personal traits; all important to my main argument, which is that Bildung happens as a result of the *way* in which we acquire content.

Do you learn to love literature, or do you learn to hate Shakespeare? What do you learn about yourself if the context is such that the teacher says one thing (critical questions welcome!) but does another (fobs you off if you try to be critical)? These are learnings that stay with you long after all knowledge is forgotten and shape your future engagements with knowledge and other people– that is Bildung.

Keywords

Bildung, content transcendence, context, hierarchy of learning, second-order, systems theory

Introduction

Bildung[1] has always been considered a worthy aim or ideal for education. It is often discussed together with character formation, personality, development of virtues, etc. On the one hand it is a positively charged concept pointing to something valuable and desirable; on the other hand the concept is fuzzy. Both the concept and the phenomenon it refers to are vague and hard to grasp. And yet, Bildung is worth defending. We just have to find space for it, in an educational landscape dominated by learning outcomes, competencies, assessment, measurement and documentation of results.

I shall in this paper look at Bildung through a systems-theoretical lens. Viewed as Bildung theory this is unorthodox, but I shall argue that it does entail a relatively concrete way of understanding Bildung. It also entails a space for Bildung in education, even in the classroom. I have no definition of Bildung to offer. Rather I shall explore what *kind* of concept it can be: namely a second-order, contextual, concept. The inspiration for my exploration comes from Gregory Bateson's hierarchical concept of learning, in particular what he terms "Learning II," second-order learning or context learning. "Learning I" is learning of knowledge and skills. Learning II is what we learn from being in the kind of context where Learning I takes place. Bildung, I shall argue, can be analyzed as Learning II. This may sound abstract, but may give us a concept of Bildung which affords concrete manifestations, and which may give direction for one's own actions as educator.

"A splendid paradox"

Even unorthodox approaches should be anchored in more familiar educational terrain. I shall begin by looking at the Swedish reform pedagogue Ellen Key (1849-1926) and her view on Bildung. In her day, Key was one of Europe's most influential educational thinkers;

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[1] There is no direct translation of BIldung in English, although it is sometimes called *education* and sometimes *(self)formation.* Since many of my English-speaking colleagues are now using the German word, I adopt the same convention.

presumably best known for her harsh criticism of the school system. A school where content is taught as unconnected little pieces, organized in rigid time slots, does not promote Bildung, she argues. And then, famously, she goes on to say:

> But, happily, Bildung is not just knowledge of facts, it is a splendid paradox: that which remains after you have forgotten everything you have learned (1912, p.121, my translation).

What can conceivably remain, after we have forgotten everything we have learned? Key is vague on this, but apparently imagines that acquired knowledge has a lingering "effect," even after the knowledge itself is no longer retrievable from memory.

Key developed her thoughts on Bildung in various texts over a period of time. She held on to the view that being knowledgeable is not identical to being "gebildet."[2] Bildung, she says (1898, p.94), should be *being* rather than *knowing*. With gebildet individuals reason, emotion and imagination work together. True Bildung is characterized by insight and comprehension on the intellectual side, sympathetic understanding and tolerance on the emotional side. Taken together these give us humbleness in life and mildness (compassion) toward other humans. Mildness is a sign of perfect Bildung, Kay says (1919, p.24), so maybe that is what should remain after we have forgotten everything we have learned? I shall make two observations here. First, Key's paradox may be reminiscent of what is called content-transcendent aims. One type of aim concerns learning of concrete content, for example knowledge of Morris West's authorship. A content-transcendent aim can be that the students *through* working with West's authorship *also* learn to love literature, develop critical sense as readers, etc. With the right exchanges between reason, emotions and imagination, scant content can yield good Bildung, precisely because Bildung happens *through* a subject and not by the facts *in* or *about* the subject. Equally, large amounts of knowledge (especially in the form of facts) can give bad Bildung results, something Key thinks is the case in school, where there is little or no room for emotion and imagination. Second, we see here a transition from Learning I to something else. Learning I is acquisition of concrete knowledge (and skills), for example about West's authorship. Learning to love literature, on the other hand, hardly counts as Learning I. It is something else, because it is an effect of Learning I. And thus, we are on our way toward a second-order understanding.

An unorthodox perspective: Bildung as context learning

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[2] In German, Norwegian, Swedish and Danish an adjective is easily formed of the noun Bildung. English-speaking authors use the adjective "educated" (e.g. R.S. Peters), but I choose to stick with the German form and thus call it "gebildet."

It is not uncommon to view Bildung as both a process and an aim (Evenshaug & Lie, 2023): acquisition of knowledge, skills and experience and the result of this process. It is also common to view it as an individual process. Bildung is something that happens to or is done by the individuals themselves. Through interaction with various Bildung-means (as Key calls it) you develop your personality and character.

Systems theory gives us a different vocabulary. Bateson (1972, 1980) speaks about systems, patterns, hierarchies, flexibility, context, communication, punctuation, etc. These are not concepts we normally employ to speak about Bildung. Systems-theoretical assumptions concern form rather than content, and allow us to see the world in unexpected ways. Like all perspectives, it affords certain ways of understanding phenomena and blocks others. A consistent systems-theoretical analysis of Bildung will no doubt rub against traditional vocabularies and familiar ways of thinking. I hope to show that a Batesonian perspective, unorthodox as it is, yields a flexible and yet down-to-earth way of thinking about Bildung.

My inspiration to analyze Bildung as context learning comes from Gregory Bateson's descriptions of what he calls *Learning II*:

> … phenomena which belong to the category of Learning II are a major preoccupation of anthropologists, educators, psychiatrists, animal trainers, human parents, and children. All who think about the processes which determine the character of the individual or the processes of change in human (or animal) relationships must use in their thinking a variety of assumptions about Learning II (1972, p.297).

Learning II is a second-order phenomenon, and Bateson insists it should be of interest to educators, parents and children alike. But what is it? We enlist the aid of systems theory.

Selected systemic concepts

Systems are organized complexities consisting of different parts in interaction. *Complexity* concerns the number of parts and their internal patterns, whereas *organization* concerns the degree of order (or disorder) in the system. The system makes up a whole. It is a mistake, Bateson says, to understand the parts as being *inside* the whole. Rather, we have a logic of constitution here: the parts build up the whole they themselves are parts of. Like the letter A, which is part of the alphabet and which, together with the other letters, constitutes the alphabet). Systems are hierarchically organized part-whole relations. This is how the world is built up, Bateson argues, as a complex network of different phenomena standing in part-whole relations to each other. He uses various concepts as synonyms for system; whole, context, form, pattern, relation.

Parts and wholes are different *logical types.* It is important, Bateson says, not to mix up things that are on different levels. For example, we have a dog named Brutus. He is a member of the class of poodles. The class is a different logical type, at a higher level of abstraction than the member it classifies. We build this up to a hierarchy of classes (Brutus, poodle, dogs, canines), where the most abstract class always classifies the less abstract class. If we confuse the levels, we may think we speak about dogs in general while we really are talking about poodles. The same hierarchical principle applies to actions, claims, perceptions, persons, etc. – these are organized by us into patterns or some contextual structure. It is this contextual structure, Bateson says, that informs us how a claim should be understood: what is going on, what is appropriate, inappropriate, rational, expected, right or wrong of us to do. This context is itself part of a larger context, a meta-context. The hierarchy of contexts is open, and the levels might conflict. That is an important point and I shall come back to it.

Contextual structure is important. The process by which such structure is created, is called *punctuation*. According to Bateson, punctuation is a basic epistemological act where we make distinctions, sort things, make order and ideas of how things hang together. Which contexts, Bateson asks (1972, p.163), make us call people responsible, passive or domineering? Such qualities belong to the educational realm. They appear because we have ways of punctuating that make actions and utterances meaningful for us. It is central to Bateson's systemic way of thinking that our beliefs and interpretations to a large degree come from the distinctions we make, whether we are aware of it or not. When we punctuate, we shape actions and events into sequences that often are linear, with a beginning and an ending. We identify something as cause and something as effect, and thus come to an understanding of how things happen. Watzlawick, Bavelas and Jackson (1967), in one of the classic texts of communication theory, suggest that different punctuation lies behind many conflicts. Their example, albeit fictive, has also become classic: a quarrel between a husband and a wife, where the wife says that she nags at hm because he withdraws and hides behind his newspaper, and the husband says that he withdraws because she nags at him. The word *because* shows how they punctuate, how they define cause and effect in their interaction. Paradoxically, their respective punctuation is based on the same assumption, namely that their own behavior is a response to the other's action or utterance. In other words, the other words, the other party started the dispute and is therefore responsible for it. None of them sees how their own behavior reinforces the other's behavior and becomes stimulus for the other. Thus they maintain their nagging/withdrawal pattern. They do not see the interactional pattern they create together.

In social life there are many signs whose function it is to classify contexts. These are called context *markers*. They inform us what kind of context we are in and thus how we

should interpret and understand utterances and actions. A wink might tell me I should interpret an utterance as a joke; without the wink I would have perceived it as an insult. When we do not quite know what context we are in, we meta-communicate. Is this a joke? What am I expected to do here? Problems might arise if utterance and context do not match, and this is an important element for Bildung as context learning. Take, for example, a teacher who encourages students to be critical but at the same time organizes the context (the class) so that students experience being in the wrong and their critical questions are brushed off. What will students learn from that? The context is "the name of the game", what the situation is about. Actions, utterances and behavior can be organized in many different contexts, such as "critical discussion," "play," "guessing," "exploration," "discrimination," etc. (Bateson, 1980, p.135). The context markers we pick up and make use of can be extremely subtle, even invisible.

At this point it is useful to look at Bateson's discussion of Pavlov's dogs (1980, p.135ff). The Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov (e.g. 1927) developed his theory of classical conditioning by studying how dogs came to form connections between events that were not naturally connected. The dogs learned to associate the sound of a bell with food and react to the bell in the same way they reacted to food – by salivating. He also had an experiment where the dog should learn to discriminate between a circle and an oval, by getting a reward when it identified a circle but nothing when it "pointed to" an oval shape. Pavlov then made the circle and the oval gradually more similar, until it finally became impossible for the dog to discriminate between the two. And what happened then? The dog's discrimination breaks down, Pavlov says, and describes how the dog displays all the symptoms of an acute experimental neurosis. It barks, dashes madly around and chews the measuring equipment to pieces. This description came easily enough to Pavlov, and presumably also to others who could observe the change in the dog's behavior.

Bateson's systems-theoretical vocabulary brings other things into view. First, Bateson argues, we have here a leap from one logical type to another: we go from a description of concrete behavior (the dog discriminates) to an ability the dog *has* (discrimination). I shall come back to this transformation of actions/behavior into abilities or qualities. Second, there takes place a shift in context that the dog does not perceive. From the dog's point of view this might look something like this: the dog learns to discriminate between circles and oval shapes. Thus is also learns that this is a context for discrimination, it is his task to mark the difference between the two shapes, and success is rewarded. But when there no longer is a visible difference between circle and oval, the context is no longer of one discrimination. It has been changed. This is not a leap in logical type, but a leap from one context to another, and it has concrete consequences. The dog was not able to jump from "context of discrimination" to "context of guessing", Bateson analyzes. The dog no longer knew what

was expected of it, and as Pavlov describes, it was obviously painful. The system, the context, had been changed. By Pavlov himself – he and his experiment make up a meta-context, and the larger context always classifies the smaller.

Bildung processes

The rather rough mapping of a systems-theoretical landscape is meant to pave the way for an understanding of Bildung as the way we learn context, not as the way we learn knowledge and skills. Bildung is a different logical type than knowledge acquisition.

Learning, Bateson insists, is *necessarily* hierarchical. That is because learning contains elements of trial and error, and errors may be costly. At school errors may be socially costly, if you do badly on an exam, misunderstand the dress code, or fail to play the social game. Second-order learning is therefore necessary, to reduce the amount of trial and error in first-order learning. Students ca, for instance, learn to find the correct answer to the teacher's question much faster. In which case they have learned to learn.

It is high time to take a closer look at Bateson's concept of learning; it being the point of departure for my peoposed analysis of Bildung as a second-order phenomenon (Bateson, 1972, p.279-308). Bateson suggests five levels of learning, called Learning 0, II, III and IV. There is no intrinsic evaluation here, such that Learning 0 should be of less worth than Learning I. This is a hierarchical logic applied to learning. Of the levels, Learning I and II are of particular interest for us. Learning I – first-order learning – is about ordinary learning of knowledge, facts, and skills in school. This is also where we find Pavlov's dog, who learned to discriminate between circle and oval. Formally, Learning I is a change in Learning 0. Learning 0 concerns responding to stimuli without making changes based on experience or perception. Stereotypical responses, doing things the same way, are examples of Learning 0. If a teacher repeats the same question to you and you answer differently this time (the capital of New Zealand isn't Hamilton but Auckland), we have an example of Learning I. Second-order learning, Learning II, is formally a change in first-order learning. In particular, Bateson says, changes in the punctuation of sequences/interchanges, and changes in the (use of) context markers. There is always, Bateson says, an assumption that contexts remain roughly the same over time, so that we know what the name of the game is. Context markers provide information about what (kind of) context we are in. Sometimes these are obvious; for example, students immediately know what to do when they enter an auditorium. It is vitally important for us to pick up information that context A is different from context B, so that we can adapt. The problem for Pavlov's dog was that it did not have any context markers that could help it understand what to do when discrimination between circle and oval no longer was possible. Experimental neurosis is an example of second-order learning.

Generally speaking, it can be very stressful and unsettling for us when context markers are changed, since that leaves us guessing what the name of the game is.

Some of Bateson's analyses are hard to understand; he does not give the reader much help. It is not obvious how changes in punctuation lead to the second-order phenomena that he describes, including formation of personality and character. But let us for the sake of the argument accept his perspective. By learning ways of punctuating sequences and by learning certain context markers we learn what is expected of us and can adapt to that. We learn the principles, implicit and explicit rules, and communicational patterns of a context, say in education. Thus, Bateson says, second-order learning, context learning, will always be present during first-order learning, as the context that classifies what takes place in first-order learning. In Bateson's systems theory these are different logical types and should not be conflated. The relation between first- and second-order learning can be found in many discussions about the role of knowledge in Bildung. And as a tricky point, because they are not treated as different logical types. To exemplify, Ulvik, Kvam and Eide (2021) claim, on the one hand, that Bildung concerns who we *are*, about growing as a human being (p.1328). On the other hand they also claim that knowledge in the form of deep understanding is a necessary condition for true Bildung. Students must grasp and be gripped by meaningful content (p.1328). My business here is to point out that "who we are" is a different logical type than content. Content to be learned is first-order learning, no matter how meaningful it is. "Who we are" is second-order learning. It seems to me that this form of conflated exchanges between first- and second-order learning is not uncommon in Bildung discussions. We find it already in the idea of Bildung as both process and aim – as a process it is something we *do* (or something that happens to us), as a result it is something we *have* or *possess*. It will be recalled that Ellen Key insisted that Bildung is about who we *are*, not what we *know*. But it is hard for educators not to think about content, in the form of things we should know. It is an old idea that some forms of knowledge are more valuable than others, and that it is these forms that yield Bildung. Wolfgang Klafki (e.g. 2001) calls such content-oriented views "material Bildung," characterized by the insistence that a particular kind of content is required to promote Bildung. Evenshaug and Lie (2023) show that the conception of Bildung found in Norwegian national curricula by and large has been content-oriented; in recent years with an increased emphasis on measurable outcomes and testing. Also in LK20, the current national curriculum, Bildung is understood as first-order learning (p.10):

> Bildung happens when students receive knowledge about and insight into nature and environment, language and history, art and culture, religion and world views. … Bildung happens when they work individually and when they collaborate. … Bildung happens when students learn how to find the correct answer, but also when they understand there might not always be one correct answer (p.10, my translation).

This gives the impression that Bildung happens to all students, everywhere and all the time. Evenshaug and Lie point out that even if the processual aspect of Bildung is more emphasized here than in the previous curriculum, the idea of Bildung itself remains opaque. Largely, this is about content supposed to promote Bildung, but understood as something like the content-transcendence we met in Ellen Key's writings. However, the last sentence of the quotation might point toward a second-order understanding: the students have adapted to a context and learned how to find correct answers, thus, trial and error is reduced. They have learned how to learn, and that is a Learning II phenomenon. The understanding that there might not always be a correct answer, is also Learning II – the students can adapt to a different context, jump from a context is which there are correct answers to a context in which there are not, and where something else therefore is expected of them. This presupposes that the students can pick up on context markers which tell them that they are no longer in context A, but in context B. If they are unable to make such a shift, we might imagine a reaction not unlike that of Pavlov's dog: there should be a correct answer here, I am just incapable of finding it. That is not a good situation to be in for students.

The role of knowledge is generally portrayed as essential for Bildung. Somehow or other it is knowledge that creates Bildung, and as I said above, it is tempting to insist that a special kind of knowledge is required. Let us look at Ellen Key again. She insists that Bildung is about *being*, not about *knowing.* Hence, the content must be separable from its cultural context and made subject to educational intentions. It is not content for content's own sake, but content for its *formal* value. This is reminiscent of what Klafki calls formal Bildung, where individuals and their Bildung processes take precedence over content. This does not mean that content, in the form of knowledge, has no place in Key's thinking. As suggested above, Bildung theorists cannot avoid according a role to knowledge. Knowledge that is supposed to yield or promote Bildung, must be such that it affects both reason, emotions and imagination. Since individuals are different, they must be able to choose content for themselves, Key argues (1912, p.112), after they have acquired basic knowledge and skills (reading, writing, geography, history). It is the formal value of the knowledge that is important, not the content *per se.* But not even Key can completely avoid judgment of content. She, too, wants to claim that some types of knowledge promote Bildung better than others; for example, reading books and traveling.

Ulvik, Kvam and Eide incorporate both *being* and *having knowledge* – Bildung concerns who we *are*, they say, and at the same time the insist that it requires certain deep forms of understanding. Without these forms of knowledge, no Bildung. The idea seems to be that the knowledge we acquire influences us in specific ways and promotes the qualities commonly associated with Bildung: critical thinking, independence, democratic attitude, etc.

Content-transcendent effects and second-order effects can be difficult to distinguish, and is, surely, quite unclear in some cases. Learning to love literature evidently requires reading texts and working with them. But when Bildung discussions use terms such as "independent," "playful," knowledge-seeking" or "mild" it is no longer just content-transcendence. So yes, Bildung can result from us getting influenced by knowledge we learn. But in a systems-theoretical perspective such qualities are not direct effects of knowledge, they are effects of the context in which this knowledge is acquired. I argue that mildness, Ellen Key's prime sign of Bildung, is a result of second-order learning. Mildness is a Learning II phenomenon.

Personal qualities

Recall Bateson's point that personal traits, such as responsible, passive or domineering, are the business of educators. This is important. We, as educators, teachers, parents, should be deeply concerned about what personal qualities our students develop, and not least *how* it happens. Ellen Key thinks that we ourselves (by and large) develop our personal qualities, since they (more or less) follow from abilities we are born with. Others should refrain from meddling, she argues.

How are personal traits formed in a systems-theoretical perspective? This is where we can find a solution to Key's splendid paradox, Bildung as that which remains after you have forgotten everything you have learned. Descriptions of personal traits, Bateson says,

> … are derived not from what the subject has learned in the old simple sense of the word "learning," but from the context in which the simple learning has occurred (2009, p.217).

Bildung, development of personal qualities, is not Learning I but Learning II. A number of interesting implications follow. On the systems-theoretical perspective, what we call "personal qualities" strictly speaking do not belong to the individual. They belong to the relationship, the system. All concepts we use to describe personality, Bateson claims, have their roots in what happens *between* people, not something *inside* them (1980, p.146). Attributing personal traits to individuals is a fallacy. If we want to understand why people exhibit certain traits or behaviors, we should not look for inborn abilities or qualities but rather study the patterns in the first-order learning context that might bring about the second-order learning in question. This is an unusual and difficult way of thinking, but also pivotal to an analysis of Bildung as a second-order phenomenon.

Localizing traits *in* a person is a fallacy. This fallacy consists of a leap in logical type: a leap from something that is relational or contextual to some inner tendency, an ability, which

is then made responsible for the individual's actions (or the effect). So when Pavlov attributes a discriminatory ability to the dog, which he then says breaks down in the experimental situation, he commits a fallacy. The dog's discriminating is something it *does*, in a relation with Pavlov. If we turn the husband and wife interchange in Watzlawick, Bavelas and Johnson's example into personal qualities, we are left with a wife who is a nagger and a husband who is a withdrawer. Instead of a couple involved in a nagging-withdrawal patterns, we have two people with certain personal traits.

On a Batesonian perspective, this is particularly bad if we conceive of this inner tendency, the ability, as fixed or static. Then we easily think it can be the cause of behavior, and the path to attribution of guilt or responsibility is short. The wife is responsible for the marital disputes because she is a nagger. The husband is responsible for the marital disputes because he is a withdrawer. Thinking like this is a mistake, Bateson argues; it is treating patterns, forms, differences as if they were things. Asking why the wife nags and answer that it is because she is a nagger, is an empty explanation. The explanation must rather be sought in her communicational pattern with her husband.

On a systems-theoretical view, descriptions of personality traits – such as Key's mildness – only tell half the story. It does not make sense to describe anybody as mild, friendly, a good leader or passive outside a relationship involving at least two parties. When we attribute personal traits to somebody, we cut a piece from a larger sequence of interactions, experiences and events and transform it into an ability or a trait that can be used to explain behavior. We thereby overlook the other half of the relationship. The husband is passive in his relationship with his wife, his passivity is something that emerges in the relationship, the interaction. The moment we attribute a trait to somebody, we tend to think that this person *is* like that, more or less consistently. But all traits, Bateson argues, must be defined from relational patterns, from combinations of double descriptions (1980, p.147). We get double descriptions when we describe how all parties in a relation punctuate the interaction: the wife explains how she perceives the interaction with her husband, and he explains how he perceives his interaction with her. And then we see how they contribute to and maintain an interactional pattern.

It is occasionally difficult to interpret Bateson's views on personality traits, besides his repeated claim that traits are results of Learning II. When the emerge, are they then "owned" by the individual? In *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972) he talks about traits as if they are developed and owned by the individual. In *Mind and Nature* (1980) he appears more radical, insisting that the relationship is primary, not the individuals; hence, all talk about personality traits is a fallacy. This is a hard perspective to adopt, it turns our conventional beliefs upside down. In any case personal traits are not manifested outside relationships. It is hardly meaningful to describe me as "friendly" or "mild" here I sit and write. However, I can be

friendly in relation to others, and then the quality comes about as part of the interaction and my interlocutors contribute or make possible my friendliness. We develop our qualities in the contexts we take part in, not least the educational contexts we take part in. Traits are results of context learning. And in that way, they can be that which remains after we have forgotten everything we have learned on a first-order level.

What can teachers do?

Can anything practically useful be extracted from this? Yes, it can. There are several a teacher can do. Evidently, there are also limitations here to be to be aware of.

A systems-theoretical view implies that teachers direct their attention toward the context. And toward their own communication: if the teacher says one thing and the students perceive the context as saying something else, a double communication takes place that makes it difficult to be a student. Teachers might say they want students to think critically, but the context might say otherwise – critical questions are brushed off, ridiculed or ignored. Conflict between utterance and context often creates confusion and frustration. Teachers should therefore organize a context that does not conflict with explicit communication. Next, teachers should see to it that this context is maintained and repeated, so that students know what the name of the game is, and that it is predictable. And all the while the teachers should think: what kind of context should I organize, to make it probable that my students develop good habits, abilities or traits, as results of the *way* we work with the content? Ellen Key might be right; it is not the type of knowledge that is important. For her, the interchanges between reason, emotion and imagination are essential. In a systems-theoretical perspective, it is the way we do things, the way we communicate, and the way we enter into relationships that are essential. This in no way precludes Key's interchanges. Learning II happens where Learning I happens.

There is also a limitation here. Teachers can organize predictable contexts for their students. But, as Bateson reminds us, contexts are (often) parts of larger contexts. It is the meta-context that classifies the context, not the other way around. Classrooms are in a context called school, school has a national curriculum (at least in Norway), there are political intentions and international large-scale students assessment. These contexts might contradict one another. Utterances in the classroom can contradict the name of the game in the classroom. Silent messages from the school can contradict the classroom context, and the message from policy makers (explicit or implicit) can contradict the name of the game of a certain school. Society at large may convey completely different messages about what is important than what happens in school. And yet – I think that a teacher can create a productive, repetitive context, together with the students.

The second main lesson to learn, concerns the relational aspect. Individual perspecives are not sufficient. Contrary to the husband and wife in Watzlawick, Bavelas and Johnson's example, teachers are well advised to hone their skills at punctuating relations and not (just) their own perspective. This is an uncommon and difficult way of viewing the world. But teachers who can deal in double descriptions, their own punctuation *and* the students', can understand student behavior in very different ways. Not by attributing traits (lazy, evasive, motivated, obedient, aggressive, etc.) but by understanding how such traits emerge and become observable in interactions, with among others the teachers themselves. Generally, we should be prepared to see our own contributions to other people's behavior, as unpleasant as it may be. Explaining behavior is a complex affair on Bateson's theory. To understand why people think and act the way they do, we must ask which contexts are likely to bring about the traits and actions we want to explain. In principle, explanation of human behavior happens by reference to contexts and meta-contexts (and even meta-meta-contexts). This should stop us from drawing hasty and (over)simplified conclusions about traits, motives and actions and put labels on people. It should also draw our attention to our own contributions to other people's behavior.

Concluding remarks

I have discussed Bildung as a second-order phenomenon, as a result of context learning rather than of knowledge acquisition. Viewed as Bildung theory, I presume that this is unorthodox. I by no means claim that this way of thinking covers all the different uses of the term Bildung.

I do claim, though, that a systems-theoretical analysis has three important advantages. First, it redirects our thinking from content to the context in which the content is communicated. Thus, we can leave behind discussions about which content, which types of knowledge, is best suited for Biildung processes. Bildung as Learning II is brought about by relationships and context where we interact with others.

Second, traits we normally think of as belonging to the individual, are on this perspective relational. Attributing them to an individual amounts to telling only half the story, and quite often leave out one's own contribution to the trait in question, positive as well as negative.

Third, we can tease out something concrete that a teacher actually can do in their classroom, together with their students. Among other things, this concerns creating a context for the students where utterances and the name of the game correspond, so that students know what is expected of them. If a context changes, the teacher can meta-communicate:

explicitly tell the students that the name of the game with *this* task is a different one, since it is about evaluating arguments rather than finding correct answers.

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When Dialogue Fails: Political Subjectivity and The Fantasies of Student Agency in Philosophy for Children

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Abstract

In the wake of increasing political polarisation, epistemic instability, and cultural fragmentation, the secondary classroom has become a contested space for the formation of political subjectivity. This paper investigates how subjectivity is constituted during classroom discussions on contemporary political issues, particularly within pedagogical contexts informed by Philosophy for Children (P4C). Drawing on insights from Australian classrooms, the paper considers how teachers and students negotiate voice, agency, and epistemic authority in dialogic spaces, and how these negotiations reveal underlying tensions between individualistic and structural accounts of subjectivity.

The P4C movement, grounded in deliberative dialogue and the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model, invites students to generate philosophical questions, interrogate contestable concepts, and work toward epistemic progress through collaborative discussion (Gregory & Laverty, 2017). This pedagogical practice well situated to facilitate discussions of contemporary political topics such as misinformation, extremism, ecological disaster, populism, and democratic erosion. However, while P4C aspires to egalitarianism and open-ended inquiry, these classroom spaces often surface emotionally charged and ideologically saturated responses that mirror broader social antagonisms. Here, students' speech does not simply reflect personal opinion, but rather implicates them in discursive structures, sometimes hurtful, sometimes resistant, that exceed the individual.

Common approaches to student agency tend to bifurcate between ego-based individualism, which emphasises autonomy and free expression, and sociological frameworks, which focus on structural determination by race, class, or culture (Charteris & Smardon, 2019). Both of these approaches, however, overlook the psychic dynamics of desire, fantasy, and identification that underpin ideological attachments. To move beyond this binary, this paper draws on Lacanian psychoanalysis, specifically Lacan's theory of the split subject, to reconceptualise subjectivity not as pre-existing or unified, but as constituted in and through discourse (Fink, 1996). In Lacanian terms, the subject is not the coherent "I" of speech, but a fleeting trace that emerges where discourse falters—where contradiction, hesitation, or unconscious speech interrupts the symbolic order.

Lacanian theory posits that fantasy functions as a screen that organises the subject's desire and sustains their relation to ideology (Žižek, 1989). In the classroom, political discussions frequently reveal these fantasies, not through explicit content alone, but in affective responses, discursive breakdowns, or resistant silences. For instance, the tension between the teacher's facilitative neutrality and students' demand for moral certainty can expose fantasies about authority, truth, and recognition. From this perspective, classroom discussions are not merely epistemological events, but also libidinal and ideological ones, in which subjects are interpolated, fractured, and momentarily constituted.

This paper concludes by proposing that a Lacanian approach enables educators to view classroom dialogue not as a neutral arena for rational exchange but as a dynamic site where unconscious structures, ideological attachments, and symbolic ruptures play out. This repositioning imagines the role of the educator, not as a guarantor of knowledge, but as a facilitator of encounters with the Real, where the subject might emerge as divided and

desiring. Rather than seeking consensus, harmony, or "merely" epistemic progress, P4C classrooms could be cultivated as spaces that better tolerate ambiguity, embrace inherent subjective alienation, and support ethical-political reflection beyond identitarian or didactic frames.

By reframing classroom speech as a site of psychic investment and symbolic struggle, this study contributes to current debates on democratic education, student agency, and the ethics of facilitating political dialogue in schools. It suggests that understanding how subjectivity is constituted in classroom discussions requires attention not only to what is said, but also to how, and where, discourse breaks down.

Keywords

Philosophy for Children, Politics, Dialogue, Subjectivity, Psychoanalysis

Context

In this article I investigate discussions of contemporary political issues in Philosophy for Children (p4c) classrooms. In my own teaching practice, I found that the egalitarian nature of p4c often drew out personal opinions that could be hurtful or mirror broader social tensions. Given concerns about extremism (Aly et al., 2014; Harris-Hogan et al., 2019), misinformation (D'Olimpio, 2018; Legg, 2024), misogyny (Hill, 2025), and threats to democracy (McGowan, 2022), examining how teachers navigate such discussions is both timely and significant. Contemporary political issues shape the lived realities of students and their communities. As Tudball (2011) argues, education is inherently political, a site where subjectivities are formed and negotiated. Schools are, therefore, not only for knowledge transmission but also arenas for practicing democratic values of dialogue, pluralism, and critical engagement. The 2025 revisions to the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Philosophy Study Design reinforce this imperative, with new emphases on belief formation, epistemic responsibility, and contemporary issues such as echo chambers and epistemic injustice (VCAA, n.d.). I situate this project within this shifting curricular and societal landscape.

Philosophy for Children (p4c), first developed by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp in the 1970s, embeds philosophical dialogue in education through the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model (S. Williams, 2016). While there is a diversity of off-shoots and variations of p4c practice (Johansson, 2018; Vansieleghem & Kennedy, 2011; Worley, 2021), an exploration of these differences is outside the scope of this article. Instead, I will focus on the aspects of p4c practice that most variations share. Put very simply, students respond to a stimulus by collaboratively generating and exploring philosophical questions, while the teacher acts as facilitator rather than the content authority.

Since its adoption in Australia in the 1980s, p4c has been adapted through grassroots initiatives and has contributed to Australia's standing as a leader in philosophy education (Burgh & Thornton, 2018). Research consistently demonstrates benefits for students'

reasoning, communication, and critical engagement, with particular advantages for disadvantaged groups (Millett et al., 2018; Trickey & Topping, 2004). Recent scholarship also emphasises its capacity to foster democratic dispositions, environmental awareness, and inclusive dialogue Fynes-Clinton et al. (2024; Thornton et al., 2024).

Central to these capacities of p4c is the question of student agency. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) ((1989)) requires children's views be given due weight. Agency is, however, contested: sometimes framed as autonomy or leadership (Department of Education and Training, 2019), other times as socially and politically shaped (Charteris & Smardon, 2019). Philosophy for children presupposes that students gain greater ownership of dialogue (Barrow, 2015), but more research is needed on how this plays out in politically charged discussions. In this, teachers' ethical positions are equally critical, whether they present themselves as neutral facilitators or as actors with explicit commitments reveals their orientation toward democracy, authority, and the student–teacher relationship.

These tensions connect p4c with the discourse of critical pedagogy. Freire (1968) critiques education that casts students as passive recipients, instead advocating dialogic learning that fosters critical consciousness. Sharing this aspiration but facing contradictions, p4c's egalitarian procedures cannot fully eliminate power dynamics (Funston, 2017). Lipman (2003) envisioned the teacher as neutral facilitator, while critical pedagogy demands explicit partisanship with the oppressed (Kohan, 2018). These unresolved tensions, about the goals of political dialogue, the role of teachers, the importance of agency and voice and what exactly contrains them, are at the core of this article.

In what follows, I treat these questions of voice, authority, and participation not only as pedagogical design problems but as questions about how student agency is structured by ideology. Rather than assuming that more discussion or more student choice straightforwardly translates into greater agency, I ask what kinds of subject positions are made available, and to whom, in p4c classrooms when contemporary political issues are on the table. This opens onto a more psychoanalytic reading of agency: one that distinguishes between forms of agency that remain largely imaginary and those moments in which the symbolic co-ordinates of the classroom are disturbed. The later sections of this article therefore return to these tensions through a Lacanian account of ideology, fantasy, and the Real, in order to reconsider what it might mean for p4c to cultivate genuinely transformative student agency.

Controversial Contemporary Political Issues

In an era of political fragmentation, polarisation, and misinformation (Kubin & von Sikorski,

2021), fostering democratic engagement through education is crucial. Growing numbers of young people are picking up extremist rhetoric (Aly et al., 2014; Harris-Hogan et al., 2019; Stahl et al., 2021), and researchers have noted rising male supremacy among young Australian men (Roberts et al., 2025) and behavioural changes in boys post-COVID (Wescott et al., 2024). Yet, direct teacher intervention is criticised for damaging relationships with students and communities (Harris-Hogan et al., 2019). Teachers, therefore, must navigate competing ethical commitments (McCarthy et al., 2023), making these issues particularly complex in classrooms.

At the heart of these complexities is controversy itself. Micheal Hand & Levinson (2012) distinguish epistemic controversy (issues unsettled but open to reason) from behavioural controversy (issues imbued with emotional and social significance). Garrett (2020), however, stresses that many political issues are both: unsettled in knowledge terms but deeply entangled with identity and affect. These dimensions make them important, and difficult, to discuss. Discussion, Micheal Hand & Levinson (2012) argue, is the most effective pedagogical method for controversial issues, cultivating empathy for other views and fostering skills for democratic participation. Philosophy for children provides one of the richest frameworks for this kind of collaborative inquiry.

At the same time, contemporary "post-truth" conditions raise further challenges. Legg (2024) highlights truth, not as a fixed entity, but as a communal practice requiring shared assumptions and social infrastructure. This aligns with the Community of Inquiry model central to p4c, which situates truth as praxis rather than product. In p4c classrooms, however, controversy is not only epistemic but affective (Garrett, 2020; Micheal Hand & Levinson, 2012). Therefore, discussions of issues often seen as controversial, for example, regarding race, privilege, or identity, often provoke discomfort and defensiveness (Chetty & Suissa, 2016; Kizel, 2016). Students may reclassify beliefs as immutable features of identity, halting dialogue (Micheal Hand & Levinson, 2012). While teachers often attempt to neutralise conflict through abstraction or procedure, but such strategies can suppress minority voices and blunt democratic potential (Chetty & Suissa, 2016). Instead, discomfort should be recognised as a sign that inquiry is addressing lived dimensions of subjectivity and power. Thus, while p4c offers an ideal space for democratic dialogue, its engagement with politically controversial issues is *uniquely challenging*.

If we are to claim that p4c offers a greater student agency, so that young people might express and interrogate their own political and ethical views, then we must take seriously the challenges posed to the notion of agency in p4c. At stake here is not only the facilitation of discussion: how minority voices might be better heard in CoI-informed discussions, but the foundational questions of how ideology structures such encounters. Ideology animates political talk, shapes attachments of identity and affect, and yet this affect also risks

foreclosing inquiry. It is precisely this tension that grounds my interest in controversy in p4c. In this article I seek to clarify the status and function of ideology in discussions of contemporary political issues in the p4c.

What is Ideology?

Ideology suffers from what Gerring (1997) calls "semantic promiscuity" (p. 957). That is to say, that at different times, in different academic areas, ideology is defined in different ways. To avoid unnecessary historical background I have attempted to outline the ways in which ideology has been discussed that are relevant to my inquiry while still giving some historical background for both context and to justify my particular understanding of the concept.

The concept of ideology originates in the late 18th century with de Tracy (1992), who envisioned it as a science of ideas. Napoleon's polemical use of the term, however, shifted it toward propaganda and political struggle (Backer, 2020). This leads, crucially, to Engels & Marx (1985), who developed the concept further, using it to describe *both* false consciousness and the material conditions that give rise to consciousness. This dual lineage carried into the Frankfurt School, where ideology critique became a hallmark of critical theory, exposing how culture and institutions reproduce domination (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2017). Later, Althusser (Althusser, 2014) reformulated ideology as the "imaginary relation to their real conditions of existence" (p.181), insisting on its *materiality* in practices and institutions. For Althusser, schools are a Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), producing subjects through rituals of recognition and interpellation. Education theorists such as Apple (2019) and Giroux (2011) drew heavily on this conception, emphasising how curricula and pedagogy are shot through with ideological selections that stratify students by class, race, and gender.

At the level of intellectual history, it has been argued that ideology has "ended" as a category. In psychology, its decline paralleled the abandonment of concepts like "personality" and "human nature" (Jost, 2006), reflecting broader shifts toward rejecting universal categories and meta-narratives (Rasiński, 2011). While ideology has had a long and assorted history throughout the academy, in various disciplines and at various times, it has fallen out of use (Malešević & MacKenzie, 2002). This shift in thinking is in part due to the work of theorist such as Foucault. Foucault "raised doubts about ideology-critique insofar as its proponents, Marxian or otherwise, assumed a notion of truth as accurate understanding of the intrinsic nature of things—including the intrinsic nature of man" (Kumar, 2005, p. 62). In a similar fashion, Deleuze & Guattari (1987) state quite plainly that "there is no ideology and there never has been" (p. 5). Foucault, his contemporaries such as Deleuze and Guattari, and theorists who follow in that intellectual tradition, theorise dispersed notions of

power and authority that problematise traditional conceptions of ideology. Of particular problematic status are notions of ideology that espouse a *true reality* which ideology paints over with false understanding.

Despite the critique of universal categories of ideology, Fuchs (2020) notes that definitions of ideology continue to proliferate and oscillate along a spectrum: from a more neutral "worldview" on one end to "false consciousness" on the other. This ambiguity underscores the conceptual elasticity of ideology and its enduring analytical value. As such, scholars have sought to rehabilitate ideology "after poststructuralism" (Malešević & MacKenzie, 2002). This, however, poses issues. C. Williams (2002) argues that the "epistemological opposition between ideology and reality, on which the term traditionally relied, has collapsed" (p. 25). Therefore, ideology is open to new critique: how exactly does one measure thedistorting effects of ideology, if one can not have access to some form of stable, unaffected, reality? Following from this, C. Williams (2002) argues that conceptions of ideology can be mounted that do not rely on the binary oppositions of illusion and reality. While other scholars attempt to incorporate theories of ideology back into poststructural thought. Peters (2003), for example, reads Marx *through* poststructuralism to frame ideology in terms of knowledge capitalism, where education itself becomes entangled in ideological production. Szakolczai (2003) is more critical however, arguing that attempts to rehabilitate ideology may themselves be ideological projects, secular equivalents of religious dogma.

Regarding the role the ideology plays in mediating agency in p4c, I am interested in approaches to ideology which foreground the relationships between identity, subjectivity, and affect. Discussions of contemporary political issues in classrooms evoke a range of challenges (Garrett, 2020; Micheal Hand & Levinson, 2012). Interrogating these challenges, I argue, requires a sufficiently rigorous conception of ideology that moves beyond a true-false dichotomy. Furthermore, rather than a normative or descriptive approach to ideology, the critical theory tradition foregrounds the complex ethical status of ideology and ideological critique (Zizek, 2012). This ethical nuance comes in part due to, and in turn informs, the diversity of ontological theorisation of the status and function of ideology and ideological critique. This ontology of ideology finds its ultimate expression in theories which analyse the role of ideology in subject formation (Althusser, 2014).

Ideology in Education

The term ideology has waxed and waned in educational research. Backer (2020) traces how, while widely used between the 1960s and 1980s, it declined in favour of a diverse range of terms such as "discourse". Early critical pedagogues such as Apple and Giroux explicitly foregrounded ideology as central to understanding how schools reproduce inequality. Apple

(1978) emphasised how the selection of curricular symbols is directly tied to the stratification of students, while Giroux (2011) developed a critical pedagogy that positioned ideology as a terrain of struggle within and against institutions. For Apple (1978), ideology was not merely *in* the curriculum but structured the very processes of selection, teaching, and evaluation. Giroux (2011) by optimistic contrast, emphasised the agency of teachers and students, highlighting how classrooms could also become sites of resistance. His version of critical pedagogy thus treats ideology as a terrain of contestation, where dominant forms can be challenged and reconfigured.

Critical pedagogy more broadly takes up this contestation as its defining task. Freire (1968) insists that education is never neutral: it either functions as an instrument of domination, reproducing the ideology of the oppressors, or as the practice of freedom, enabling critical consciousness and collective action. Freire reframes ideology, at least the kinds of ideology he is concerned with, not simply as a distortion but as the lived "culture of silence" (p. 30) that keeps the oppressed from naming and thus transforming their world. Education, for Freire, is therefore a political project: to unveil ideological structures and empower students to act against them. Freire describes this ideology of oppression, as he names it, that pervades education:

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. (Freire, 1968, p. 72)

Building on Freire, Giroux (2011) developed a specifically North American version of critical pedagogy, highlighting the role of popular culture, media, and curriculum in ideological formation. For Giroux, schools are both ideological state apparatuses, in an Althusserian sense, *and* sites of resistance. Teachers, he argues, must take up their role as transformative intellectuals, able to critique dominant ideologies while fostering democratic agency in students. This makes pedagogy itself a political practice, inseparable from ideology critique.

Hooks (1994) speaks to this tradition with an emphasis on race, gender, and affect in the classroom. Her work highlights how ideology operates through the marginalisation of Black, feminist, and queer voices, and how education must create spaces for counter-hegemonic speech. For hooks, the classroom is a site of radical openness, where confronting ideology is inseparable from cultivating belonging and care. Importantly, hooks underscores that ideology does not only operate at the level of abstract structures but also in embodied practices, emotions, and interpersonal dynamics of teaching and learning. In more recent

work, Kim (2021) extends these insights by linking ideology to the imaginary and myth, while retaining Althusser's emphasis on interpellation as subject formation. For Kim, ideology is not simply a mystification but a necessary imaginary through which subjects make sense of their social reality. Similarly, Leask (2018) expands the Althusserian frame by reading Spinoza's concept of imagination as the affective basis of ideology in education, thereby grounding ideological processes in the embodied lives of students. This highlights the way ideology is not only cognitive but also affective and, crucially for many theorists, material. Taken together, this line of scholarship suggests that ideology in education cannot be reduced to false beliefs or external impositions. Instead, it is woven into curricula, pedagogy, practices, material, places, and the lived affective attachments of teachers and students. Schools, as Althusser (2014) argued, are key ideological state apparatuses, but in the tradition of critical pedagogy they are also sites where ideological reproduction can be disrupted, reworked, or challenged through pedagogy. What is not clear, from the relative optimism of critical pedagogy's project, are the precise coordinates which map a way out of the ideology's inescapability, without recourse to pure relativism or contradiction. Put simply, I question the ontological grounds on which critical pedagogy asserts a realm outside of ideology. If we are to put forth p4c's potential to instantiate greater agency, against various ideological structures, then I question how precisely we articulate such a topology.

Ideology in Political Classroom Discussion

While the term ideology itself doesn't have a strong currency in contemporary literature on classroom discussions, a family resemblance can be found, and therefore ideology inferred, through similarity. I interpret these other terms: affect, identity, etc. as a proxy for a kind of ideology. As McAnulty & Garrett (2022) state:

The complicated terrain of our current moment where tensely knotted affects

and emotions, indeed, are intimate parts of our lives that have to do with
identity, history, justice, and equity. (p. 108)

This intimacy between the socio-political and our seemingly innate or intuitive feelings of identity, history, justice, and equity is emblematic of ideology (Althusser, 2014; Fraser, 1995; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Research on classroom political discussion identifies these ideological markers as both a resource and a barrier. For example, Micheal Hand & Levinson (2012) highlight how discussion is pedagogically rich precisely because "people's identities, affiliations and life experiences" (p. 616) generate passion and sincerity. Yet, they also caution that when students reclassify opinions as immutable identity features, dialogue

can stall.

Tension within ideologies mediating role in discussions underscores its ambivalent: it both animates discussion and risks foreclosing inquiry. This seemingly dual role of ideology, barrier and resource, can be traced back through the lineage of its use. As seen with Gramsci (1971), ideology is not reducible to distortion or false consciousness, but instead names the terrain on which hegemony is secured. Hegemony, in his account, involves the organisation of consent through the lived forms of common sense embedded in everyday practices, culture, and institutions. Crucially, this redefinition means that ideology is no longer *only* a mechanism of domination, but also a potential resource for emancipation (Anderson, 2017). Subaltern groups can construct counter-hegemonies, these are alternative ideological formations that articulate new ways of living, thinking, and organising, thereby challenging the dominance of the ruling bloc. Ideology, in this sense, is not simply an obstacle to be unmasked but a field of struggle to be strategically occupied. It is precisely this Gramscian insight that Laclau & Mouffe (2001) take up. In their post-Marxist reformulation, ideology is reworked as a discursive terrain where meaning itself is contingent and contestable. In this framework, emancipation from oppressive regimes cannot rely on the unfolding of historical necessity (Engels & Marx, 1985), but must actively construct new hegemonies through ideological struggle. In other words, ideology becomes indispensable to any project of radical democracy (Butler et al., 2000), not a mask to be torn away, but the very material with which emancipatory politics is built.

This thinking, of ideology as contestation, can be seen in the work of critical pedagogy as well. Apple (2019) and Giroux (2011), as well as Freire (1968), conceive of roles for educators which see them battling within the realm of ideas against oppression and for emancipatory politics. What Michael Hand (2023) and Micheal Hand & Levinson (2012) identify is precisely the social power of ideology as seen in the passion, sincerity, and affect relating to issues of identity, justice, equity, etc. Similarly, as Garrett (2020) emphasises, there is an important link between emotional significance and political knowledge for understanding the context of increasing political divisions across democratic countries. However, emotional significance can be read here proxy for the more fundamental issue of the interpellating effect of ideology. Garrett (2020) states that discussions of controversial issues in classrooms are needed, but that they require particular approaches to be of value. These approaches need to acknowledge the emotional demands of these kinds of conversations as there is "agreement of scholars from a variety of disciplines that our political lives are indeed constituted of emotional and non-rational components" (Garrett, 2020, p. 338). These emotional and non-rational components inform a diverse range of responses in students. As Garrett (2020) argues, psychical defence mechanisms of resistance, ignorance, disavowal and projection each describe "different route[s] by which

the individual will unconsciously steer away from knowledge that poses a threat to the conscious notions of self, identity and relation" (p. 339). These complexities inform the ideological barriers to having greater agency in discussions around contemporary political issues.

Ideology and Philosophy for/with Children

This discussion of ideology in education and political classroom dialogue can be sharpened by considering ideology's relation to Philosophy for Children (p4c) approaches. These approaches foreground classroom dialogue as both a pedagogical method and a political space (Kizel, 2023), and as such, it is inseparable from the ideological formations that constitute subjectivity, identity, belonging, and exclusion. Rosas (2024) argues that ideology operates not only through coloniality but also through adultism: the privileging of adult viewpoints that systematically marginalise children's perspectives. From the vantage point of liberation philosophy, adultism functions as an ideological apparatus that renders children's voices peripheral, situating them as future citizens rather than present participants. Philosophy for children, when rethought through a childist lens, offers a counter-hegemonic practice (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001) Children become part of an ageless pueblo (Rosas, 2024), a collective actor capable of contesting ideological domination in the present, rather than merely preparing for emancipation deferred to adulthood. Yet, as Wurtz (2024) cautions, positioning p4c as a trojan horse for educational reform risks reinscribing ideological histories of race and exclusion. The school, often privileged as the natural site for philosophical inquiry, carries entrenched histories of white supremacy and coercive governance. To assume that philosophy in schools can *straightforwardly* produce social progress, without attending to these ideological inheritances, is to risk reifying them. For minoritised students especially, p4c can inadvertently reproduce the very hegemonies it seeks to resist. As so often is the case, when even well-meaning educators are challenged by uncomfortable questions they move into "white talk": resistance, denial, hostility, ignorance, and defensiveness (Chetty & Suissa, 2016). Applebaum (2010) calls this white complicity pedagogy. Chetty & Suissa (2016) disagree with claims that p4c inherently guards against the thoughtless acceptance of tradition, authority, and prejudices. They claim there needs to be a willingness to experience discomfort, as so often the ideological reproduction that occurs in p4c spaces doesn't come in the form of overt inculcation or indoctrination but from subtly avoiding what they call "no go areas". In this light, seeking greater agency by means of ideology critique requires situating classroom dialogues within the material histories of race, schooling, and the politics of reform, rather than treating philosophy as an ideologically "pure" space that inherently protects against hegemonic and ideological reproduction.

Similarly to Leask (2018), Wolf (2024) draws on Deleuze to discuss affect as a way of conceptualising subjectivity beyond analytic-logical rationalism. Traditional p4c, rooted in Lipman's commitments to reasonableness and critical thinking, risks reproducing a liberal ideology of the autonomous subject (Wolf, 2024). By contrast, approaches which take affect seriously reveal how ideology is lived in and through bodies, gestures, and intensities that circulate in the p4c community of inquiry. This resonates with Hooks (1994) who recognises teaching as embodied and affective, but theorises that affect itself can be the terrain of struggle, the means by which students are interpellated into or resist discursive norms. Taken together, these perspectives reveal p4c as deeply enmeshed in ideological dynamics. Rather than seeing p4c as a neutral method of dialogue, I situate it as an ideological practice, one that can reproduce dominant structures or, alternatively, enact counter-hegemonic forms of collective inquiry. In this sense, philosophy with children exemplifies the Gramscian and post-Marxist insight that ideology is never merely an obstacle to critique, but also the very material through which emancipation and new hegemonies are forged.

In unpacking the history of ideology, and its relation to the education, political classroom discussion, and p4c, ideology can be view as dispersed, diverse, embodied, and constitutive, but many of the theories supposed ideology to be a ground of contestation. This conceptualisation leaves behind both ontological and ethical problematics. The ontological: if ideology is an object or relation which configures dominant thought through hegemonic reproduction (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001) and interpellation (Althusser, 2014), there remains no place *outside* of ideology in which to mount critique. Put another way, ideological critique dissolves itself into mere relativism. This leads directly into the ethical issue. If there is no escape from ideology, and critique of one particular ideology is merely in service of a different ideological view, the teacher's ethical position is compromised. As opposed to status of teachers as public intellectual transformers envisioned by critical pedagogy, the consequences of the relativism of ideology leave the teacher as a purely empty facilitator. In answering the question of the status and function of ideology, it is precisely these two issues that are at stake.

Lacan and Žižek: A critique of ideology

Lacanian psychoanalyst and Hegelian philosopher Slavoj Zizek writes prolifically on the topic of ideology and ideological critique. In his work he deals directly with the ontological problem of ideology. Žižek's work is distinctive because it synthesises the Marxist problematic of ideology with Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic categories, thereby rethinking the very grounds on which ideology critique can be mounted. Rather than treating ideology as illusion, misrepresentation, or even as a set of discursive practices, Žižek (1989) insists that

ideology is sustained by fantasy and enjoyment, both concepts, and his application of them, are underpinned by the work and theory of Lacan (1966).

Lacan's tripartite schema of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real situates the subject not as a unified being but as fundamentally divided Lacan (1966). The Symbolic order of language and law interpellates the subject, but, unlike Althusser (2014), this symbolic consistency is never complete. This incomplete constitution of the subject is supported, propped up, by fantasy, which fills in the gaps and provides the subject with a coherent sense of reality. At the same time, the Real, the third of Lacan's tripartite schema, names what resists symbolisation altogether, the traumatic kernel that cannot be fully integrated into discourse. This Real can only be glimpsed at times when symbolic representation and the fantasmatic elements which structure reality falter. For Lacan, fantasy is not an escape from reality but its very support, "reality" itself is sustained by the fantasmatic screen that both conceals and structures our relation to the Real (Zizek, 1992).

Žižek reconfigures ideology critique by reeading Marx through this Lacanian lens. Žižek (1989) argues that ideology functions not by masking reality, but by organising the subject's desire around an impossible object, what Lacan (2014) calls the objet petit a, that embodies the surplus-enjoyment, or jouissance, that eludes capture. Ideology thus persists not because people are *deceived* but because it speaks to their enjoyment, it tells us not only what to think but how to desire. This explains why, as Zizek (2012) notes, attempts to step "outside" ideology are themselves ideological: "the stepping out of (what we experience as) ideology is the very form of our enslavement to it" (p. 6). Porter (2002) notes that Žižek maintains a paradoxical tension here, any attempt to move beyond ideology only reinscribes it, yet critique, as Zizek (2012) argues, remains necessary. This reformulation grapples directly with the two problematics raised earlier. Ontologically, if ideology is fantasy's structuring of reality, there is indeed no external position outside ideology. But this does not collapse into relativism. Instead, critique might consist in locating the points where ideology falters, moments where the fantasmatic frame no longer secures meaning and the subject glimpses the Real.

The appeal of Žižek's framework lies in its attentiveness to enjoyment (jouissance) and fantasy in sustaining ideology. Drawing on Lacan and Žižek thus allows this thesis to conceptualise ideology not merely as a set of external impositions, or as a *completely inescapable* structuring of subjectivity itself. Instead, Lacan's notion of Real, something which escapes complete symbolisation, leaves open the possibility to mount a theory of ideological critique while still acknowledging the unavoidable structuring role that ideology plays in constituting the subject. This, in turn, grounds a psychoanalytic approach to discussing contemporary political issues in the p4c classroom. One is which the question of the status and function of ideology is dealt with immanently. That is to say, without imposing

a new ontological space into the topology of the ideologically structured social world. Instead, the turn to Lacan's Real, is an acknowledgement of the paradoxical contradiction of interpellation by ideology. The Real emerges from within the inherent contradictions of the symbolic order which fails to fully make sense of the world, or to put it another way, the inherent contradictions *are* the emergence of the Real.

Beyond Imaginary Agency

In addressing the status and function of ideology in classroom political discussion, I employ this conceptualisation of ideology. This framing of the problem allows me to move beyond the "slick 'postmodern' solution" (Zizek, 2012, p. 17) of relativism, while still honestly addressing the legitimate ontological and ethical issues that ideology presents, namely: on what grounds can we assert any form of legitimate agency against that which so intimately structures our relation with the social world? Here I intentionally conflate Žižek's notion of ideological critique and agency. I do this to assert their shared endeavour and problem, and to frame ideological critique, and the project of contesting the seemingly complete interpollation by ideology, as sharing characteristics with the political project of student agency.

Previous research has identified tokenistic, shallow, or structurally predetermined forms of student agency (Muir, 2024) For instance, voice-as-feedback, choice-as-minor-variation, or agency restricted to matters of small significance such as selecting topics within pre-set parameters, these practices can be reread through a Lacanian frame as forms of imaginary agency. In Lacanian theory, the imaginary stabilises a coherent image of the self, a flattering mirror in which the subject misrecognises themselves as autonomous, unified, and in control. Much of what schools celebrate as agency, listening to students' voices, structured student leadership pathways, or controlled forms of co-contribution, functions in precisely this way. It produces a illusion in which students see themselves as agents without encountering the symbolic structures that actually constrain their action. Muir (2024) shows how these practices operate within tightly regulated curricular, institutional, and discursive limits. Imaginary agency thus names the school-sanctioned fantasy that agency has been granted, while the coordinates of action remain unchanged. This form of agency parallels forms of ideological critique that merely parrot another ideological mantra, avowing its virtues, without stepping outside of symbolic structuring of ideology itself.

Imaginary agency is tokenistic, not because it is insincere, but because it is structurally incapable of disturbing the symbolic order in which systemic inequality, teacher-student roles, and institutional demands are reproduced. From this perspective, the problem is not that students lack agency but that the form in which agency is offered is already captured by ideology, foreclosing encounters with the Real that might open genuinely transformative,

unpredictable, or risky forms of subject formation.

This illusion of agency is exemplified in the p4c classroom, particularly in discussion of controversial political issues, where the egalitarian veneer of the Community of Inquiry can obscure the deeper ideological structures that organise speech, identity, and affect. In such moments, students may appear empowered—able to choose questions, shape dialogue, and express their views—yet their participation remains bound by the same symbolic coordinates that structure their social world. The affective intensities that surface in discussions of race, gender, nationalism, or power are not merely interpersonal challenges but symptoms of the ideological fantasies through which students make sense of themselves. Students often cling to opinions reclassified as aspects of fixed identity, while teachers gravitate toward procedural neutrality, abstraction, or white talk to contain discomfort. These are not simply pedagogical missteps, they are the material enactments of ideology itself. In this sense, the p4c classroom becomes a microcosm of the broader social field, a space where agency is proclaimed but often pre-scripted, where inquiry is encouraged but structurally confined, and where dialogue is pursued but only insofar as it does not threaten the fantasmatic stability that ideology provides.

Yet, if ideology structures even the conditions of dialogue, the task is not to seek a mythical position outside ideology but to recognise where its fantasmatic consistency falters. Here, the Lacanian category of the Real becomes crucial. Rather than functioning as another normative standard that prescribes how students ought to act, the Real names moments when the symbolic order fails to absorb or domesticate what emerges in discussion, moments of contradiction, breakdown, affect, or discomfort that signal the limits of imaginary agency. It is precisely in these cracks that a different mode of agency becomes possible. This agency is not reducible to choice or procedural participation, but one grounded in an encounter with what cannot be easily rationalised or smoothed over. If p4c is to genuinely empower student agency by supporting students in navigating contemporary political issues, its commitment to democratic dialogue should be interrogated. The question, then, is whether p4c can move beyond supporting imaginary agency toward cultivating the conditions under which students and teachers might confront these ruptures, dwell in their discomfort, and begin to reconfigure the symbolic coordinates that structure their participation.

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Decentring linguistic hegemony in peer review: relational epistemology, affect and ethical becoming

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper introduces Onto-Epistemic Mutual Becoming as a relational, affective and ethical approach to peer review. It critiques dominant epistemic and linguistic gatekeeping practices in traditional reviewing, particularly their marginalising effects on non-Anglophone scholars. Drawing on Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist, Indigenous and affective epistemologies, we reimagine peer review as dialogic, inclusive and coconstructive. Through translingual, intergenerational narratives, we call for publishing practices premised on ethical responsibility, interpretive generosity and epistemic justice. -

Design/methodology/approach – This paper applies a narrative inquiry approach and draws on Deleuzian and Eastern relational ontologies to propose a transversal, ethically attuned peer review approach. Through the experiences of three multilingual scholars – early-career (Xingxing), mid-career (Nashid) and senior (Sender) – we illustrate affective harm, epistemic exclusion and transformative alternatives grounded in translanguaging, mentorship and dialogic reciprocity. Theoretical lenses include Ren, Wu Wei, Pratityasamutpada and collective Indigenous accountability.

Findings – Traditional peer review often enacts affective and epistemic harm through linguistic regulation and methodological policing. However, relationally grounded, translanguaging-friendly and mentorship-based approaches disrupt dominant norms and foster inclusion. Experiential narratives show how scholars actively resist marginalisation and co-create epistemic spaces of care, reciprocity and plural recognition.

Research limitations/implications – Based on a small set of narrative accounts, this study prioritises depth and transferability over objectivity and generalisability. Nonetheless, its theoretical innovation opens pathways for empirical inquiry into affective justice and inclusive peer review across contexts.

Practical implications – We propose education in epistemic justice, dialogic mentorship and translanguagingaffirming review models. Editorial policies should decentralise monolingual norms, diversify reviewer pools and support relational feedback. -

Social implications – This approach promotes equity in knowledge production by challenging

epistemic hierarchies and amplifying plural traditions. It empowers marginalised scholars and nurtures scholarly ecosystems of care and ethical co-becoming.

Originality/value – This is among the first papers to theorise Onto-Epistemic Mutual Becoming in peer review. By weaving Eastern, Indigenous and feminist philosophies with lived narratives, it reimagines peer review as an ethical, transversal and relational practice.

Keywords Peer review, Linguistic hegemony, Epistemic injustice, Decolonising academic publishing, Relational epistemology

1. Introduction: the crisis of linguistic and epistemic hegemony in peer review

Once valorised as a neutral and rigorous mechanism of scholarly validation, peer review is now increasingly problematised as an onto-epistemic filter that privileges Anglo

-Eurocentric, monolingual and colonial knowledge traditions (Canagarajah, 2002, 2024; Pennycook, 2017, 2024; Kubota and Lin, 2006). Dominant review practices tend to reify Standard English and uphold Western rhetorical norms, rendering non-Western, Indigenous and translingual epistemologies illegible within the academic publishing landscape (Phillipson, 1992; Nigar, 2025). This linguistic hegemony shapes what counts as valid scholarship and entrenches epistemic hierarchies by marginalising alternative ways of knowing (Pennycook, 2017; Dovchin, 2020). Yet beyond the discursive violence of linguistic exclusion lies a deeper, underexplored terrain: the affective politics of peer review. Scholars from non-dominant backgrounds routinely experience emotional and epistemic labour through linguistic scrutiny, methodological gatekeeping and repeated demands for assimilation (Lillis and Curry, 2010; Kubota, 2004). These experiences are not merely personal burdens but manifestations of affective violence embedded within a system that positions relational, spiritual and narrative modes of knowing as inferior (Illesca, 2023; Kubota, 2004; Nigar and Kostogriz, 2024).

Despite growing critique of academic coloniality and calls for linguistic justice, most interventions treat peer review as a procedural or technical domain, rather than as a relational, ethical and affective ecology. Existing literature has thoroughly documented exclusionary practices (Canagarajah, 2011; Kubota and Lin, 2006), yet there remains a significant gap in theorising peer review as a site of mutual becoming – one that affirms epistemic multiplicity, affective labour and intercultural care. What is missing is a holistic approach that reimagines review not as a regulatory checkpoint but as a co-emergent space of dialogue, discomfort and diffractive transformation.

Addressing this gap, this paper asks: How can peer review processes be reconceptualised to decentre language dominance and foster epistemic justice through relational, affective and ethical engagement? In response, we introduce the orientation of Onto-Epistemic Mutual Becoming, which reconceptualises peer review as a dialogic and affectively attuned

space for co-producing knowledge. Drawing on Eastern relational ontologies – such as Confucian reciprocity (Ren; Hall and Ames, 1987), Daoist attunement

(Wu Wei; Jullien, 2004) and Buddhist interdependence (Prat�ɪtyasamutp�ada; Garfield, 2015) – as well as Indigenous philosophies of collective responsibility (Wilson, 2008), affect theory (Wetherell, 2012) and feminist care ethics (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017), this approach foregrounds attunement, relational precarity, and interpretive generosity as central to ethical reviewing. It frames affect not as an ornamental dimension but as a constitutive force – orienting scholars toward one another through listening, storying and shared becoming (Ahmed, 2004; Gunaratnam, 2009).

This ethical bearing resists the regulatory figure of "Reviewer 2" – the often-invoked archetype of epistemic violence – and instead proposes a pluriversal knowledge ecology where legitimacy is cultivated dialogically rather than enforced. Through empirical narratives from multilingual scholars – including Nashid, Sender and Xingxing – this study illustrates how peer review is lived as both trauma and possibility. These accounts highlight the erasures produced by dominant academic conventions and simultaneously gesture toward inclusive alternatives: translanguaging-friendly, mentorship-based and iterative review practices that hold space for diverse epistemologies and emotional registers (Cenoz and Gorter, 2020; Canagarajah, 2011; Nigar et al., 2024a, b, c; Samson et al., 2024).

All considered, this paper calls for systemic reforms across journal policies, reviewer training and editorial cultures. It challenges institutions to move beyond tokenistic diversity statements and toward practices that recognise relationality, care and affect as epistemic imperatives. Storytelling is treated not as anecdotal supplement but as a legitimate method of rendering the political, emotional and ontological textures of academic life visible (Nigar, 2025; Pennycook, 2024). In doing so, this work contributes a transformative model of peer review grounded in intercultural ethics, decolonial praxis and epistemic justice – one that reorients scholarly evaluation toward co-becoming, rather than conformity.

2. Linguistic hegemony and affective politics in peer review

Peer review, often positioned as a neutral mechanism of academic rigour, in practice functions as a gatekeeping apparatus that disproportionately privileges Anglo-Western linguistic norms and epistemic traditions. The dominance of English in academic publishing is not a neutral or benign development but reflects entrenched systems of epistemic injustice and colonial legacies (Canagarajah, 2002; Dovchin et al., 2023; Nigar, 2025; Pennycook, 2017; Phillipson, 1992). Scholars from postcolonial, Global South or transnational contexts are often expected to mould their work to fit the rhetorical and stylistic expectations of dominant AngloAmerican academia. These expectations silence epistemic difference, reinforcing linguistic hierarchies and positioning deviation from "standard" English as deficiency rather than a legitimate alternative (Kubota and Lin, 2006; Nigar, 2025).-

2.1 The coloniality of language in academic publishing

The coloniality of academic English functions as a key mechanism through which linguistic hegemony is maintained. Despite increasing recognition that English itself has become both a multilingual and multilingua franca (Makoni and Pennycook, 2006), dominant publishing venues continue to valorise a narrow set of monolingual, standardised norms, largely drawn from elite academic institutions in the Global North. As Phillipson (1992) notes, English operates as the epistemic currency of global academia – establishing what counts as legitimate knowledge, and by whom.

These linguistic regimes are particularly exclusionary toward scholars working across translanguaging practices, oral traditions and alternative rhetorical structures. Such epistemologies, deeply rooted in community, relationality and embodied knowledge, are often erased or labelled as "incoherent" or "unscholarly" within dominant peer review structures (Pennycook, 2002; Dovchin, 2020). Nigar et al. (2024a, 2025) document how this silencing is often racialised and gendered, with non-Western scholars framed as "inarticulate" or "unclear" rather than differently articulate – revealing a deep entanglement between language, power and epistemic exclusion.

As Lillis and Curry (2010) argue, scholars from non-Anglophone contexts frequently undergo extensive linguistic revisions not to improve clarity, but to align with dominant epistemic codes. This produces a homogenising effect, where codified norms of argumentation, citation and structure are prized over intellectual innovation or contextual relevance. The implicit message is clear: to be taken seriously, one must speak (and think) like the Global North.

Canagarajah (2011) calls this dynamic "epistemic exclusion", where scholars are forced to self-censor, code-switch or domesticate their ideas into a format palatable to Western audiences. Translanguaging – offering a fluid, ever-shifting model of multilingual scholarship – challenges these constraints, but is rarely accommodated in mainstream peer review (Cenoz and Gorter, 2020; Dovchin et al., 2023). The persistent marginalisation of translanguaging reflects an institutional resistance to epistemic diversity and a narrow framing of rigour that privileges form over content, and compliance over creativity.

2.2 The affective structures of reviewer feedback

Alongside colonial language imposition, peer review enacts affective forms of regulation. It operates not only as an assessment process but also as a profoundly emotional terrain shaped by desire, marginalisation and disciplinary power. The affective economy of peer review is governed by two intersecting dynamics: the reviewer's desire for authority, and the author's longing for recognition (Canagarajah, 2002; Lillis and Curry, 2010). Within this asymmetrical exchange, reviewers often occupy the role of gatekeepers, while authors – especially those from non-dominant backgrounds – are positioned as epistemic outsiders seeking validation.

Although promoted as constructive feedback, reviewer commentary frequently functions as a tool of epistemic policing. Scholars from postcolonial and multilingual contexts routinely encounter vague, dismissive or demeaning reviews that frame linguistic variation as interactions reproduce disciplinary orthodoxy and discourage intellectual risk-taking. Dovchin (2020) highlights how peer review comments often amplify linguistic insecurity among NNES (non-native English-speaking) scholars, leading to internalised perceptions of deficiency and

illegitimacy.

Nigar et al. (2024a, 2024b, 2024c) further reveal how such affective exclusions are intertwined with professional identity formation. Reviewer comments that question language competence often do more than critique syntax – they erode scholarly confidence, entrench hierarchies and delegitimise alternative epistemic traditions. The result is an affective economy of fear, self-censorship and epistemic conformity.

For many multilingual and racialised scholars, peer review becomes a source of repeated affective injury rather than intellectual engagement (Lillis and Curry, 2010; Dovchin, 2020). Over time, these microaggressions accumulate into a broader pattern of epistemic exclusion: authors withdraw from publishing, avoid particular journals or silence aspects of their identity to avoid further harm. As Sender and Nashid's narratives of their lived experiences over time illustrate, these exclusions are not isolated incidents but structural patterns that shape how knowledge is produced, validated and circulated.

The toll is not merely emotional; it is intellectual and institutional. A culture of affective violence undermines diversity in scholarship by punishing difference and rewarding assimilation (Nigar, 2025). As Pennycook (2002) argues, such systems of gatekeeping hinder not only whose knowledge is heard but how knowledge itself is conceptualised. Dominant models of scholarly rigour prioritise individualism, linearity and disembodied abstraction, while dismissing dialogic, situated or affective modes of ontological knowing (Nigar, 2025; Pennycook, 2024).

2.3 Toward epistemically and affectively inclusive peer review

To resist such exclusionary structures, scholars such as Spivak (1988) call for an "ethical responsibility" to listen to and amplify subaltern voices – not as tokens, but as epistemic agents. Reimagining peer review as an affective and relational process requires moving beyond extractive feedback loops toward dialogic engagement situated in care, fluidity and epistemic creativity (Canagarajah, 2011; Cenoz and Gorter, 2020; Dovchin et al., 2023).

This shift entails both conceptual and structural transformations. Codemeshing and translanguaging must be legitimised as scholarly practices, not merely tolerated as linguistic quirks. Reviewer training programs should include critical reflection on epistemic privilege, linguistic imperialism and the politics of affect. Journal editors must actively diversify their reviewer pools and research paradigms, and develop guidelines that prioritise equity and inclusion alongside rigour.

Crucially, as Pennycook (2002), Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (2017) and Tuck and Yang (2012) remind us, the politics of language in academia are not separate from broader colonial systems – they are their extension. Linguistic discrimination is often a proxy for deeper structures of racial capitalism, settler governance and Anglo-Eurocentric valuation. Accent, idiom and rhetorical form become sites of geopolitical sorting, entrenching North–South hierarchies even within so-called global scholarship.

Decolonising peer review, therefore, is not just about language – it is about reworlding the epistemic infrastructures that shape academic life. It demands a pluriversal stance: one that honours diverse knowledge systems, recognises language as relational and situated and

foregrounds the material conditions that shape scholarly production. As Nigar et al. (2024a, 2024b) emphasise, this reworlding is not abstract. It is lived, negotiated and often precarious. But it is also deeply hopeful.

By transforming peer review into a space of ethical and affective responsibility, we open possibilities for a more just, plural and dialogic academy – one in which difference is not a problem to be fixed but a resource for collective reimagining (Nigar and Kostogriz, 2025).

3. Onto-epistemic mutual becoming: reimagining peer review as relational, affective and

ethical engagement

Moving beyond epistemic policing requires a fundamental reimagining of peer review as a process of *Onto-Epistemic Mutual Becoming* – a relational, affective and ethical practice that fosters co-constructed knowledge rather than reinforcing hierarchical validation (Figure 1). This orientation challenges entrenched norms of knowledge evaluation by embracing reciprocal engagement, hybridity and collective meaning-making. Rather than functioning as a filtering mechanism that disciplines scholars into rigid linguistic and epistemic norms, peer review is repositioned as a space of relational knowledge creation – attuned to difference, care and epistemic dignity.

These traditions are not complementary in the sense of a seamless integration. Instead, they offer a field of epistemic tension – held together not by synthesis but by mutual resonance. Their onto-epistemic force lies in their differential proximity, which disrupts the colonial desire for coherence. Following transversal ethics (Braidotti, 2019; Icaza and V�azquez, 2025), their co-presence is not aimed at harmony or convergence, but at enacting epistemic hospitality – an ethics of proximity that resists epistemological enclosure. Each tradition – Confucian *Ren*, Daoist *Wu Wei*, Buddhist *Prat�ıtyasamutp�ada* and Indigenous onto-relationality – resonates with the others without demanding equivalence. This approach affirms their differential fluidity while refusing reductionist synthesis often expected in Western theoretical architectures. Held in productive tension, Confucian ethics of reciprocity (*Ren*, 仁) (Hall and Ames, 1987; Tu, 1998), Daoist Wu Wei (无为) (Jullien, 2004), Buddhist interdependent arising (Prat�ıtyasamutp�ada, 缘起) (Garfield, 2015; Williams, 2009) and Indigenous relational

Figure 1. Affective epistemologies and relational peer Review*(Ren, Wu Wei, Prat�ıtyasamutp�ada and Indigenous Relationality in Transversal Co-Presence)*

Decentered Peer Review Model of Onto-Epistemic Mutual Becoming

accountability (Wilson, 2008; Battiste, 2019) offer situated orientations to ethical becoming – highlighting different facets of scholarly practice without flattening their distinctions. Together, they guide a relational knowledge assemblage premised on multiplicity, interpretive fluidity and ethical reflexivity (Tsuda, 2013).

Figure 1 maps peer review as a decentered, relational practice shaped by affective, pluriversal and ethical orientations. Rather than merging Confucian (Ren), Daoist (Wu Wei), Buddhist (Prat�ıtyasamutp�ada) and Indigenous relationality, it presents them in differential copresence – each retaining its specificity while resonating through shared commitments to care, affect and relational becoming. The figure affirms diversity, not synthesis, inviting dialogic movement across distinct epistemic lineages.-

3.1 Confucian reciprocity: ethical knowledge as mutual becoming

The Confucian tradition views knowledge as ethical and reciprocal, prioritising collective intellectual cultivation over individualism (Tu, 1998; Jullien, 2004). Unlike Western hierarchical models that enforce competition, Confucian relationality sees peer review as a ethical dialogue rather than exclusionary gatekeeping (Kubota and Lin, 2006). Ren (仁) – often misinterpreted as hierarchical – embodies reciprocity, ethical responsibility and intellectual care (Pennycook, 2002). Applying Ren to scholarship fosters intellectual porosity and inclusive knowledge production (Wilson, 2008).

Peer review, in its current form, often operates as a hierarchical mechanism of gatekeeping rather than a dialogical process. Scholars from non-Western backgrounds frequently face feedback that demands rigid conformity to Anglo-American academic norms, disregarding alternative epistemologies (Canagarajah, 2002; Dovchin, 2020). As Nigar et al. (2024a) illustrate, the lived experiences of English language teachers navigating institutional power parallel those of multilingual scholars in academia, who must negotiate their professional legitimacy within structurally exclusionary peer review systems.

A Confucian-informed approach, however, frames peer review as an ethical commitment to mutual knowledge formation. This perspective transforms the reviewer's role from gatekeeper or bully to intellectual mentor, fostering interpretive openness rather than epistemic policing (Li, 2021). When applied to peer review, Confucian relationality emphasizes Li (礼), or ritual propriety, which encourages reviewers to engage in epistemic hospitality – recognising and honouring diverse knowledge traditions rather than enforcing monolithic academic norms.

3.2 Daoist attunement: knowledge as emergent and hybrid

Wu Wei is not passivity, but an epistemic practice of soft resistance – where responsiveness means negotiating rhythmically with critique, not against it. In revising, we allowed discomfort to guide, not dominate – moving with rather than coercing epistemic direction.

Daoist epistemology rejects rigid binaries of valid/invalid or accepted/rejected knowledge, instead emphasising the hybrid and emergent nature of epistemic engagement. Wu Wei (无为), or effortless attunement, resists coercive intellectual control, instead valuing knowledge that unfolds organically through interaction and dialogue (Hall and Ames, 1987).

Western peer review models frequently prioritise methodological rigidity, often discounting non-linear and plurilingual ways of knowing (Pennycook, 2002; Nigar and Hopwood, 2025). This imposition of academic orthodoxy forces scholars, particularly from the Global South, to align their work with Anglo-Eurocentric epistemic paradigms, often at the expense of their own intellectual traditions (Canagarajah, 2011). Nigar et al. (2024b) discuss how hybrid professional identities emerge as multilingual educators and scholars navigate these epistemic constraints, demonstrating the necessity of principles that accommodate translingual knowledge production rather than erasing it.

Applying Daoist principles to peer review suggests a shift toward a more fluid, iterative and inclusive model – one that accommodates diverse epistemic formations and recognises the situated, evolving nature of knowledge. A peer review system informed by Daoist attunement would resist static evaluation criteria, instead embracing knowledge co-emergence as an openended, relational process (Makoni and Pennycook, 2006).-

3.3 Buddhist co-arising knowledge: deep engagement and ethical care

Buddhist epistemology, particularly Prat�ıtyasamutp�ada (缘起), or co-arising

interdependence, challenges the notion of knowledge as an isolated, author-centric entity. Instead, it posits that knowledge emerges through relational networks of scholars, methodologies and cultural contexts (Thakchoe, 2007; Tynan and Bishop, 2023).

This perspective reframes peer review as a practice of ethical care, recognising that epistemic engagement carries affective responsibilities. The dominant peer review system often fosters adversarial relations between authors and reviewers, where feedback is framed as correction rather than co-construction (Dovchin, 2020). These adversarial dynamics operate through affective economies of power. Drawing on Gunaratnam (2009), we argue that the emotional labour required to navigate peer review – particularly for multilingual and racialised scholars – is not incidental but constitutes a form of epistemic labour. The desire for recognition, the fear of rejection and the persistence of self-doubt are not merely personal responses but structural affective formations that shape and constrain epistemic legitimacy. This lack of affective engagement is not merely incidental – it constitutes an epistemic boundary that reinforces hierarchies of knowledge through the absence of dialogic care. Alienation, self-censorship and exclusion become not just emotional consequences but structural effects, particularly for scholars from marginalised linguistic and epistemic traditions (Lillis and Curry, 2010). Affect, in this context, is not a secondary register but an organising principle of inclusion and exclusion. As Ahmed (2004) reminds us, emotions do not reside within subjects; they circulate between bodies, shaping who is recognised as a legitimate knower and who is rendered unintelligible.

Nigar (2024, 2025) highlights how the affective labour required to constantly justify one's epistemic legitimacy contributes to burnout and exclusion in academic-professional spaces, reinforcing the need for compassionate, dialogic engagement in peer review rather than

punitive critique. A Buddhist-informed peer review model would reframe critique as karun _ �a

(compassion) and upaya (skilful means), encouraging intellectual fluidity and multiplicity rather than epistemic policing (Williams, 2009).

3.4 Indigenous relational accountability: knowledge as collective responsibility

Indigenous epistemologies challenge Western academic frameworks that position knowledge as an individualistic, author-centric pursuit. Instead, knowledge is understood as relational, emerging through ethical engagements with community, land and history (Wilson, 2008; Tynan and Bishop, 2023). Indigenous peer review models reject extractive validation in favour of reciprocal knowledge-sharing processes grounded in relational accountability.

Peer review, as it currently functions, often disregards Indigenous knowledge systems by imposing rigid Western notions of authorship, objectivity and methodological validity. Scholars working within Indigenous paradigms frequently encounter scepticism regarding the legitimacy of their methodologies, with oral traditions and relational epistemologies viewed as anecdotal rather than rigorous (Battiste, 2019). This epistemic marginalisation reflects broader colonial structures that privilege written over oral knowledge, reinforcing exclusions that marginalise Indigenous scholarly contributions (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

As Nigar et al. (2024b) argue, these exclusionary models are particularly evident when

professional identities intersect with racialised and linguistic expectations, demonstrating how academic institutions maintain epistemic gatekeeping that disproportionately affects scholars from non-Western traditions (Nigar, 2025; Nigar and Hopwood, 2025).

An Indigenous-informed peer review model reframes evaluation as an ethical act of relational accountability rather than a hierarchical judgment process. This involves: Recognising citation as an ethical act rather than a mechanical requirement (Wilson, 2008).

Respecting Indigenous knowledge protocols, ensuring that epistemic contributions are contextualised within relational networks rather than extracted for academic consumption (Marker, 2006).

Valuing oral and community-based methodologies as legitimate scholarly contributions rather than treating them as secondary to Western academic norms (Tynan and Bishop, 2023).

Reframing peer review through Onto-Epistemic Mutual Becoming repositions it from a site of epistemic policing to one of dialogic, relational engagement (Canagarajah, 2002; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Nigar and Hopwood, 2025). Informed by Confucian reciprocity, Daoist attunement, Buddhist interdependence and Indigenous relational accountability (Hall and Ames, 1987; Garfield, 2015; Wilson, 2008), this approach values affective connection and interpretive porosity. It challenges Anglophone dominance and colonial hierarchies in academic publishing (Pennycook, 2002), advocating inclusive practices that support epistemic justice. Translanguaging and codemeshing (Canagarajah, 2011) further open space for valuing diverse epistemologies, making peer review a decentred, reciprocal act of knowledge coconstruction.-

4. Experiential anecdotes: navigating the terrain of peer review

This section offers situated narratives that reveal how peer review can function as linguistic gatekeeping, onto-epistemic policing and affective rupture – yet also as a site of epistemic becoming (Ahmed, 2004; Gunaratnam, 2009; Wetherell, 2012; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Through collaborative storytelling and autoethnographic reflection, these vignettes unravel the affective labour and structural hierarchies embedded in scholarly publishing (Canagarajah, 2002; Kubota and Lin, 2006). We do not treat these stories as mere illustration, but as epistemic enactments of Onto-Epistemic Mutual Becoming, where critique and care entangle. Rather than neutral assessment, peer review is revealed as a space of contestation – where power, marginalisation and refusal co-exist, and where diverse ways of knowing are often silenced or, at times, re-voiced through relational praxis (Nigar and Hopwood, 2025).

4.1 Linguistic gatekeeping and the affective labour of legibility

The peer review process often subjects non-native English-speaking scholars and translingual academics to what Canagarajah (2002) terms linguistic gatekeeping – a practice where academic legitimacy is tethered to conformity with standardised norms of writing, expression and citation (Lillis and Curry, 2010; Baker-Bell, 2020).

Nashid, a South Asian postdoctoral scholar working on migrant English teachers' hybrid

professional identities, received a set of peer reviews that left her torn. After countless attempts and refusals over time, one reviewer lauded the paper as "thought-provoking," while the other dismissed it for "poor clarity" and "lack of readability." The epistemic terrain on which she stood – one grounded in postcolonial critique, affect theory and Deleuzian perspectives – was deemed *"unempirical", "abstract" "mismatched" and "overly theoretical"* (Ahmed, 2004;

Pennycook, 2002; Spivak, 1988). What was being evaluated, it became clear, was not only the content but the form, rhythm and cultural register of her writing (Canagarajah, 2024; Makoni and Pennycook, 2006).

The repeated critique forced her to invest in a high-cost editor. But even after linguistic polishing, she encountered comments such as, "English still needs editing". As a consequence, Nashid began to self-censor her writing voice, feeling the need to disembed her political subjectivity and tone down her decolonial and poetic expressions to be "acceptable" within mainstream scholarly spaces (Tuck and Yang, 2012; Canagarajah, 2023). This reflects the emotional and financial toll multilingual scholars shoulder in striving for epistemic legitimacy – what Wetherell (2012) and Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) would describe as the affective labour embedded in knowledge production.

Sender, a multilingual senior academic hailing from Central Asia, observed a similar burden placed on her PhD student's co-authored paper, which was rejected with the terse comment: "Not of interest to the field." The manuscript, which engaged with South–South multilingual teacher experiences, was dismissed on the basis that its English "needed substantial work," even though the conceptual clarity and citation practice were rigorous (Connell, 2020; Kubota and Lin, 2006). The review process became less about ideas and more about linguistic packaging.

These experiences reveal how peer review often functions as a moral economy (Lillis and Curry, 2010), enforcing implicit norms about how knowledge should look and sound. For multilingual scholars, English becomes both the medium and the metric of worthiness, with "standardness" acting as a proxy for value (Phillipson, 1992; Canagarajah, 1999; Nigar and Kostogriz, 2025).

4.2 Epistemic policing and the silencing of situated knowledge

Beyond linguistic discrimination, peer review operates as a gatekeeper of epistemic legitimacy, routinely marginalising research attuned to non-Western ontologies, ethical orientations and relational methodologies (Spivak, 1988; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Connell, 2020; Wilson, 2008).

Xingxing, a Han Chinese cosmopolitan scholar, undertook a deeply ethical approach to analysing Tibet's multilingual curriculum, informed by Buddhist interdependence (Prat�ityasamutp�ada) and localised knowledge practices (Garfield, 2015; Williams, 2009). Her avoidance of interviews – guided by relational ethics rather than empirical deficit – was not only methodologically deliberate but ontologically situated (Wilson, 2008; Battiste, 2019). Yet, the review process at mutiple journals for years failed to recognise this specificity, echoing epistemic policing that dismisses Indigenous and Buddhist ontologies as lacking "rigour" (Ahmed, 2004; Lillis and Curry, 2010; Kubota, 2016).

One reviewer's rejection of the manuscript as "unclear" and containing "too many theories" reflects a monolingual bias that privileges Anglo-Eurocentric ideals of clarity and theoretical restraint as scholarly rigour (Canagarajah, 2002; Nigar and Hopwood, 2025; Pennycook, 2002). The discomfort with theoretical plurality reveals an unease toward hybrid or relational ways of knowing. Likewise, Xingxing's ethical withholding of data was read as a flaw rather than a strength, exposing a lack of epistemic hospitality (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017).

In another instance, our collaborative paper (Nashid and Xingxing), which wove hermeneutic phenomenology with Foucauldian discourse analysis, was dismissed for its "lack of coherence". Reviewers demanded the removal of metaphor and plurilingual storying and recursive interpretation – thus policing not just method, but affective, aesthetic linguistic and interpretive expressions of knowing (Gunaratnam, 2009; Ahmed, 2004; Illesca, 2023; Nigar, 2025). This reflects a tendency within peer review to flatten the plural, poetic hermeeutic and pluriversal into neat epistemic compartments (Makoni and Pennycook, 2006; Canagarajah, 2011, 2024).

Similarly, a Chinese colleague's use of Daoist ethics and Wu Wei was rejected until reframed through constructivist learning theory, demonstrating the pervasive pressure to translate situated philosophies into "recognisable" Western terms (Jullien, 2004; Hall and Ames, 1987). This is not an issue of scholarly merit, but one of epistemic injustice and assimilation (Tuck and Yang, 2012; Spivak, 1988; Connell, 2020).

These instances illustrate how peer review functions as a mechanism of epistemic imperialism, privileging "objectivity", "rigour" and "universality" while systematically erasing embodied, relational and locally accountable knowledge practices (Canagarajah, 2023; Phillipson, 1992; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Baker-Bell, 2020; Nigar and Hopwood, 2025). As such, the politics of what counts as "research" remains shackled by Anglo-Eurocentric power-knowledge regimes, rendering certain voices audible only through processes of epistemic translation, erasure or conformity (Kubota and Lin, 2006; Tsuda, 2013).

4.3 Affective rupture and epistemic disorientation

These exclusions produce more than academic delays – they inflict affective injuries that shape scholars' sense of belonging, legitimacy and voice (Ahmed, 2004; Wetherell, 2012). Peer review, often assumed to be a value-free gatekeeping mechanism, is a site where epistemic hierarchies manifest emotionally, particularly for scholars situated in the Global South or working with translingual, Indigenous or affectively attuned methodologies (Canagarajah, 2002; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Nigar et al., 2024b).

Despite being a major grant recipient and distinguished professor, Sender continues to face marginalisation in her research and advocacy on linguistic racism, both locally and globally. Within evaluative systems where she does not know the reviewers—though they likely know her—she remains subject to subtle epistemic exclusion, exposing enduring asymmetries of recognition and Australia's tall-poppy culture (Udah, 2019). As a linguistically minoritised early-career scholar, she once received a national grant rejection with a single-line comment: "Not suitable for a national grant." The abrupt and dismissive tone—echoing the "nasty feedback" many minoritised scholars endure—left a mark that lingered, shaping her future engagements with academic evaluation. As Baker-Bell (2020) and Canagarajah (2023) note, such moments do not simply assess merit—they police worthiness and silence those who

challenge dominant paradigms.

Xingxing, whose work engages with Tibetan values and multilingual curriculum policies, experienced similar marginalisation. Despite her methodological choices being grounded in ethical caution and Buddhist philosophies of relational interdependence (Garfield, 2015; Williams, 2009), reviewers deemed her project "lacking originality." This critique, detached from its sociopolitical context, caused Xingxing to begin omitting cultural references and metaphysical approaches from her writing. "I thought perhaps I should just use straight-up critical discourse analysis and drop all mention of Tibetan values," she said. This is not just self-censorship; it is the internalisation of what Ahmed (2004) calls affective economies – structures of feeling that regulate who can speak, and how.

Nashid, co-authoring another paper with Xingxing, recounted being told by a reviewer: "Is this really a scholarly piece or a poetic outburst?" The remark's condescension was palpable. Rather than engaging with their methodology – one that braided hermeneutic phenomenology and affective storytelling (Gunaratnam, 2009; Wilson, 2008) – the reviewer dismissed it as emotionally excessive. This expectation to maintain "objectivity" under the guise of rigour reflects what Connell (2020) terms northern theory hegemony, where rational detachment is privileged over situated knowledge and relational epistemologies. It also highlights the epistemic violence entailed in regulating emotionality, a form of emotional conformity that punishes voice and embodiment (Tuck and Yang, 2012; Nigar et al., 2024a).

These are not isolated accounts. They point to a wider structural condition within peer review – an affective economy that enforces emotional restraint and epistemic dispassion. Scholars who write with susceptibility, embodied voice or translingual hybridity are rendered less legitimate unless their work is reframed through dominant Anglo-centric frames of "clarity" and "coherence" (Lillis and Curry, 2010; Illesca, 2023; Nigar and Kostogriz, 2025). This enforces a binary between rigour and reflexivity, where the latter is tolerated only when subordinated to the former.

As Makoni and Pennycook (2006) and Pennycook (2024) assert, dismantling epistemic hierarchies involves more than diversifying topics – it demands rethinking the languages, modalities and affects that count as scholarly. The experiences above illustrate how the peer review process, while claiming objectivity, often performs epistemic policing – disciplining not only what is said, but how it is felt and lived (Spivak, 1988; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Nigar et al., 2024a; Nigar and Kostogriz, 2024).

4.4 Epistemic becoming: peer review as relational resistance

Despite the exclusions and injuries outlined earlier, some forms of peer review have the potential to serve as relational, ethical and transformative spaces. These are sites where

scholars – especially those racialised, multilingual or working within decolonial paradigms – can reconstitute their voice and methodology without having to amputate themselves to meet hegemonic expectations (Ahmed, 2004; Canagarajah, 2002; Nigar and Kostogriz, 2025).

After a series of dehumanising reviews that dismissed the legitimacy of affect and voice,

Nashid approached feedback with as much ethical openness as she could muster. Yet the accumulation of "nasty" and reductive critiques left its mark, teaching her to seek journals that valued mentorship-based review processes—spaces more attuned to dialogue and epistemic fluidity (Samson et al., 2024). This time, reviewers engaged with her work not to sanitise it but to understand the ethics embedded in its post-colonial, relational stance. They encouraged her to retain her metaphors, reflect more deeply on affective precarity, and expand her commitments to situated knowledge. "For the first time," she said, "Finally, I didn't feel like I had to amputate my voice to be published." Such practices enact what Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) calls matters of care—not as sentiment, but as epistemic practice.

Sender's submission to a critical applied linguistics and sociolinguistics-friendly journal marked another moment of epistemic becoming. Her writing – which wove together Korean, Mongolian and Japanese idioms – was not erased but embraced. A reviewer wrote, "Your translanguaging enriches this paper's epistemic landscape. Please keep it". In stark contrast to earlier experiences, Sender found that multilingual scholarship could be valued when reviewed through a decolonial lens (Canagarajah, 2011; Lin, 2013; Cenoz and Gorter, 2020; Nigar et al., 2024a).

When she submitted her work on nomadic Mongolian pedagogies, she was paired with reviewers familiar with Indigenous and Eastern philosophies. Rather than demanding citations of Anglo-Eurocentric theorists or turning oral traditions into quantifiable data, reviewers honoured the embodied storytelling of the piece (Wilson, 2008; Garfield, 2015; Hall and Ames, 1987). For once, the work was not translated into academic jargon – it was allowed to speak in its own voice, on its own terms (Cadman, 2017).

A moment of epistemic rupture turned reparative emerged when Xingxing and Nashid transformed a paper that was rejected by a top-tier journal into a blog post for Language on the Move. The post, written in an affective and autobiographical register, resonated widely with readers across academia and community networks, validating the work far beyond traditional journal metrics. As Illesca (2023) notes, such spaces can offer vital counterpublics where marginalised voices are not merely included but centred. Rather than chasing impact factors, they created impactful encounters.

As an act of relational resistance, the three scholars – Nashid, Sender and Xingxing – have since become peer reviewers themselves. They now approach reviewing as ethical engagement, guided by attentiveness to affect, methodological diversity and positionality. Rather than punishing difference, they act as what Spivak (1988) might call uncoercive rearrangers – interlocutors who help re-shape scholarly voice without erasure. Peer review, in this mode, becomes an affective commons (Nigar, 2025): a space for co-thinking rather than conformity, for dialogic becoming rather than disciplinary disciplining (Cadman, 2017; Gunaratnam, 2009; Makoni and Pennycook, 2006; Kubota, 2016).

This vision aligns with developing calls to reimagine academic publishing through decolonising methodologies (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), linguistic justice (Baker-Bell, 2020) and translanguaging epistemologies (Canagarajah, 2023; Nigar et al., 2024b). It affirms that peer review, far from being a fixed evaluative tool, is a relational and pedagogical process – one that can reproduce harm, or cultivate solidarity (Nigar and Kostogriz, 2025; Nigar et al., 2025).

Overall, these experiential accounts over time urge us to reimagine peer review not as a procedural gatekeeping tool but as a relational, affective and co-constitutive practice – especially for multilingual, migrant and Indigenous scholars whose epistemologies are often marginalised (Ahmed, 2004; Canagarajah, 2002; Lillis and Curry, 2010). In such contexts, peer review becomes a site of epistemic survival and refusal, where knowledge, identity and affect are entangled with power. Reworlding peer review requires a shift toward responsibility, transversal ethics and dialogic engagement (Connell, 2020; Tuck and Yang, 2012; Wilson, 2008). This requires investing in reviewer education, embracing epistemic and linguistic diversity (not merely demographic diversity), and fostering affective accountability. Only then can peer review realise its potential as a practice of care, recognition, and epistemic justice (Kubota and Lin, 2006; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Spivak, 1988).

5. Transforming peer review: ethical and relational practices

Peer review must be reimagined as an affective and relational space – one where susceptibility is transformative, relationality is rigorous and critique is exercised as a form of care. Traditionally, it has functioned as an exclusionary mechanism, upholding Anglo-American linguistic and epistemic norms while marginalising transnational, plurilingual non-Western, hybrid and cosmopolitan scholars (Canagarajah, 2002, 2024; Pennycook, 2002; Phillipson, 1992; Nigar, 2025). To foster a more inclusive and dialogic scholarly culture, peer review must shift from hierarchical judgment to a model of intellectual stewardship – where knowledge is co-constructed rather than policed (Kubota and Lin, 2006; Dovchin, 2020).

We propose Onto-Epistemic Mutual Becoming as an ethical and conceptual reorientation: a lens that repositions peer review as a relational practice grounded in translingual fluidity, intercultural attunement, affective labour and dialogic co-becoming. Informed by Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist, Indigenous and poststructural thought, this approach honours epistemic difference without erasure, inviting peer review to become a site of reciprocal transformation rather than assimilation. The next section outlines concrete practices that resist epistemic gatekeeping and cultivate inclusive, pluriversal scholarly engagement.

5.1 For reviewers: from judgment to intellectual stewardship

The role of the reviewer is crucial in determining whether a manuscript is accepted, revised or rejected. However, feedback can either function as epistemic policing – dismissing alternative ways of knowing – or as a form of intellectual mentorship, guiding authors toward constructive engagement (Lillis and Curry, 2010; Canagarajah, 2011). Scholars from minoritised linguistic backgrounds frequently receive overly prescriptive feedback, pressuring them to conform to dominant Anglo-American academic norms rather than refining their own epistemic contributions (Dovchin, 2020; Dovchin et al., 2023; Pennycook, 1994).

A shift toward intellectual stewardship necessitates moving beyond deficit and binary oriented critique. Ethical reviewers should engage in relational and affective accountability, recognising the diverse linguistic and epistemic trajectories of authors (Kubota and Lin, 2006). This requires a commitment to dialogic reciprocity, where feedback is framed as coconstruction rather than hierarchical correction (Li, 2021). Reviewer education programs must incorporate awareness of ontolgically oriented linguistic and epistemic justice, emphasising that the reviewer's role is not simply to assess, but to mentor and nurture

intellectual diversity (Cenoz and Gorter, 2020; Nigar, 2025). Journals should provide guidelines encouraging constructive, non-assimilative feedback that allows for translingual and epistemic multiplicity.-

Attending to the affective terrain of peer review requires more than structural reform; it demands an epistemic reorientation – one that recognises affect as a futural force, relationality as rigorous inquiry and critique as a practice of ethical care grounded in diversified and situated knowledges (Nigar et al., 2024b).

5.2 For authors: navigating epistemic exclusion while resisting assimilation

Authors from non-Western and translingual backgrounds often face the difficult task of negotiating their scholarship within hegemonic academic structures that privilege Anglo-centric norms (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 2002). This navigation frequently leads to self-censorship, as their work is either deemed "too unfamiliar" for mainstream academic discourse or pressured into linguistic and epistemic assimilation (Canagarajah, 2002, 2024; Nigar, 2025). Canagarajah (2002) shows that rejection letters to multilingual scholars often cite vague criticisms such as "lack of

clarity" or "unfamiliar structure" – feedback that conceals implicit marginalisations conflating linguistic difference with intellectual deficiency. These exclusionary practices carry a profound affective toll, contributing to experiences of self-doubt, erasure and burnout (Dovchin, 2020; Nigar, 2025).

*Hybrid Professional Becoming (*Nigar, 2024, a, b; Nigar and Kostogriz, 2025) offers a fluid, negotiated approach for understanding how scholars navigate constraints while preserving epistemic agency across linguistic, cultural and intellectual contexts. Rather than passively conforming to dominant academic norms, hybrid professional becoming involves strategic negotiation, wherein scholars tactically engage with dominant structures while asserting their linguistic and epistemic identities (Makoni and Pennycook, 2006). Codemeshing – a practice of interconnecting multiple linguistic and rhetorical resources – offers a means of resisting monolingual constraints while maintaining scholarly legitimacy (Canagarajah, 2011).

To support authors in this process, institutions must invest in writing-for-publication workshops, particularly for scholars writing in English as an additional language (Lillis and Curry, 2010). Such initiatives should not focus solely on linguistic correction but should prioritise epistemic confidence, fostering an environment where diverse knowledge traditions are valued rather than erased (Dovchin et al., 2023).

5.3 For journals and editorial boards: implementing a relational peer review model

Attending to the affective terrain of peer review requires not only structural change but an epistemic reorientation – toward receptivity as proliferative, relationality as rigorous and critique as care. Editorial boards wield significant influence over how peer review functions, from the selection of reviewers to final decision-making. However, conventional journal policies often uphold exclusionary linguistic and epistemic norms, reinforcing barriers for non-Western scholars (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 2002). Moving toward a relational peer review model requires rethinking the role of editorial boards as facilitators of intellectual inclusion rather than as gatekeepers (Kubota, 2016).

Key reforms include.

(1) Diversifying Reviewer Pools: Journals must actively recruit reviewers from diverse linguistic and epistemic backgrounds of expereince and practice to ensure a diversity of perspectives in manuscript appraisal (Pennycook, 2002; Canagarajah, 2024).

(2) Encouraging Reflexive Reviewing: Journals should develop ethical reviewer guidelines, emphasising non-hierarchical, constructive feedback that acknowledges experiential-practical epistemic diversity (Nigar, 2025; Dovchin, 2020).

(3) Allowing Translanguaging: Editorial boards should recognise translingual academic writing as a legitimate form of scholarly expression, moving beyond rigid standardised monolingual norms (Canagarajah, 2011).

(4) Institutionalising Dialogic Peer Review: Rather than binary accept/reject decisions, journals should adopt iterative review models that promote dialogic engagement between authors and reviewers (Li, 2021).

No one has yet determined Scholium *what a body can do.* – Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics,* Part III, Proposition 2, Scholium (1,677, p. 155)

This provocation reminds us that bodies – textual, affective and intellectual – carry latent capacities for relation, resistance and reworlding (Spinoza, 1677; Ahmed, 2004; Gunaratnam, 2009). Reimagining peer review as a space where silence is heard, listening is rigorous and learning is co-authored across difference invites a more affectively attuned and epistemically transversal scholarly practice (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Canagarajah, 2024). Yet this vision must reckon with entrenched asymmetries of voice, labour and recognition that shape academic publishing. As Bhambra (2014) and Mignolo and Walsh (2018) argue, standard language ideology is deeply entangled with the broader colonial architectures of knowledge – epistemic extractivism, institutional gatekeeping and capitalist regimes of value that circumscribe whose knowledge counts.

Some journals – Feminist Review, English in Education, Discourse: Studies in the Cultural

Politics of Education, Critical Inquiry in Language Studies and Journal of Multilingual and

*Multicultural Development – have begun reconfiguring peer review through multilingualism, relational review and citation decolonisation. Still, such moves often remain tethered to Western institutional logics. Ethical peer review, then, is not a settled endpoint but a situated, relational practice – negotiated within structural constraints and nurtured through multiple traditions of care, accountability and resistance (*Wilson, 2008; Braidotti, 2019; Icaza and V�azquez, 2025). This approach resists reducing decoloniality to language alone and foregrounds how publishing is co-constituted by settler governance, extractive knowledge economies and entrenched North–South research hierarchies.

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Deweyan Reflections on the National Education Policy 2020 in India

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Abstract

"Education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself". In his essay, "My Pedagogic Creed" (1897) and in his seminal book, Democracy and Education (1916), John Dewey, an influential American Pragmatist philosopher and educationist, illustrates the idea that the intrinsic value of education extends far beyond the mere pursuit of qualifications or achievements. Every step in life is either a component or a product of our overall education and thus, education is the very fabric of existence, intricately woven into our being, empowering us to thrive, develop resilience and engage meaningfully within our communities and the broader society.

A well-educated populace is better equipped to drive innovation, foster economic growth as well as promote social change. Education greatly affects job growth, technology progress and the spread of new ideas through the rational evaluation of established norms, sometimes proposing new norms and breaking old dogmas. Education, therefore, serves as a cornerstone of a nation's progress, where citizens not only seek personal gain but also actively contribute towards its overall wellbeing.

In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a significant transformation in the educational landscape since Independence. Its primary aim is to restructure the system to meet the demands of the 21st century and achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 by 2030. The policy outlines an ambitious vision to establish a globally esteemed education system that is firmly rooted in Indian values. This policy signifies a notable shift toward holistic development and multidisciplinary education. It emphasizes the importance of experiential learning, critical thinking and creativity, with the goal of producing well-rounded individuals who can thrive in an ever-evolving world.

As a practitioner of Philosophy, I believe education is a crucial domain deserving of philosophers' attention. Despite various theories in the philosophy of education, a significant issue in India is that many philosophers and researchers overlook crucial discussions on

educational theories that may help enhance strategies and policy implementation. Areas like the philosophy of mind, ethics, epistemology and social philosophy are often neglected by educationists. The role of philosophy, not just the philosophy of education, in establishing a robust educational framework cannot be underestimated. The challenges faced in the domain of education extend beyond policy issues and they are deeply rooted in philosophical questions that require thoughtful reflection and active engagement.

In this paper, I contend that the pragmatist approach outlined in the works of John Dewey aligns closely with NEP 2020, providing a philosophical framework within which its principal ideals can be more effectively actualised. Just as Dewey's notion of Education embodies a transformative vision for the-then American education system, the NEP 2020 reflects a shift from the traditional and conservative system of teaching-learning to a more holistic, intersectional and experiential paradigm. I shall delve into the nuanced connections between Dewey's notion of Education and the foundational principles articulated in the NEP 2020. To conclude, my paper will aim to establish that Dewey's philosophy of education can aid and strengthen the application of NEP 2020 in terms of enhancing cognitive development and knowledge retention as well as the cultivation of critical thinking skills, fostering a strong sense of social responsibility and encouraging personal growth.

Keywords: Pragmatism, John Dewey, National Education Policy 2020, Experiential Learning, Critical Thinking, Holistic Development

Introduction

The philosophical worldview known as Pragmatism emphasises the practical and useful implications of ideas and theories. It highlights the importance of practicality and empirical experiences and uses scientific methods and techniques as essential tools for application. While pragmatism is often scrutinised within epistemology – especially concerning our understanding, justification and evaluation of knowledge – its significance extends far beyond, influencing diverse fields such as psychology, sociology, politics, education and so on. This interdisciplinary approach promotes a straightforward and pragmatic methodology assessing various circumstances and tackling challenges, prioritising solutions that yield tangible, beneficial outcomes.

A notable application of pragmatist[1] principles is found within Philosophy of Education. John Dewey, a seminal figure in the pragmatist tradition, articulated the

importance of connecting education to experiential learning. He believed that education should be inherently linked to the needs and experiences of students, advocating for a learning process that is active and reflective. Dewey's vision transformed traditional educational paradigms by prioritising critical thinking, social interaction and reflective capacity over rote memorisation. His holistic approach has garnered international acclaim and remains relevant, influencing educators and policymakers.

The tone that is present in the pragmatist approach to education, particularly the Deweyan approach, is also reflected in the recently implemented National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) in India. The NEP 2020 aims to fundamentally overhaul India's education system by integrating principles of experiential learning, critical thinking and holistic development across all educational strata, from preschool to higher education. One of its central objectives is to cultivate a more flexible and student-centric learning environment, which encourages creativity and innovation along with the practical application of knowledge. The policy seeks to embrace a multidisciplinary approach, enabling students to acquire a diverse skill set that is vital for success in the 21st century.

My paper aims to explore the intersection between John Dewey's pragmatist approach of education and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India. It is structured into three main sections to facilitate a comprehensive analysis: the first part discusses the significance of philosophy as a foundational element in education, emphasizing how philosophical frameworks shape educational practices and goals. The second part delves into the relevance of John Dewey's ideas, especially his emphasis on experiential learning, critical thinking and democratic citizenship, and how these principles can inform contemporary educational strategies. Finally, the third section examines the connections between Dewey's pragmatism and the core objectives of the NEP 2020, highlighting how the policy's focus on holistic and flexible education aligns with Dewey's vision for fostering active, engaged learners.

The Need for Philosophy in Education

Education is a key element in helping individuals realize their potential and find meaning in life, ultimately leading to long-lasting success. It prepares people to face real-life challenges and promotes positive changes in behaviour and mindset. Through accessing resources and various life experiences, we seek knowledge and self-improvement. Education plays a crucial role in passing down values and skills from one generation to the next, particularly for children. It stimulates critical thinking, cultural awareness and core values while equipping

them with practical skills for adulthood. Ultimately, education is a lifelong journey that empowers individuals to thrive and engage meaningfully in society.

The aims of any educational system are fundamental in defining its overall purpose and direction. These aims significantly influence all facets of education, including the structure and function of institutions, the design and implementation of curricula, the strategies employed in pedagogy and the methods used for assessment. Clarifying the aims of education is a crucial first step in both understanding the current educational landscape and implementing meaningful reforms. Even in cases where these objectives are not formally articulated, they persist and frequently reveal themselves in the daily practices of educators and learners, as well as within the frameworks of educational policy.

These aims can be categorized into several domains, notably sociocultural, political, and, more importantly, philosophical. The sociocultural aims often focus on nurturing citizenship, cultural awareness and social responsibility, while political aims may emphasize the role of education in fostering democratic values and civic engagement. However, the philosophical aims of education are paramount as they lay the groundwork for deeper inquiry into the nature of knowledge, learning and the purpose of education itself.

Philosophy, frequently referred to as the "mother of all disciplines", adopts a holistic approach that interconnects various fields to tackle fundamental questions and synthesize knowledge into a cohesive framework. Each academic discipline - including history, political science, economics, and the natural sciences - has its own unique philosophy characterized by a set of guiding principles and theoretical frameworks that shape inquiry and understanding. Education is no exception to this, as it too is grounded in a distinct philosophy of education that transcends mere instructional methods and encompasses broader ethical considerations, aims and the role of education in society. The philosophy of education thus serves as a foundation for both theorizing and practical applications, ultimately guiding the development of effective teaching and learning strategies that address the needs of a diverse population.

Throughout the history of Western philosophy, questions concerning education have been a significant focus for philosophers, from Socrates, Plato and Aristotle to twentieth-century figures such as Rousseau, John Dewey, Vygotsky, Piaget. Similarly, in the history of Indian philosophy, thinkers from the Vedas to contemporary figures like Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and J. Krishnamurti have addressed questions related to the philosophy of education.

Despite the presence of various theories and theorists in the field of philosophy of education, a significant issue in India is that philosophers and researchers often overlook essential discussions related to educational theories and issues that could greatly enhance educational strategies. Even the policymakers tend to neglect philosophical perspectives, resulting in a disregard for the deep-rooted philosophical concerns surrounding education. The vast and complex realm of philosophy – particularly areas such as the philosophy of mind, ethics, epistemology, and social philosophy – is frequently overlooked by educational practitioners. This neglect is especially puzzling. These areas, if properly considered, can provide valuable insights that could inform and improve educational structures, curricula and teaching methodologies.

The disconnect between established theoretical frameworks and their practical applications has resulted in significant gaps in both theorizing and policy formation, which ultimately undermine the quality of education that learners receive. For instance, sidelining moral development in favour of rote learning can compromise students' ability to think critically about ethical dilemmas they may face in real-world situations. Similarly, when critical ethical questions about equity – such as the fair allocation of resources and opportunities – are overlooked, the curriculum may fail to address the diverse backgrounds and needs of students. If we do not focus on these important areas, education may become insufficient and out of touch with the needs of a diverse society, hindering holistic development of learner.

Philosophy holds a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape, serving as a guiding framework that illuminates the pathways toward personal and intellectual growth. Education stands as the essential platform through which individuals embark on a journey of self-discovery, unlocking their potential and nurturing the inherent qualities they possess. By adding meaning and purpose to life, education equips learners with the tools necessary for achieving long-lasting success across various dimensions. The philosophical underpinnings of education establish its foundational aims, which significantly influence the overall curriculum and the pedagogical approaches employed by educators. These philosophical perspectives help define essential aspects of educational practice, including the organizational structure of institutions, the standards of school discipline, and the multifaceted roles that teachers play in facilitating learning.

As society evolves and the needs of learners change, the necessity for clear and coherent aims in education becomes increasingly evident. Philosophy will perpetually influence and shape not only the content delivered in educational settings but also the methods utilized to impart knowledge and foster critical thinking. This ongoing interaction

between philosophy and education contributes uniquely to the development and refinement of educational theory and practice, ensuring that the educational experience remains relevant and impactful. I strongly advocate that practitioners of philosophy should actively engage in investigating the current state of education from a philosophical perspective. Philosophy has the potential to illuminate pathways whereby education serves as a transformative platform.

To clarify, my purpose of investigation is the foreground and background of the educational system in India. In India, the NEP 2020 marks a pivotal transformation in the nation's educational landscape. Its core objective is to comprehensively restructure the existing education system to address the evolving needs of the 21st century while striving to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 by 2030, which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all. The policy outlines an ambitious vision to cultivate a globally respected education system that remains deeply rooted in Indian cultural and spiritual values. This initiative signifies a marked shift towards holistic development and multidisciplinary approaches to education. It stresses experiential learning, encouraging students to engage actively with their surroundings, foster critical thinking and unleash their creativity. The ultimate goal is to nurture well-rounded individuals who possess the skills and adaptability necessary to flourish in an increasingly dynamic and interconnected world.

As a practitioner of Philosophy, I am particularly drawn to the parallels between the NEP's emphasis on critical thinking and experiential learning and the educational theories proposed by John Dewey. Dewey advocated for an education system that promotes problem-solving abilities and the holistic development of learners, emphasizing the importance of applying knowledge in real-world contexts. In the following section, I will delve into the relevance of Deweyan principles in contemporary education, examining how they can further enhance the objectives outlined in the NEP 2020.

The Relevance of Dewey's Pragmatism

The motivation behind my choice to connect Dewey's pragmatism of education with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is deeply personal and rooted in my academic journey. In my M.Phil. dissertation, I sought to explore the pivotal question: What role does mental simulation play in the teaching-learning process? To investigate this, apart from delving into various theories within the realms of the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of education, I designed two questionnaires, taking cues from experimental philosophy,

aimed at middle school students and their teachers. This was done to gain a comprehensive understanding of the nature of simulative engagement in pedagogy. The findings from my survey revealed a significant preference among both teachers and students for active-learning methodologies. This approach, which emphasizes the importance of student participation over passive listening, aligns closely with the principles espoused by Dewey's pragmatism. His educational philosophy advocates for a learner-centred environment where inquiry and experience are paramount. During my survey, I felt, even the teachers and students, knowingly or unknowingly loved the approach of Deweyan Education, after the implementation of NEP. So, it sparked in me an immense desire to further explore Dewey's education in a deeper analytical way. Gradually I started observing a striking similarity between its tenets and NEP. While Dewey's name is not explicitly mentioned in the policy, the policy's emphasis on Experiential Learning, Critical thinking is nothing but an echo of what is portrayed in Deweyan education.

John Dewey's philosophy of education stands out from other educational theories due to its distinct focus on experiential learning, the practice of democracy in educational settings and a student-centred approach. When we discuss modern education – characterized by student-centred, real-world-focused, inquiry-based learning – we are consciously or unconsciously invoking Dewey's legacy. Unlike broader philosophies that concentrate on abstract theoretical foundations, Dewey's ideas are grounded in the belief that education should be an active, hands-on process intended to prepare students for the complexities and challenges of real life. His emphasis on "learning by doing" highlights the importance of direct experiences in the learning journey, enabling students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills in practical and applicable ways. What truly sets John Dewey apart is his holistic integration of progressive educational ideals into a cohesive philosophy that prioritizes the comprehensive development of each child – intellectually, socially and emotionally. Dewey's pragmatist approach fundamentally challenges the traditional view of education as merely a preparatory phase for future endeavours. Instead, he conceptualizes education as an essential, lived experience that is integral to a continuous process of personal and communal growth. Dewey posits that education should not merely aim to transfer knowledge but should also cultivate critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a passion for lifelong learning.

The notion of progressive education emerges in stark contrast to the traditional "factory model" that once dominated American schooling. This traditional approach, marked by its emphasis on uniformity, rote memorization and a one-size-fits-all strategy, has been criticized for stifling creativity, neglecting individual differences and inadequately preparing

students to navigate the complexities of the modern world. In challenging this outdated model, transformative education seeks to foster a more inclusive, adaptive and empowering learning environment that values diversity, promotes critical thinking and inspires a genuine love of learning. By redefining the role of the student as an active participant in their own educational journey, Dewey's vision remains remarkably relevant today. It highlights the ongoing necessity for education to be both meaningful and applicable, ensuring that students emerge not merely as passive recipients of knowledge but as engaged architects of their own learning experiences, capable of thought, inquiry and innovation in an ever-evolving society.

Dewey articulated his beliefs on education in his influential essay "My Pedagogic Creed", where he famously stated, "Education is a social process; education is growth; education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself." This profound perspective emphasizes the intrinsic value of education that extends far beyond mere academic achievements, test scores or qualifications. Rather than being viewed solely as a means to secure future employment or attain societal success, education should be regarded as an essential and dynamic part of our daily existence. To Dewey, education is fundamentally a process of growth and development that nurtures both psychological and social skills of the individual. It engages learners in critical thinking and encourages them to interact actively with their environment. This kind of education fosters a sense of community and social responsibility, allowing individuals to contribute meaningfully to society. Education serves not only to uplift the learner but also to create a ripple effect, positively impacting society by cultivating informed, active and engaged citizens who are equipped to address social challenges and contribute to the common good.

By promoting collaborative learning, Dewey aims to create educational spaces that do more than just impart knowledge. He seeks to cultivate engaged and thoughtful citizens, equipped with the skills necessary to navigate complexities and contribute meaningfully to society. His vision highlights the importance of education as a foundation for democratic participation, urging that schools prepare individuals not only academically but also as informed and active members of their communities. Dewey's vision of democratic education is particularly noteworthy. He advocates for classrooms to serve as microcosms of democracy, where students engage in collaborative discussions, practice empathy, and develop a sense of social responsibility. This environment not only conveys academic knowledge but also prepares students to become engaged citizens. Through such methods, students learn to navigate diverse perspectives and work collectively toward shared goals, enhancing their interpersonal skills.

Dewey's seminal work *Experience and Education* underscores his belief that knowledge is not a mere transfer from teacher to student, but rather a dynamic process of co-construction through both individual and collective experiences. In this model of education, learners are encouraged to connect their academic studies to their own life experiences and personal interests, which significantly deepens their understanding and enhances the retention of information. For instance, when students engage in hands-on activities, project-based learning or real-world problem-solving, they not only grasp theoretical concepts more effectively but also develop a more profound interest in the subject matter. Education is not confined to traditional classroom settings or limited to theoretical knowledge. He stresses the importance of experiential learning – an approach where students engage actively with their surroundings, allowing them to construct knowledge through firsthand experiences. Dewey critiques conventional educational systems that prioritize rote memorization and abstract instruction, which often fail to connect with real-world applications (Dewey, 1938). He calls for a shift towards a student-centred methodology, where learners are encouraged to be active participants in their educational journeys rather than passive recipients of predetermined knowledge.

His advocacy for inquiry-based learning actively engages students in the process of confronting and addressing real-world challenges. By immersing themselves in hands-on exploration and systematic investigation, students develop innovative problem-solving skills that are crucial in today's complex environment (Dewey, 1933). This pedagogical approach not only enhances students' comprehension of the subject matter but also fosters the growth of analytical thinking and creative skills. As they navigate through practical problems and formulate solutions, they cultivate essential abilities that empower them to tackle the intricate issues they will face in contemporary society. This method emphasizes the importance of experiential learning, where students become active participants in their education, shaping their knowledge and skills in a meaningful way.

Dewey advocates for a model of disciplined learning that not only promotes freedom of thought but also encourages creativity and innovation in students. He argues against a mechanistic approach to education, which often stifles individual expression and critical thinking. For instance, Dewey emphasizes that true discipline in education is not merely rooted in theoretical knowledge; rather, it is shaped through active engagement and real-world experiences. He envisions a learning environment where structured discipline serves as a guide for exploration and inquiry, allowing students to think critically, ask meaningful questions, and ultimately develop their own ideas within a rich social context.

Dewey believes that learning should be a dynamic process, where collaboration among peers fosters deeper understanding and collective problem-solving.

Thus, Deweyan pragmatism provides a comprehensive perspective on education that underscores the significance of experience, social interaction and inquiry-based learning. By adopting this holistic approach, educators can foster a more engaging, effective and democratic learning environment, equipping students with the vital tools needed to succeed in an ever-evolving global landscape. Dewey's holistic development approach also encompasses cognitive, social, emotional and physical growth, recognizing that the overall well-being of students is crucial for effective learning (Dewey, 1897). This comprehensive outlook enables educators to support students' overall development, preparing them for the complexities of modern life.

I firmly believe that John Dewey's insights on learning and the essence of education are crucial to consider when developing a curriculum. While I acknowledge that the educational landscape has evolved and that global demands have shifted significantly especially given the diverse geographical and social contexts across different countries – Dewey's ideas can serve as a vital foundation for curriculum development. In disciplines such as philosophy, the synergy between theoretical exploration and practical activism is especially noteworthy. Dewey's pragmatic approach establishes a vital link between thought and action. He posits that philosophical inquiry must be anchored in real-world experiences, asserting that ideas derive their significance only when they translate into tangible outcomes.

Dewey's philosophy offers educators and policymakers a versatile toolkit that is essential for fostering an educational environment tailored for the complexities of the 21st century. His approach promotes the cultivation of critical thinkers who possess the ability to analyse and evaluate information effectively. Additionally, it encourages the development of creative problem solvers who can devise innovative solutions in real-time and instils values in socially responsible citizens who actively engage with their communities and understand the intricacies of societal issues. By embracing Dewey's principles, education can meaningfully evolve to meet the diverse needs of individuals and society as a whole.

Bridging NEP 2020 and Deweyan Pragmatism

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 signifies a pivotal transformation in India's educational landscape, with the clear objective of restructuring the education system to effectively meet the diverse demands of the 21st century. The policy document articulates its

ambitious vision, stating that it "aims to create a globally prestigious education system rooted in Indian values" (Ministry of Education, 2020). This commitment reflects an intent to not only elevate the quality and accessibility of education but also to ensure that it resonates deeply with the rich cultural, historical, and ethical values inherent in Indian society.

One of the central claims of the National Education Policy (NEP) is its strong emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), acknowledging these skills as essential building blocks for every child's educational journey. The Policy asserts that "the ability to think critically and solve problems is essential for success in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world" (Ministry of Education, 2020). To nurture these vital competencies, the NEP proposes a significant shift from traditional rote learning - typically characterized by memorization and repetitive tasks - to more dynamic and experiential learning approaches. This innovative framework includes methodologies such as project-based learning, inquiry-based activities and hands-on experiences, allowing students to engage in real-world problem-solving scenarios that reflect contemporary societal challenges. Such an approach not only fosters a deeper understanding and retention of knowledge but also stimulates curiosity, creativity, and innovation among students, equipping them with the tools necessary for lifelong learning.

Furthermore, the NEP aims to enhance educational flexibility and promote multidisciplinary education, asserting that "students should be able to choose their courses and subjects based on their interests and aptitudes" (Ministry of Education, 2020, p. 20). This student-centric approach encourages learners to pursue their passions and strengths while discouraging a rigid, one-size-fits-all model of education. By allowing greater agency, the NEP seeks to empower students to tailor their educational experiences, thereby fostering a sense of ownership over their learning journey.

I intend to establish that the NEP aligns closely with the philosophical notion of education of John Dewey. Both the NEP and Dewey's philosophy share a common vision for transforming the education system by highlighting the importance of a holistic and student-centred approach. Dewey emphasized the significance of engaging students in meaningful activities that connect their learning to real life, a principle that is echoed in the NEP's comprehensive strategy. By placing a strong emphasis on experiential learning, critical thinking and holistic development, the NEP seeks to redefine India's education landscape.

In this context, Deweyan pragmatism serves as a valuable philosophical framework for understanding, implementing and achieving these ambitious educational goals. By

intertwining these principles with contemporary educational practices, the NEP aspires to cultivate a generation of learners who are not only academically proficient but also socially and ethically responsible individuals, capable of contributing positively to society and navigating the complexities of an interconnected world. This vision represents a significant step toward fostering a more inclusive, equitable and forward-thinking educational system in India.

The following highlights some key commonalities shared by both the NEP and the Deweyan notion:

<u>Experiential Learning</u>

John Dewey's commitment to experiential learning is a cornerstone of his educational philosophy, emphasizing the critical role of direct, practical engagement in the learning process. He posits that education should not merely be about the acquisition of abstract knowledge but should involve active participation and reflection. This foundational idea resonates strongly within NEP 2020's educational approach, which prioritizes hands-on, project-based learning strategies that encourage students to immerse themselves in real-world scenarios.

For instance, the internship process integrated within the NEP serves as a prime exemplification of experiential learning. These internships allow students to apply theoretical concepts in practical settings, enabling them to cultivate essential skills such as problem-solving, teamwork and adaptability. According to the Ministry of Education (2020, p. 14), such methods are strategically designed not only to impart theoretical knowledge but also to foster practical competencies that students can readily utilize in their future careers.

Through actively engaging with their surroundings, students are encouraged to explore complex problems, analyse various perspectives, and devise innovative solutions based on their direct experiences. This type of engagement not only enhances their understanding of subject matter but also hones their critical thinking abilities. Integrating experiential learning into the curriculum significantly amplifies student engagement, contributing to a more dynamic and interactive classroom environment. Research has shown that experiential learning leads to more effective and meaningful educational experiences, promoting deeper understanding and long-term retention of knowledge. By meshing theoretical frameworks with practical application, students are more likely to retain information and apply it in real-world situations, ultimately preparing them for the challenges they will face beyond their formal education.

Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking is the disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualizing, analysing, synthesizing, and evaluating information to guide decision and action. It is deeply influenced by philosophical inquiry, which encourages questioning assumptions, exploring different perspectives and grounding arguments in logical reasoning. This philosophical underpinning enriches critical thinking by providing a framework for understanding the complexities of beliefs and values. In the context of pedagogy, the inclusion of critical thinking is essential for fostering independent learners who can navigate an increasingly complicated world. Educators emphasize the development of critical thinking skills to empower students to assess arguments, identify biases, and articulate their thoughts clearly.

John Dewey put forth a special understanding of critical thinking that aligns closely with experiential learning. He argued that critical thinking is not merely an academic exercise but is fundamentally connected to the process of reflection on experience. Dewey emphasized the importance of inquiry-based learning, where students engage in problem-solving and are encouraged to think critically about their experiences to develop a deeper understanding of the world. The concept of critical thinking is also reflected in the NEP 2020, which aims to cultivate analytical skills and creativity in students. The NEP recognizes that developing critical thinkers is crucial for addressing national challenges and promoting societal progress. It advocates for an educational environment that encourages questioning, open dialogue, and a commitment to lifelong learning.

Overall, critical thinking is a vital competency that blends philosophical insights, pedagogical practices, and the evolving needs of society, ultimately shaping responsible and thoughtful individuals. The significance of critical thinking lies at the heart of both Dewey's philosophy and NEP 2020. Dewey insisted that education must foster "the ability to think critically and solve problems" (Dewey, 1933) to prepare students for an ever-evolving world. Similarly, NEP 2020 underscores the necessity for students to acquire "critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills," skills that are essential for navigating challenges in a complex environment (Ministry of Education, 2020). Developing critical thinking enables students to effectively evaluate information, assess varying viewpoints, and make informed decisions. By prioritizing critical thinking, educators empower students to think independently and approach problems with both resilience and confidence, fostering a generation capable of thoughtful action.

Holistic Development

Both Dewey and NEP 2020 advocate for the concept of holistic development within the educational landscape, aiming to cultivate well-rounded individuals prepared to navigate the complexities of modern life. So, what exactly is holistic development? Holistic development refers to a comprehensive approach to education and personal growth that considers the entire spectrum of an individual's development. As articulated by John Dewey in "My Pedagogical Creed" in 1897, this concept emphasizes the importance of fostering the "all-around development of the individual". Holistic development encompasses not only cognitive growth - such as critical thinking, problem-solving and academic skills - but also prioritizes social, emotional and physical development. Thus, it involves cultivating interpersonal skills, empathy and the ability to work collaboratively with others, focuses on understanding and managing one's feelings, building resilience and developing self-awareness and promotes health and well-being.

The concept presented in NEP 2020 reinforces a vital educational perspective by advocating for "holistic development" alongside "multidisciplinary education." This approach emphasizes the necessity of nurturing students as integrated individuals rather than relying on fragmented or isolated teaching strategies. A holistic educational model recognizes that the overall well-being of students – encompassing mental, emotional, social, and physical dimensions – is essential for fostering effective learning and personal growth. By cultivating an environment that prioritizes emotional intelligence, social skills, ethical values and physical health in conjunction with academic rigor, educators can cultivate well-rounded individuals who are better prepared to navigate and engage with the complexities of today's society. This inclusive strategy not only enhances academic outcomes but also equips students with essential life skills, enabling them to collaborate effectively, solve problems creatively, and contribute positively to their communities. Consequently, a holistic approach to education becomes a foundational element in preparing students to thrive in an interconnected, dynamic world.

How can this all-around development be achieved? It can be realized through a variety of strategies and components. For example, internships - whether voluntary or aimed at developing employment skills - play a critical role by providing real-world experiences that reinforce classroom learning and help students to cultivate practical skills and professional networks. Additionally, incorporating research skills into the curriculum fosters critical thinking and encourages students to engage with information analytically. Ultimately, a balanced integration of emotional, social, and academic education is key to creating an enriching learning environment that supports each student's journey toward becoming a well-rounded and capable individual.

Conclusion

The convergence of Dewey's philosophy and NEP 2020 could present a compelling framework for meaningful education reform. By embracing Dewey's principles of experiential learning, critical thinking and holistic development, educators can construct a more engaging, effective and student-centred educational system. This transformative approach has the potential to equip students with essential skills and competencies, such as collaboration, creativity and adaptability, required to thrive in an increasingly complex and rapidly evolving global landscape.

To successfully enact these necessary reforms, educators should prioritize the development of flexible and multidisciplinary curricula that seamlessly integrate project-based learning as a fundamental pedagogical approach. This entails designing projects that not only span a variety of subjects - such as science, mathematics and the arts - but also address pressing real-world issues, enabling students to forge meaningful connections between theoretical concepts and their practical applications.

In Ethics and Moral Philosophy, as well as in Mind and Cognition, we can observe practical collaborations between the Philosophy of Education and Deweyan Pragmatism. Given the opportunities for internships under the current NEP curriculum at the undergraduate level, introducing similar internships at the master's level could greatly benefit students. Such internships would allow students to understand the real-world implications of philosophical concerns. This understanding would address two key aspects: first, the challenges that arise in the world prompting philosophical inquiry, and second, the application of philosophical theories and ideas to real-world situations. This approach would create a reciprocal relationship between philosophy and real-world issues, enhancing the relevance of both fields.

It is crucial to recognize that education is not a linear race with a uniform starting point for all learners. Students come from diverse social and economic backgrounds, which significantly affects their educational experiences and opportunities. For instance, some students may have access to advanced resources such as tutoring, technology and extracurricular activities, while others may face limitations due to financial constraints or systemic barriers. In designing and implementing educational strategies, it is essential to consider these varying circumstances. Each learner brings a unique set of experiences, strengths, and challenges that can profoundly influence their educational journey.

By bridging Dewey's notion of education with NEP 2020, I aim to illustrate the possibilities of enhancing educational quality through a progressive and pragmatic approach. This method emphasizes not only individual upliftment but also the collective improvement of the entire community, driven by the educational advancement of its members. While there are several shortcomings in both Dewey's educational philosophy and the policies outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) that necessitate targeted corrections and actionable suggestions, we cannot overlook the potential benefits that may arise from integrating these approaches. By addressing the gaps, we can cultivate an educational environment that fosters critical thinking, inclusivity and active citizenship, which are essential for the holistic growth of individuals and their communities.

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[1] I would like to clarify that there are common misconceptions surrounding the terms "pragmatic approach" and "pragmatist approach". A pragmatic approach refers to a flexible and practical method for addressing problems or situations while a pragmatist approach encompasses the philosophical positions and arguments advanced by pragmatist thinkers. While many pragmatists emphasize practicality, they do not uniformly endorse the pragmatic approach. Furthermore, the pragmatic approach is not exclusive to pragmatism, as it is also

employed in scientific disciplines. To avoid confusion, it is more accurate to refer to the philosophical claims of pragmatism as "pragmatist claims" or "pragmatist approaches", rather than "pragmatic approaches", since the term "pragmatic" does not capture the full scope of pragmatist thought.

Plotting a pragmatic course: mobilising a coherent defence of elites, ethics, and the learner experience

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Abstract

Traditionally, universities operate within a hierarchical or pyramidal conceptual model. This is not surprising: in the same way that Maslow's hierarchy of needs underpinned discourses of social, cultural, economic, and personal growth, Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domain levels remains at the heart of the discourse of higher education.

Increasingly, however, many educators face fundamental challenges to that discourse. On one level, many contemporary universities face an increasing challenge to their relevance and to their legitimacy as increasing numbers of potential students either choose not to study or, worse, begin their studies but choose to leave before gaining their qualification. From a populist perspective such developments can easily be constructed as systemic failings: not only are universities 'less popular', they are also 'poor stewards of the public purse'.

Further, it is increasingly clear that students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds are overrepresented among those who choose not to study and / or choose not to complete their qualifications. Here, the socially progressive function of higher education to effect social mobility can be critiqued on its face: if the very people who have the most to benefit are not participating, surely the system is broken?

On another level, populists argue that the individualistic and subject specific research expertise that, more than anything, (self) construct the epistemological psychology of the traditional academic and their scholarship is clearly no longer fit for purpose. It is only the most well-funded, research-intensive universities that can actually deliver on the promise of a global thought leader in every classroom. By this logic, the majority of academics are therefore unable to meet the elite standards they set themselves, and the 'product' they offer is thereby intrinsically flawed.

At a more fine-grained level, populists argue that models of thinking, knowledge acquisition and transfer, communication frameworks, and even rigour and validity (to name but four) that permeate contemporary universities and their decision-makers are woefully unsuited to contemporary reality. Often such discourses are based in a utopian technological determinism: every successive breakthrough will – somehow – redefine and overthrow established models of education.

This is, we argue, the point on which resistance to populist criticisms of the contemporary university can be mobilised. If we accept that universities are neither nimble nor agile organisations, it is then perhaps no surprise that their reactions to economic, social, and technological change have been blunt, misguided, or not fit for purpose. To be blunt, since

the late 1980s universities have been very active "responding" but most of that activity has failed to defend or protect what they are, what they do, and what they value.

In this paper we will argue that one key reason for this has been the failure to engage in a philosophical debate about the nature of the changes we have lived through in the past thirty years. There needs to be something of a paradigm shift: whereas we have argued from analogue, hierarchical, and instructional ontological discourses, we need to recognise that our students and the worlds they inhabit are digital, helical, and dialogical.

We will further argue that it is only by centring the learner in a radical understanding of the present (and the power of the present to define the future) that gives the best chance of redesigning curricula to meet current circumstances. Drawing from real-world examples, we will show how such an approach can provide a space for academics to design innovative, connected, and playful curricula that can, and do, retain connected to institutional demands and meet or at least blunt populist demands for a relevant and useful contemporary qualification.

Introduction

In late 2017 our university's student association sent representatives to our Faculty Board (which oversees academic governance for four schools, over 6,000 equivalent fulltime students, and approximately 600 full time equivalent staff) with a simple yet contentious request: could we support their claim that all lectures should be recorded and made available on our learning management system?

The argument was compelling. Over 85 percent of undergraduate students worked during weekdays to support their studies. Some were parents, many had other significant family responsibilities. Increasing numbers lived with disabilities or conditions for which recorded lectures were a clearly necessary accommodation. And all of them had to navigate the reality of a barely fit for purpose transportation infrastructure. As one of the presenters said:

> I cannot actually get to my 8am class. I live down south and I need to take two trains. The earliest the first one leaves is 6:30 and if they are both on time the earliest I can get to class is twenty pasty eight. Even if I was happy to miss out on the first part of the class, the professor doesn't like us coming late. So either I can get a recording of the lecture or I can't do my degree.

In the face of these and similar stories, eventually the university agreed and lecture recordings were officially approved, equipment and software installed, and academics trained to make everything work.

None of the compelling, factual arguments that aligned with (even used) our policies and procedures was the determining factor, however. Rather, it was the reality that lectures had already been recorded for decades. Since the early 2000s our students had been sharing screenshots, photographs, lecture notes, and, yes, voice recordings of lectures in

social media groups, first on Facebook via other means as they were introduced. The argument was not, therefore, "will you record your lectures for us?" Instead, it became "don't you feel responsible to make sure the recordings we get are consistent and correct and contain the important material?"

We were both struck by how amazed, even shocked, our colleagues were when they learned of this reality. It literally was not something they had thought was possible: learners would collaborate and use technology to do so without needing a central organising "committee" of some sort. Rosser has been teaching and researching about the use of media technologies since the mid-1990s. And Ana Sofia was the by far the closest staff member in age to the student presenters in that Faculty Board meeting. From each of our perspectives, it made sense that students would be using their phones and their Facebook to help them learn.

When we reflected, we identified a central issue that we felt underpins this – and many other – issues in contemporary higher education. The lifeworlds inhabited by learners and those who are employed to help them learn are significantly and radically different. We also felt that, while there had been some attempts to describe and define this gap – for example, the differentiation between the digital native and the digital immigrant – such explanations tended to be ahistorical, technologically deterministic, and very often sublimated within a related discourse (such as the moral panics over screen time or the erosion of privacy online).

There was, we felt, a wider social totality that was either missing or marginalised. What would it be like, we asked, if a university (or a component part like a faculty, school, or teaching team) deliberately positioned itself in relation to its learners from a phenomenological standpoint? What is the essence of the lived experience of our students now? Might we have more success meeting our goals if we actually found out? And what other realities might shock and confuse our colleagues and friends?

In this paper, we reflect on and discuss three examples where we employed a positionality we termed "meeting the students where they are". This had two immediate benefits. First, it allowed us to respond differently to some of the most common issues raised by academics: students *should be* doing these things, behaving in these ways, asking these questions, and they aren't! We could say "yes, that's right: let's try to see why that might be before we ask them to change". Second, we could make the case that it's much easier to ask people to make changes if we know where they are and how they can move to where we want them to go.

There was a further interesting issue. It became clear that in centring the lived experience of our learners we were uncovering a different way to understand the nature of the intellectual elite. Students and staff occupy an undeniably elite position within society. Both benefit from access to knowledge, institutional resources, and cultural capital. Indeed, one important function of higher education is to transfer these advantages generationally. But when we centred what students and staff are doing when they "do education" we could see how their elite status is a series of common practices and dispositions rather than a cultural exclusivity in which their experiences or identities were insulated from wider social realities.

This lack of insulation from the wider world was only reinforced during and after the difficulties and disruptions brought by the Covid lockdowns. Very suddenly, the "doing of university" changed very significantly. For one thing, recording material and making it available via technology quickly became the new normal. For another, apparently simple changes to health advisories radically altered expectations: when everyone is told that they should not come to campus if they have a respiratory illness (which circumstance remains to this day), both academics and learners have to change. Deadlines may need to be extended to accommodate periods of absence. Courses may need redesigning to remove high stake hurdles to student progression. And policies and procedures may very well need to be re-examined as a result.

At the same time, of course, the populist critiques of higher education that were evident prior to 2020 have only intensified since as political and social life has become increasingly polarised, so much so that, as one scholar puts it:

> In the context of declarations of 'fake news' and the 'post-truth era', it is perhaps unsurprising that 'populism' has become central for understanding the contemporary articulation of long-standing social tensions surrounding elites, experts and the exercise of authority (Stacey et al 2022: 3).

Our contention is that the ideas and issues we identified in 2017 can be used as the basis for a systematic and considered response to populism that not only has practical and easily realisable benefits, it also offers a way to move past the unproductive and often pointless arguments that populists typically advance when discussing higher education. Before we outline our ideas further, however, it is necessary to outline where we understand current debates are situated.

Understanding Populism and Academia

We do not propose to develop a full account of the myriad ways in which populist movements can and do interact with and influence education systems, the wider political climate in which they exist, or the people who work within them. Rather, our purpose is to develop a perspective of critique from which we can advance our central argument: that old(er) methods to resist are no longer fit for purpose and that current circumstances require a new, perhaps more fine grained, approach to preserving academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

In both conceptual and practical terms, the main reason why we need new approaches to countering, resisting, and replacing populism is that we are living with and within a global mediated culture where objective truth has been, as Lahcen Haddad puts it (2016), 'downgraded to a level where it becomes irrelevant and secondary to the act of emotionally appealing to deep grievances and a sense of insecurity and loss'. This is, of course, the "post-truth era", typified by a hollowed out public sphere, where opportunities to argue against populist ideas and nostrums have been deliberately and successfully removed, reduced, and replaced (Marchenko et al 2021).

With reference to the higher education sector, we can identify key areas of focus when considering how best to develop sophisticated contemporary responses to populist discourses and policies. Probably the most important of these is the central dichotomy

constituted by every populist movement: the people, noble, pure, and under threat on the one hand, and the elite, base, corrupt, and dangerous on the other (see, for instance, Waller at al 2017, Shakeel & Maranto 2021, Nixon 2023, Mamlok 2024, and Parker 2024). This dichotomy, which radically undermines pluralist ideas, can then serve as the basis for a cycle of rhetorical crises, usually themselves based on othering minority groups, which, in turn reinforces anti-elite sentiment (see Burke & Carolissen 2018 for a very convincing explication of the gendered dimensions of this phenomenon). Here, the stereotypical academic can be mobilised as a particularly disconnected, dangerous threat to the "the people" (Staykova et al, 2016).

The most important consequence of undermining the importance of educated, contextual viewpoints is that subject expertise – usually the result of decades of enquiry and not easily reducible to soundbites – is positioned as naturally inferior to the common sense of the ordinary person. Personal or anecdotal experiences are often raised to the status of authoritative evidence, actively disregarding complex structural or scientific contexts (Rohrer 2018). As Catherine Tebaldi (2021) notes, populists can deepen their emotional appeal by adopting and deploying progressive language: fringe ideas can be justified, for instance, because they provide a diversity of thought, and populist individuals can position themselves as lone truth seekers opposed by monolithic elite institutions, which, of course, include universities.

When considering how to best respond to the post-truth mediascape, there has been an understandable claim that people within and across countries have reacted (and continue to react) irrationally, emotionally, and in ways that counter their own objective best interests. While there is some truth to descriptions of this kind, it is highly problematic to assume that such reactions are because the audience is either easily manipulated or reflexively and emotionally uncritical. Not only is this assumption paternalistic, Eurocentric and often neo-colonialist (Mahouly 2025), but it also runs counter to decades of scholarship and research that has uncovered the engaged and active role audiences play when making meaning from any media text (Hill 2011).

Universities and scholars within them have likewise not necessarily been the most agile or nimble when responding to challenges brought by populist ideas. Some individuals have taken the opportunity to mobilise populist discourses as a means to promote themselves and their individual ideological / philosophical solutions to contemporary difficulties (often as a means to "crossover" from irrelevant academia to a popular audience in order to make money – see, for instance, Jordan Peterson), while others have chosen to use their scholarly credentials as a point of difference in a crowded political landscape (usually as the radical outsider who can use their expertise on behalf of the common people, often with seriously underwhelming success – see, for instance, Javier Milei). Such academic populists are typically unable to maintain a sustained career trajectory and often find themselves marginalised relatively quickly (Brühwiler, & Goktepe, 2021).

Institutionally, universities and other higher education institutions have, as Jo-Anne Dillabough (2022) argues, a dual role as a site for radical democratic action alongside the embodiment of bureaucratic and technocratic rationalities; ironically, this dual role can promote populism within the organisations, as academics argue for their "common sense" approaches rather than corporate or financial metrics of success. And historically, populism has been an important rationale for accessible, practical, locally connected university

systems such as some state universities in the USA (Gelber 2011). These two examples are important because they remind us that any overly simplistic notion that populism inherently and naturally constitutes an external imposition onto a higher education sector that is otherwise immune needs to be critiqued and a more sophisticated response developed.

Remembering that populism is neither new nor automatically inherently negative is especially important because the higher education sector is experiencing the current reinvigoration of populist critique after decades of neoliberal challenges to and undermining of its role, function, and purpose. Agendas of marketisation (as evidence by, for example, huge increases in student fees) drove changes that largely but not exclusively operated within the system. Populist agendas, by contrast, drive changes that operate to change, replace, or even remove the system (Turnbull et al 2024). Three examples are instructive here. First, there is the threat of state control of the sector operationalised through defunding programmes and courses that have little or no immediate use value economically (such as literature and ancient history). Second, populist critique that universities undermine national cohesion because they "allow" and "normalise" criticism provide a rationale to restrict access to those with the appropriate social and political opinions (sometimes framed as the need to oppose the imposition of "Cultural Marxism"). Finally, populism often mobilises social and moral opposition to higher education because higher education produces alternative explanations for events and trends that run counter to emotive, simplistic and moral solutions (for example focussing on structural interventions to reduce crime rather than blaming and scapegoating individuals and classes) (Turnbull at al 2024).

It is not surprising that the higher education sector is a target of populist actors. University education, for instance, is strongly associated with reducing support for Right-Wing Populism (RWP), largely because higher education by definition requires a pluralist outlook (Manning & Stefanovic 2023). This fact is often referred to on social media with reference to Steven Colbert's 2006 quote 'reality has a liberal bias'. The fact that a counter narrative such as this can be popularised and mobilised points to a potential site of resistance to populism: rather than engaging in debates that accept a populist frame (such as 'programmes can be judged on values connected to their worth'), it might be more productive to steer away from solely theoretical "debates" and purposefully focus making positive change. It might also be useful to accept that feelings of disquiet, powerlessness, and despair that populists exploit have genuine causes, and it would be more productive to engage with that reality rather than focus on why those feelings are inappropriate or detrimental (Stitzlein 2024).

The argument here is that there is little point in contesting populism on its own terms or by accepting its definitions of and explanations for reality. Shan Mohammed, Quinn Grundy, and Jessica Bytautas (2024) convincingly argue that critical pedagogies are ineffective without affective solidarity with learners and wider society. They show how the very nature of post-truth ideas undermines traditional conceptions of the learner journey in higher education. Social media offer alternative explanations. Influencers and podcasters communicate using the techniques and frames of reference of highly educated experts. And those who espouse conservative, regressive, and far-right views can be positioned as heroic oppressed minorities. In such an environment, a standard epistemological approach (simply providing data) is likely to be ineffective (see Loving 2016, Gerrard 2021, and Greenwood-Hau 2024). As Michalinos Zembylas puts it:

> data and didacticism may not work productively in efforts to challenge posttruth
> in pedagogy: it is no good 'telling' people they should simply abandon their
> posttruth claims and then assume this is […] effective (2022: 305).

Admittedly, this may well be difficult. For many, it would require accepting that at least one part of the appeal of populism is real: people do appreciate being heard and having their feelings validated. And it can be frustrating for people (like academics) who value and are convinced by rational debate to face the fact that they may need to situate their arguments in the personal, the individual, and the narrative as a precondition of being heard. We argue, nevertheless, that efforts to make precisely these changes can be relatively simple and straightforward, and that their benefits can greatly outweigh the costs.

Towards a platform for change: three case studies

Since 2018 Auckland University of Technology has been reconceptualising and redesigning its programmes, with a specific focus becoming truly student-centred (Auckland University of Technology 2024). In practical terms, this means that the curriculum review and validation processes for which we have been responsible now include a range of different, and new, drivers. Alongside external factors connected to funding shortfalls (curricula that attract full fee paying international students are no longer "nice to haves"), measures that supposedly incentivise quality (programmes and courses with unacceptably low pass rates can lead to financial penalties), and pressures to maintain relevance (accreditations and industry liaison committees are assuming ever-greater importance), our colleagues are now asked to fulfill a range of institutional demands that fundamentally change how they "do curriculum".

Rather than list or interrogate each of these new demands, we propose to employ three case studies to show the range and scope of the changes.

Case Study 1: Deadlines
In Aotearoa New Zealand learners from a Pacific background are the most likely to be overrepresented in negative outcome statistics. This is due to a range of factors, not least of which is significant historical economic and social marginalisation, and there have been and continue to be many investigations into the kinds of interventions and policy changes that can lead to better outcomes (see, for instance Theodore et al 2018, Sopoaga et al 2024, and Chu-Fuluifaga 2025).

It is unfortunately very common that Pacific learners are unable to complete their courses or programmes and many either officially withdraw from study or fail to complete courses. One issue is the mismatch between the lifeworld of the learners and the institutional requirements of university bureaucracy.

Feedback from Pacific students in our faculty highlighted a particular issue with coursework deadlines, particularly when the coursework required collaboration either in formal group assignments or as part of the learning process prior to submission. The feedback highlighted the difficulty of organising the logistics of any collaborative work, especially in weeks when more than one assignment was due. When asked "if you had a magic wand, what's one thing you would change to make things better?" they asked that individual assignment deadlines within a given week were removed in favour of a single "end of week" deadline for all the work.

On the surface this may seem to be of little value. What is the benefit of having a deadline of Friday 11pm for four assignments instead of, for example, one on each of Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday? The argument from the pacific students was deceptively simple. For them, many assignments were not submitted because the individual deadlines were too inflexible. Simply put, there were too many factors to accommodate for all members of every group to be able to fit into the timing when submissions were staggered across the week. If, however, they had more freedom to arrange their university commitments alongside those of their classmates and incorporate their work, family, church, and other commitments they felt they would be able to complete and submit their coursework.

Our response was to trial the "deadline week" within three selected programmes. In one case, the number of Pacific students was too low to identify any significant benefit. In the other two, the retention rate between Year One and Year Two increased from 63.4% to 75.8% in one programme and from 64.7% to 73.2% in the other. No other interventions or changes were made, and when each of these programmes was analysed in more detail, the improvement in the retention rates was almost entirely because higher numbers of Pacific learners were submitting their coursework (that is, the proportion of Pacific learners who completed all their coursework and were unable to pass did not change).

Case Study 2: Whanaungatanga

During the Covid lockdowns it was clear that many learners struggled. Perhaps because of extra support or perhaps as a result of the novelty of the unusual situation, learner achievement in 2020 and 2021 was surprisingly good. In fact, for our faculty, despite widespread assumptions that 2021 would be more difficult than 2020, pass rates in general increased over that period. In 2022, however, there was a significant decline.

Learner feedback and metrics such as login and usage statistics suggested an increasing lack of engagement was an issue across many programmes. As a trial, one programme team decided to include activities and conversations in the first weeks of the first-year courses that focussed on whanaungatanga rather than on course content as such. Whanaungatanga can be described as developing respectful, reciprocal, kinship-type relationships including caring for others and the wellbeing of the group.

There was, naturally, some trepidation about removing one entire lesson and half of another to make space for these activities. The idea, however, was that by providing space for a guided process that aimed to build engagement and connection learners would be more likely to develop attachment and commitment to their programme. Over 2023, then, all eight courses (four in each semester) in the trial degree adopted this whanaungatanga approach. Again, this was the only intervention or change.

As Figure 1 below shows, the year-on-year percentage change in pass rates was significant. One course showed an increase of over 13 percent, and the average increase in the four first semester courses was 7.625 percent. (The average increase in the four second semester courses was 8.1 percent).

Figure 1: Year on Year Percentage Change in Pass Rates Semester One Core BCS Courses
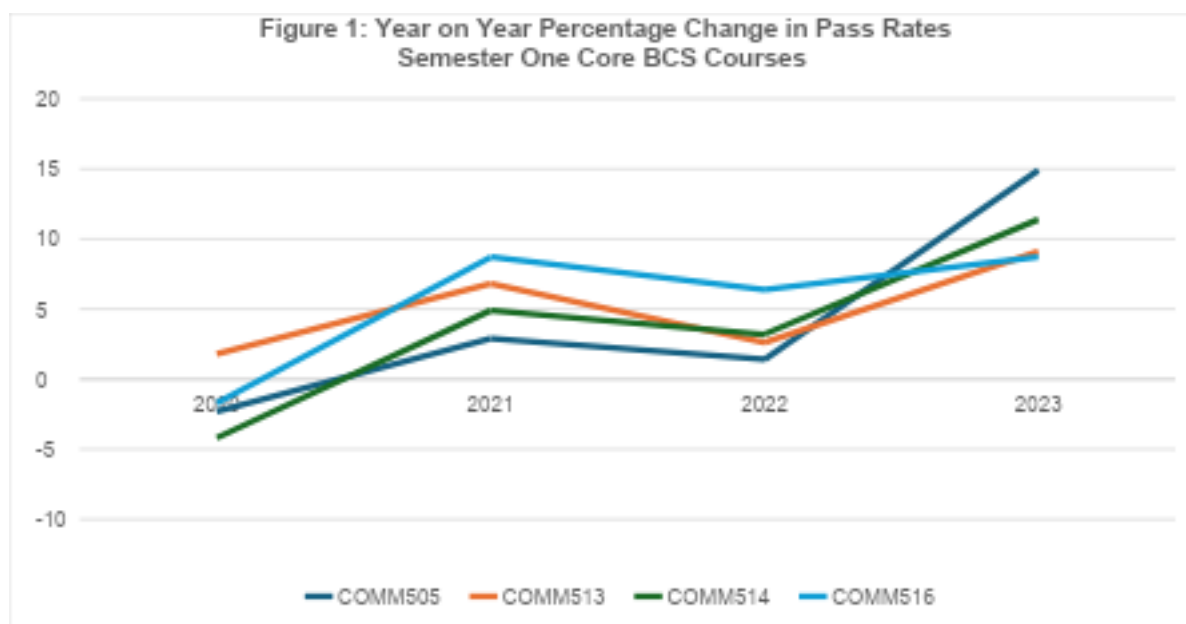
There was also qualitative feedback that supported the initiative towards improving the sense of whanaungatanga:

> Yes of course! This course has to be the most creative out there, it's hard to feel the academic pressure in this course because all your work is authentically you! Communications enables everyone to express them self and find their passion within their work. Definitely recommend to those who are having trouble discovering which degree to do, because the assessments in first year allow you to figure out what pathway you want to go down and see what you are interested in or what you don't like. It's all about trial and error during a Bachelor of Communications.
>
> Anonymous student comment – 2023 student survey

Case Study 3: "It's not your course, Professor"

The final case study concerns discussions about the pass rates across a group of courses taken by the same cohort of learners. Unlike the previous case study, which was from the creative production side of our faculty, this case study is located in the techno sciences area, specifically in Engineering.

The relevant information is that the cohort studied the same eight courses across the year. Pass rates in seven courses were broadly commensurate with each other, ranging from 84.9 percent to 88.7 percent. In the other course, the pass rate was 43.2 percent. While there was a clear relationship between success and failure across all the courses (the individuals who did not pass in the seven courses with the similar pass rates tended to be the same, and those who failed in the eighth course were not typically high achievers in the other seven), clearly there was a significant discrepancy at play somewhere.

The professor who taught the eighth course was not unaware of the issues. In fact, they'd been very aware of the problems during the semester. They'd taken advice from their

Head of Department and Head of School about how to adjust their teaching practice, offer additional sessions, even look at changes to assessment events. The came to the end of semester meeting that approved course results well prepared with a list of the advice they'd taken and a PowerPoint presentation that explained all the actions and care they had taken.

What they could not explain was the disparity between the course they had taught and the other seven courses. Their "unit of analysis" was singular and individual. They had the job of teaching this content, they taught the content and, unfortunately, a majority of the learners did not demonstrate the ability to achieve a passing grade.

It became clear relatively quickly that the missing element to the discussions was any sense of the curriculum across the eight courses being conceived of as a coherent, programmatic whole. Some of the learners who did not pass the eighth course achieved very good outcomes in the other seven. In fact, the majority of learners who did not pass the eighth course did not attempt any of the assessments, no matter what level of achievement they reached in any other course. Just over 27 percent of the entire cohort chose not to submit any work at all in the eighth course. The question was "why?"

One potential answer lay in the professor's introduction video and in their video about the assessments. Both were filled with warnings about the importance of this compulsory subject, the difficulty of nearly every topic, the demands of the assessments, and the history of struggles from previous years' cohorts. In seeking to stress the centrality and importance of the course, the professor may well have given some learners an entirely different message: this is not easy and you may very well not succeed. In a stressful and difficult environment, is it therefore not surprising that a substantial number simply tuned out? Such a response could simply be rational self-protection.

This case study, then, illustrates a key point to our argument: there is a rhetorical climate in which learners experience their learning and that rhetorical climate is experienced holistically. From the perspective of an individual academic, learners enrol in "their course". From the perspective of the learner, however, the courses and the assessments in them constitute a series of tasks (or 'doings') that need to be engaged. If one part (or some parts) of that experience is an outlier (is not to be done in the same manner and with the same approach as the remainder), then it is perhaps easily put to the side: by not being 'done like the rest' a course might be excluded from the learner experience before the learners even encounter it.

Defending 'the elite'?

This paper has attempted to engage with some difficult and fundamental questions, not the least of which (implicit we hope throughout) is "how is the university experience best justified and defended in the contemporary world?" Our answer is precisely because <u>it is an experience</u>, and an elite experience at that.

The media scholar Paddy Scannell developed his now famous phenomenological understanding of broadcasting in large part as in reaction to populist critiques of television and radio systems. Many of the arguments that are currently deployed against universities were, in the 1990s and early 2000s, deployed against broadcasting systems, whether

publicly or privately funded. The idea that cultural elites could (and were) selecting content and presenting it to "the people", the idea that some (or much) broadcasting content was inimical the interests of decent society, the idea that there was undoubtedly a more efficient (and cheaper) use of the funds needed to make and broadcast content: all featured heavily and repeatedly.

Scannell did not enter into any of those debates, or indeed to any related ones. Instead, he asked a different question: what or who is broadcasting for? or what does broadcasting do?

His answer is that broadcasting speaks to everybody in a unique way. Broadcasting, Scannell argues, combines two apparently irreconcilable modes. First, it speaks to anyone: anyone who has the equipment and pays the necessary licence, fee, or subscription can receive programming. Second, broadcasting also creates a sense of personal or individual connection with every viewer. This is the formulation of broadcasting as a 'for-anyone-as-someone' structure. Another way to express this might be 'anyone can experience this <u>and</u> there is something in it for me'. The value of broadcasting therefore lies less in the specific message of this programme or that, or in the value judgements connected to one agenda or the other. The value of broadcasting lies in the everyday acts of doing that constitute our experience of it.

Our argument is that higher education has a similar value. In fact, we argue that many universities and individuals within them already make this point (to a greater or lesser degree). The idea that a person is changed, improved even, simply because they have an education is not new. We argue that a slight change in the focus on this sentiment – away from framing education as something one *has* towards education being something one *does* – opens up a defence to many of the populist criticisms that are currently so pervasive. Importantly, this is not "an education for education's sake"; it is "an education because it will change you".

The key is that if we offer change to the learner, we must be prepared to change as educators and administrators alongside, with, and so that learners can change. More than broadcasting (which remains an almost ideal one-way model of communication), higher education is a dialogue. It is a co-created experience whether or not we use those words to describe the experience.

There is, therefore, a deeply and irretrievably phenomenological truth to higher education. And we best engage with that truth by opening up the possibility of what Kevin Gannon (2020), drawing on the seminal work of Paulo Freire, terms 'radical hope', the simple yet powerful idea that the doing of education is transformative by definition. Nobody who engages in it remains unchanged, and there is great power and potential in remembering that we have innumerable everyday opportunities to shape that change positively, bravely, and well.

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Sapere Aude! Philosophical praxes in challenging times

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Abstract

Considering today's multifaceted crisis within and beyond academia, characterized by democratic recessions, censorship, and silencing, it is pertinent to direct a critical eye on the mission of philosophy. What role may our teaching of philosophy play in young peoples' effort to navigate current complexities? More precisely, to what degree can philosophical praxes support our confronting and reconciling with the present?

To explore, I tentatively act on Badiou's call to give Hegel a voice. In doing so, I propose a critical reading of G.W.F. Hegel's inaugural address delivered at the University of Berlin on October 22, 1818. This inaugural address is a powerful manifesto for the teaching of philosophy in troubling times. Addressing his students, Hegel urges them to "to demand truth ... in the realm of freedom". This ethico-political perspective on the mission of philosophy was further elucidated in the lecture series he presented to the same group of students, and which were later published under the title "Outline of the Philosophy of Right" (1821).

However, revitalizing Hegel's social and political philosophy two centuries later is deeply problematic, not least because philosophical styles, social relations, and worldviews of today differ markedly from those of Hegel's era. His assertion that "philosophy is its own time comprehended in thoughts" highlights this obstacle: Hegel's form and vocabulary are often alien to contemporary readers. Furthermore, his ideas are immensely complex, rich, and dense, compounded by a substantial number of rejections, disputes, interpretations and divergent schools of thought – old and new – fighting over the most truthful reading of Hegel's system.

I neither can nor will ignore or resolve these complexities but rather trace Hegel's thoughts on the ethico-political role and mission of philosophy in troubling times. My engagement relies on primary texts, including his "Philosophy of Right" (1821) and "Phenomenology of Spirit" (1807), emphasizing key concepts such as desire, recognition, and the self-alienated spirit. Instead of a conventional hermeneutics, I will conduct an inverted analysis of the 1818 speech through the lens of Hegel's political philosophy and contemporary interpretations offered by Alain Badiou, Judith Butler, Axel Honneth, and Slavoj Žižek. The contemporary philosophers' insights are valuable as they highlight the paradoxical attributions that constitute both the relevance and limitations of Hegel's philosophy today. Especially in relation to the spirit of distrust in challenging times.

I open my paper by briefly situating Hegel's inaugural address and explaining his distinctive understanding of philosophy. To read Hegel is to be invited into a new mode of philosophical thought. It is to be experiencing the operations of a mobile, many faceted and complex philosophical system, moving through its paradoxical and contradictory praxes at multiple levels. It resembles what Judith Butler describes as "reflexive movements of desire," or the "madness" articulated by Žižek—concepts that resonate in Hegel's call for student engagement with complex philosophical discourses. But what motivates Hegel's invitation?

The next section of the paper explores Hegel's aspiration for these "reflexive movements of

desire". Hegel portrays philosophy as a potential vehicle for social and cultural formation of "the Spirit" (collective consciousness), or a deepening and transformation of collective narratives. By reading Hegel's phenomenology as a Bildungsroman and his politics as an ethics of freedom, it becomes clear that the mission of philosophy is education. Following Axel Honneths daring interpretation, this education entails an ongoing formation of "the I in We", cultivating vigorous social and political cultures.

In summing up, I point to the potential limits and possibilities of revitalizing Hegel today. To what extent should Hegel's inaugural address inform philosophy's role in the lives of contemporary youth? Hegel posits that "the goal of philosophy is to grasp the Idea [the true as such] in its true shape and universality". But the messy and opaque crises of today make it difficult - if not impossible - to construct a neat and orderly narrative of the present. Not to mention a collective vision of a future yet to come. Nevertheless, should we still act on today's call to give Hegel a voice?

Keywords

Political Philosophy of Education; Shifting ethical-political narratives; Hegel's Inaugural Address; Philosophical Praxis; Reflexive Desire; Collective Spirit; Cultural Bildung

Introduction

My ambition with this paper is to critically explore the contemporary relevance of G.W.F. Hegel's (1770–1831) conception of the teaching of philosophy. To what degree may Hegel's system help to construct fruitful narratives about the potential powers of philosophical praxes in the present? Background is today's multifaceted crisis unfolding both within and beyond academia, alongside a growing call among contemporary philosophers for a revitalization of Hegel to understand today's epochal transitions (Badiou 2012; Nuzzo 2018). So, what is Hegel's conception of the teaching of philosophy in challenging times? What role may philosophy play in young people's efforts to navigate current complexities? Or, to what degree can Hegelian philosophical praxes support our confronting and reconciling with the present?

To explore these questions, I turn to G. W. F. Hegel's inaugural address – delivered at the University of Berlin on October 22, 1818 – which is a forceful manifesto for the teaching of philosophy. My modest aspiration is simply to trace Hegel's reflections on the ethical-political role and mission of philosophical praxes[3] in challenging times. Appealing to "the spirit of youth" and urging students "to demand truth … in the realm of freedom," Hegel invites a consideration on how philosophy responds to its historical moment. I thus expect that a close reading of this text will illuminate his conception of the mission of philosophical praxes and invite a discussion about the topicality and relevance of this conception today.

To trace Hegel's thoughts, I will not perform a conventional hermeneutical reading of his address. Neither a linear reading of his logic. Rather, I will do a slightly inverted analysis as I read Hegel's 1818 speech while taking some contemporary interpretations offered by Alain Badiou, Judith Butler, Angelica Nuzzo and Slavoj Žižek into account. These contemporary philosophers' insights are valuable as they highlight the paradoxical attributions that constitute both the current relevance and limitations of Hegel's philosophical

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[3] My term 'philosophical praxes' here refers to the philosophical activities in higher education, such as teaching, learning and active involvement with philosophical conversations and inquiries. 'Praxes' is the plural form of praxis, the act of engaging, applying, exercising, realizing, or practicing ideas. So, to teach philosophy allude to doing philosophy, a practice of philosophizing along with the students.

system. Especially in relation to the spirit of distrust in challenging times (Badiou 2022; Butler 2012; Nuzzo 2018; Žižek 2021).

Revitalizing Hegel after two hundred years, however, is problematic, not least because social relations, worldviews, and philosophical styles have changed significantly over the centuries. Hegel is clearly right contending that "philosophy is its own time comprehended in thoughts". The fact that Hegel adopts a philosophical form, style and vocabulary completely foreign to our time is however not the only obstacle to revitalizing Hegel. Another is the fact that Hegel's philosophical ideas are immensely complex, deep and rich. A third obstacle is the substantial number of rejections, disputes, interpretations and competing schools of 'Hegelians' – old and new – fighting over the most truthful reading of Hegel's philosophical system. So why bring Hegel into the conversation about teaching philosophy in challenging times? My immediate—and admittedly somewhat naïve—answer is that Hegel developed, conceived and taught his philosophy as a response to the political challenges of his own era (Hegel 1984; Tubbs 1996).

To demonstrate I open my paper by situating Hegel's inaugural address and pointing to the way he describes his mission as a teacher of philosophy. Next, I elaborate on Hegel's mode of philosophical thought while revealing how Hegel portrays philosophy as a potential vehicle for social and cultural formation of "the Spirit" (collective consciousness). However, I sum up by asking to what extent Hegel's inaugural address may inform philosophy's role in the lives of contemporary youth. Hegel posits that "the goal of philosophy is to grasp the Idea [the true as such] in its true shape and universality". But the messy and opaque crises of today make it difficult - if not impossible - to construct a neat and orderly narrative of present transformations. Not to mention a collective vision of a future yet to come. Nevertheless, should we still act on today's call to give Hegel a voice?

Situating Hegel's inaugural address

Hegel opens his inaugural address:

> Since today marks my *first* appearance at this university in *that official capacity as a teacher of philosophy* which I was graciously appointed by His Majesty the King, permit me to say by way of introduction that I consider it particularly desirable and gratifying to take up a position of *wider academic influence* both at this *particular moment* and in this *particular place* (Hegel 1818/1999, p. 181 - italics in original).

In 1818 Hegel was called to a professorship in Berlin by the new reform-minded Prussian minister of Spiritual, Educational and Medical affairs, Karl Siegmund Franz von Stein zum Altenstein. Politically, this was a time of shifting regimes. A few years earlier, the rule of the Congress of Vienna (1815) had contributed to an increasingly conservative and reactionary political supervision of the universities[4]. However, in 1817 the new Ministry for Spiritual, Educational and Medical affairs was established by the reform-minded Altenstein, who was able to remove the universities from direct control of the party of restoration and dilute proposed restrictive measures. Already the next year, Altenstein appointed Hegel to teach philosophy at the University of Berlin.

So, Hegel was appointed to teach philosophy at the University of Berlin in a time of

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[4] After the Napoleonic Wars, the Congress of Vienna, held in 1815, established a new balance of power in Europe and led to the creation of the German Confederation, a loose association of German states. Several German states began to liberalize their governments. In 1818, Baden and Bavaria received new constitutions, and it was expected that Prussia would also have a constitution, although King Friedrich Wilhelm eventually gave up on this idea.

transition. In Prussia there was a deep tension between reformists and conservatives; between those who advocated civil, political and military reform in the wake of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and Napoleon's Civil Code and those who aimed to resist these 'liberal' progressive ideas and rather restore a patriarchic Prussian state in which the King was under God only and supported by a landowning, privileged aristocracy. Hegel sympathized deeply with the advocates of reform, which may explain the fact that he was called to the position by the reform-minded minister, who also supported him in his position all throughout his life (Houlgate 2008). So, despite alluding to "His Majesty the King" in his inaugural address, Hegel was never close to the king or to the party of restoration. On the contrary, Hegel explicitly criticized the party's use of power and privilege to suppress freedom, rights, and law. It is thus an irony that his contemporary Schopenhauer – and later Karl Popper – accused Hegel of being a paid agent for the Prussian state, because Hegel strongly opposed the ambition of the Prussian state to restrict academic freedom[5].

A time and place to engage in philosophy

So, what did Hegel see as his mission in this situation? In the next lines of Hegel's speech, we get a glimpse of Hegel's perception of the new attention being paid to philosophy:

> As far as the *particular moment* is concerned, those circumstances appear to have arisen in which *philosophy* may again expect to receive *attention* and *love*, and in which this science, which has almost fallen silent, may once more lift up its voice (Hegel 1818/1999, p. 181- italics in original).

Philosophy, Hegel says, has recently "fallen silent", but may again "once more lift up its voice". The curbing of philosophy, he seems to claim, was a result of the tangible restrictions towards the universities. Nonetheless, in asserting that "philosophy may again […] lift up its voice," he evokes an earlier period in which philosophy played a decisive role in cultural transformation and the renewal of collective consciousness (Bourke 2023). Hegel even appears to regard the French Revolution as the product of a transformed collective consciousness shaped by philosophy[6]. So, his 1818 inaugural address may be read as a sign that he believed the time had come once again to engage in philosophy.

Hegel clearly conceives his assignment as a philosophy teacher at the University of Berlin as inseparable from the cultural and historical conditions of his time. Which is also evident by the fact that he - just three years later - publishes his lectures with the title "Outline of the Philosophy of Right" (1821/2008). This lecture series – which I assume he must have presented to the very same group of students that attended his inaugural address – forms the heart of Hegel's political philosophy and should also inform our reading of Hegel's inaugural address. But again, what does Hegel believe teaching of philosophy can do?

Teaching and doing philosophy

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[5] One of the signs of Hegel's reformist sympathies is his opposition towards "the Karlsbad Decrees" implemented in 1819, which limited the role of the university by executing censorship and restricted academic freedom. Hegel wrote in a letter to a friend – Friedrich Creuzer – that "I am about to be fifty years old, and I have spent thirty of these fifty years in these ever-unrestful times of hope and fear. I had hoped that for once we might be done with it. Now I must confess that things continue as ever. Indeed, in one's darker hours it seems they are getting ever worse" (Hegel 1984, p. 451).

[6] This view clearly shines through in his lectures on world history: "It has been said that the French revolution resulted from philosophy, and it is not without reason that philosophy has been called Weltweisheit [world wisdom]; for it is not only truth in and for itself, as the pure essence of things, but also truth in its living form as exhibited in the affairs of the world" (Hegel 1822/1980, pp. 62–3).

Considering this question, it is relevant to mention that a few years earlier Hegel was asked, while teaching philosophy at the Nuremberg Gymnasium, to report on the role of philosophy in the gymnasium. Hegel's report – given October 1812 to the Central Commissioner of Education in Bavaria, Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer – expressed doubts about philosophy teaching in the gymnasium. Hegel even suggested in a private letter to Niethammer, who he had known since they were fellow students, to abolish all philosophy teaching to this group of young students. He confided that "my more immediate interest would be for professors of philosophical sciences to be declared superfluous in the gymnasium and either given another task or sent elsewhere" (Hegel 1984, p. 283). I get the impression that Hegel is here referring to his own ambitions as a philosophy teacher. However, a few months later Hegel adjusted his recommendation in a new letter to Niethammer, emphasizing that this "polemical" statement concerned the "*speculative* content" of philosophy, "which I consider too difficult for gymnasium instruction if taken in a stricter sense" (Hegel 1984, p. 285 - italics in original).

In his report on the role of philosophy in the gymnasium Hegel distinguished between two intertwined and inseparable dimensions of philosophy, namely philosophy as a subject matter and philosophy as a method, or the act of philosophizing. He emphasized that "in learning the content of philosophy one not only learns to philosophize but indeed really philosophizes. Likewise, the aim of learning [to philosophize] is only […] to know the content" (Hegel 1984, p. 279). In other words, Hegel makes the act of philosophizing one with the object it accounts for.

Moreover, Hegel contended that philosophy "in its method and soul" has three intertwined aspects: abstract, dialectical and speculative. When it comes to the abstract, which "appears predominant in the sphere of gymnasium" (Hegel 1984, p. 281), the purpose is to get to know, grasp, or understand a content or a subject matter. The dialectical, by contrast, is about transformations, both of our consciousness and of the world. In a short paragraph, Hegel makes it clear that his idea of the dialectical moves beyond the ancient Greek conception of dialectics as the very *form* of ideas. It also moves beyond the deep contradictions captured by the Kantian antinomies. Hegelrather describes the dialectical as the dynamic processes of autonomous self criticism and self-development of the subject matter itself. In his phenomenology, he pictures this process; "The series of configurations which consciousness goes through along this road is, in reality, the detailed history of the *education* of consciousness itself to the standpoint of Science" (Hegel 1977, p. 50 - italics in original). In other words, the dialectical is "the pathway to *doubt*, or more precisely the way of despair" which leads to "the conscious insight into the untruth of phenomenal knowledge" (Hegel 1977, p. 49-50). To teach this performing movement of doubt and educative self-criticism is challenging – not to say impossible – because the experience of these dynamic processes cannot be reduced to abstract knowledge only.

The speculative is to Hegel the "truly philosophical" aspect of philosophical praxis (Hegel 1984, p. 282). It is "the knowledge that the opposites are in truth one". Which implies that the inconsistency and deep contradictions in mind and matter are not something to be solved or overcome, but rather "the core of any entity" (Zizek 2021, p. 25). In his letter to Niethammer, Hegel admits that he is unable to teach speculative content to his students. It is simply "too difficult for gymnasium instruction" (Hegel 1984, p. 285). He even confides that "this point, which I make in my explanation [report], against speculative content is really directed against myself, for on account of my pupils I am unable to get by with speculative [thinking]". Nevertheless, he declares that "on account on myself, I am unable to get by without it" (Hegel 1984, p. 285). But why does Hegel say that he cannot do without

speculative thinking?

A new mode of philosophical thought

In his inaugural address, Hegel explains:

> Our vocation and business are *to nurture the development of philosophy* as the *substantial basis* which has now been *rejuvenated* and *confirmed*. Its rejuvenation, whose initial impact and expression were felt in political actuality, makes its further appearance in the *greater ethical* and *religious* seriousness, that *demand* for *solidity* [*Gediegenheit*] and *thoroughness* in general, which has gone out *to* [people in] *all walks of life*; the *most solid* [*gediegenste*] [kind of] *seriousness* is essentially [*an und für sich selbst*] *the seriousness of truth* (Hegel 1818/1999, p. 183 - italics in original).

Hegel's mission – as he saw it – was to cultivate a way of teaching and advancing philosophy that responded to political challenges of his time. The renewed interest in philosophy, he claimed, will eventually come forward as a deeper and more serious ethical and religious commitment in all walks of life. Because to Hegel, philosophical praxes – in the form of truthful dialectical speculative processes of exploration – carry potentials for a deepening and transformation of both individual and collective consciousness.

I should mention, however, that Hegel directs some sharp critiques against what he terms "the so-called critical philosophy" (Hegel 1818/1999, p. 184) for its ignorance of truth. In fact, he criticizes Kantian philosophy, which he sees as an overly abstract and formalistic intellectual exercise that ignores truth. In contrast to Kant, Hegel brings the deep transformational logic of mind and matter to the center stage (Nuzzo 2018). For one, Hegel accounts for the dynamic of real processes – be it psychological, social, political or historical. So, "true" philosophy is to Hegel reflective thinking processes that seek to understand a world of change. Not as processes of change appear superficially, but as they appear in their logical and historical configurations and developments (Badiou 2022, Nuzzo 2018, Zizek 2022). Moreover, Hegel's dialectical speculative logic is not an abstract or formal description of these dynamic processes of change but rather acts that themselves perform such movements. So again, the act of philosophizing does the very thing it sets out to explore (Nuzzo 2018). Consequently, from a dialectical speculative point of view it is vital to reconcile the impossible dilemma of describing actual transformations and concurrently contributing to them.

So, there is a tension between the descriptive and normative in Hegel. Moreover, Hegel's philosophical system carries a contradictory logic that seeks to describing the dynamic transformations of the world and self while contemplating thinking's own internal transformations, and the relationships between them. According to Zizek (2022), Hegel deals with the "madness" of the rational order itself, a madness that alludes to a series of infinite judgments that coincides, contradicts and develops through several ruptures and continuities. So, what Hegel aspire to do with his philosophical system is to describe the immanent logic of this "madness", while asking how the narrative of our present can and should be told. But how to tell the story of a present while being immersed in fragmented narratives? How can the story of the present be told from the position of immanence? Because, as Hegel says in his introduction to his *Philosophy of Right*; we can only understand our present in retrospect. Philosophy can only paint "grey in grey".

> When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a shape of life grown old. By philosophy's grey in grey cannot be rejuvenated but only understood. The owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the falling of dusk (Hegel 1821/2008, p. 16)

In other words, a cognitive mapping of our present is simultaneously necessary and impossible.

Consequently, Hegel invites his students at the University of Berlin into a new mode of philosophical thought. He invites them to be experiencing the operations of a mobile, many faceted and complex philosophical system, to move through its paradoxical and contradictory praxes at multiple levels. And to comprehend and take part of dynamic processes of transition. These dynamic processes of transition resemble what Alain Badiou labels as "truth procedures", Angelica Nuzzo terms "figures of action", or the "mad dance" described by Slavoj Žižek— concepts that resonate in Hegel's call for student engagement with complex philosophical discourses.

Cultivating vigorous ethical-political cultures

Hegel sees history and human development as a process through which Spirit[7]-consciousness – comes to know itself and achieve freedom. This self-realization involves reconciliation with contradictions and reaching at a more comprehensive understanding of reality. Zizek (2022) describes this process of self-realization as a reconciliation with madness, not in the sense that madness will be left behind, but more in the sense of a reconciliation with the inconsistency that constitutes the very real of the situation. In other words, inconsistency is not something to be overcome or left behind. Rather it is the very essence of any entity or situation. Because the real is not just what there is. It is also its ideological supplements, our symbolic fictions that structure reality, our communal narratives, our false hopes and fears. These symbolic fictions are part of and constitute reality itself. As soon we realize that - reality is no longer what it was. This subtraction allows us to see what we see in all its misery and consolation. And as soon the blindfold is removed, reality opens to an actual change.

> All that holds human life together, all that has value and validity, is spiritual in nature; and this realm of the spirit exists solely through consciousness of truth and right, through the comprehension of Ideas (Hegel 1818/1999, p. 185 - italics in original).

So, Hegel calls for a shared consciousness (Spirit)—both individual and collective—that is grounded in, shaped by and upheld by an awareness of truth and justice. Or, in other words "the comprehension of Ideas". I should mention that an idea, to Hegel, is not an ideal that we ought to realize, but rather a present actuality (Inwood 1992, p. 124). So, Hegel deals – both descriptively and normatively – with two closely interconnected types of transformations: the dynamic changes of the world and the internal changes of our thinking. The task is to explore how transformations in and of the world can be grasped conceptually while concurrently exploring why and how thinking itself should change, in terms of both how we think about ourselves and the world. From this perspective, the task of philosophy becomes clear: it is an education—of itself, the spirit, and the world.

He therefore closes his address by appealing to his students:

May I express the wish and hope that I shall manage to gain and merit your

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[7] Hegel's "spirit" is divided into 1) Subjective Spirit – which is individual consciousness, 2) Objective Spirit – or collective consciousness – which comes forward as cultural norms, practices and institutions and 3) Absolute Spirit – the merging of individual and collective consciousness. Absolute Spirit is expressed through art, religion, and philosophy. In essence, Hegel's "spirit" is about the progressive development of freedom and self-consciousness, both individually and collectively, through shifting dynamics of personal growth and societal transformation.

confidence on the path which we are about to take. But first of all, the one thing that I shall venture to ask of you is this: that you bring with you a trust in *science*, *faith* and *reason*, and *trust and faith in yourselves. The courage of truth and faith in the power of the spirit is the primary condition of philosophy study* (Hegel 1818/1999, p. 185 - italics in original).

Potential limits and possibilities of revitalizing Hegel

So again, what is Hegel's conception of teaching philosophy in challenging times? What role may he designate philosophy to play in young people's efforts to navigate current complexities?

It is no understatement to say that Hegel's inaugural address is a strong manifesto for the teaching of philosophy. The way he encourages his students to "demand truth … in the realm of freedom" demonstrates that he sees philosophy as a vehicle for social progress. Not because philosophy opens new insights on ethical-political issues only, but rather because Hegel's dialectical-speculative logic are logical figures of action that transform individual and collective consciousness. In short, to teach philosophy in terms of initiating philosophical praxes in and beyond the seminar room eventually creates and shapes a reflective, communal consciousness that next transforms the world. I am thus supportive of Angelica Nuzzo's claim that "Hegel's logic is the crucial intellectual tool that can help us weave the elusive stories of our own present" (Nuzzo 2018, p. 4).

I must admit, however, that I am sympathetic towards the extensive criticism of Hegel's idealism, circular reasoning, historical determinism, potential nationalism, and valence of his dialectic (or let's say the interpretation of it). However, in reading Hegel as a doctrine of the event rather than an adventure of the spirit – a politics rather than a history – we may glimpse an articulation of a theory of the subject that anticipates contemporary conceptualizations of the ontological edifice of being.

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Free Spirit and Its Self-Overcoming: Nietzschean perspectivism and its implications for education

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Abstract

In contemporary educational discourses, the post-truth problem is one major issue that has sparked wide discussion. In his philosophical approach, Biesta (2024) attributes this affliction to 'perspectival reason' or 'perspectivism' (he uses the two terms interchangeably), which in his understanding is the configuration that human beings fundamentally have perspectives on the world from their perspectives. Although Biesta's insight into the problematic situation is keen, his critique of perspectivism is rather unfair. In this paper, I provide an in-depth elaboration on Nietzschean perspectivism and argue that Biesta's critiques do not apply. Nietzschean perspectivism does reject the notion of 'universal truth', but it does not result in the situation where we cannot decide if one perspective is better than another. On the contrary, Nietzsche has two criteria for a 'better' perspective, which are 'objectivity' and 'life-promotion', and he attaches greater importance to the latter. For Nietzsche, for the person to endure and utilize more truths, she needs to have more strength in spirit. In the last two sections, I discuss the educational implications that can be drawn from Nietzschean perspectivism, focusing on the role of teacher in the cultivation of students' strength of spirits.

Keywords

Perspectivism; Nietzsche; Free spirit; Post-truth

Introduction

Since the Oxford English Dictionary declared 'post-truth' as the word of the year in 2016, the term has sparked wide discussion in diverse educational fields, from both theoretical and

practical angles. Nearly one decade later, with the deteriorating international political situation, rapid permeation of social media and accelerated evolution of artificial intelligence, this issue remains of great, if not even greater, concern to educational researchers. In a post-truth era, education needs to tackle fundamental philosophical questions regarding knowledge and truth, including, for example: *what justifies certain representation of the world in education if there exists no objective truth but only individual opinions?* Moreover, *if there is no such justification, then what is the relationship between human beings and world and how should education operate within such relationship?*

Gert Biesta (2024a) offers a philosophical analysis of this issue by attributing the affliction of post-truth to 'perspectival reason' (or 'perspectivism', he uses the two terms interchangeably). He claims that "we are currently in the middle of a number of significant problems stemming from the logic of perspectival reason. One is the idea of 'post-truth', which clearly stems from the suggestion that knowledge and truth are a matter of individual perspectives 'on' the world, with no outside arbiter" (p.4). He further argues that it is necessary to imagine a different human-world relationship instead of a perspectival one, through recourse to what he called 'world-returning philosophies', especially the thoughts of Levinas and Marion. A more detailed discussion of the implications on education can be found in his 2022 book *World-Centred Education*.

Biesta's works are certainly insightful and inspiring. However, this paper argues that his critique of perspectivism is rather unfair. In the next section, by critically engaging with the two related works (Biesta's 2024 paper and 2022 book), I show that his understanding of perspectivism is only of a specific kind and the educational suggestions he drew from the 'world-returning philosophies' do not magically resolve the post-truth aporia he imputes to perspectivism. After critical discussion of Biesta's works, I provide a closer look at the rich connotations of perspectivism in Nietzsche's philosophy, arguing that many of Biesta's critiques do not apply. Last but not least, I discuss how Nietzschean perspectivism offers means to grapple with the post-truth problem more thoroughly, as well as its educational implications.

A critical analysis of Biesta's approach

Biesta's understanding of perspectivism

Biesta (2024a) defines 'perspectival reason' or 'perspectivism' as "the idea that the relationship between human beings and the world is fundamentally one in which human beings have a perspective on the world from their particular standpoint" (p. 2). For him, this idea is not a trans-historical human condition but has historical roots in the invention of perspectival drawing, which not only marked a new technique in visual art but also set up a configuration of the relationship between human beings and the world where the human beings appear as observers from their standpoints and the world as what is being observed (p. 3).

Biesta makes three claims about perspectivism. The first one can be called '*externality claim*', which means that if we consider human as observer of the world, "[t]his also means that the individual in a sense 'disappears' from the world, because as 'world viewer' the individual now stands *outside and before* the world-as-object-of-observation, as object-to-have-a-perspective-on" (p. 4). The problematic consequence of this is that not only is the world reduced to a 'world view' observed by the world-viewer, the observer herself is also lost since positioning oneself 'outside and before' the world would raise "the question what this position actually is and how the self has ended up there" (p. 11).

The second claim Biesta makes can be characterized as the '*freedom claim*', since he contends that the dualistic configuration of 'world view' and 'world viewer' brings a kind of freedom for each individual, "the freedom to have a standpoint and a perspective" (p. 11). This is especially problematic for Biesta as he attributes many consequences to perspectivism because of this freedom, including 'post-truth', 'identity politics' (p. 4) and 'conflation of values with (individual or collective) preferences' (p. 5). Even in contemporary philosophical discourse, Biesta writes

> One could also argue that the recent proliferation of ontologies and '-isms' such as posthumanism, new materialism, or relational ontology, is an instance of the logical of perspectival reason, stemming from the assumption that also at a

>meta-level we are just free to articulate our own perspectives on the world, that we
>
>are just free to tell the world what it is or what it ought to be. (ibid.)

The third claim is the '*relativist claim*', in his arguments related to the 'freedom claim.' Because the post-truth situation is problematic not simply because we have the freedom to articulate our own worldviews, but also because there is not objectively justifiable criteria to decide the truth and falsity of the worldviews. In educational settings, Biesta contends that because of the premise of perspectivism, teachers and curriculum makers are facing difficulties " as they often end up having to 'sanction' a particular perspective, which increasingly raises the question what would give teachers, curriculum developers or even policy makers the right to prefer one perspective over another and even to enforce one perspective over another" (p. 12).

'World-Centred Education': Can it avoid post-truth problem?

In the next section, I will show how none of the three claims Biesta makes about perspectivism applies to Nietzschean perspectivism. For now, let us proceed to analyze Biesta's subsequent arguments. Biesta summarizes the problematic consequences of perspectivism as 'the loss of the world' because if all we have are 'world views' from individual perspectives, the world itself is lost. Hence, the question becomes "whether it is in any way possible to regain the world" (p. 5). And it is noteworthy that the philosophies which can 'return' the world to us must not simply be another world-view, another perspective, but should be a different configuration of human beings and the world (ibid.).

Through discussing different world-returning philosophies including pragmatism, phenomenology, and especially the thoughts of Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Marion, Biesta attempts to provide a configuration where instead of an individual projecting her perspective on the world, "[i]t rather is the ongoing work of finding the place where I can be found, to use Marion's phrase, the place where I can 'meet' the call of the world and where this call can 'meet' me" (p. 12). In this world-returning reconfiguration, the world is not the

object being observed and controlled, but instead it calls, commands, summons us to experience it in certain ways. This, for Biesta, is the way out of the problematic consequences of perspectival reason.

Educational implications can be drawn from this new configuration and Biesta explains them in greater detail using the term 'world-centred education' in the homonymic book (Biesta, 2022). In this book, Biesta (2022) criticizes the view of education as the selection and (re)presentation of the world for the students:

> The idea that the world needs to be represented, which also means that the world needs to be interpreted, stems from the observation that the world itself doesn't tell us how it wants to be understood, how it wants to be known. (p.92)

Even though Biesta does not explicitly use 'perspectivism' in this paragraph, it can be seen as his account of 'perspectival' education, because in perspectivism as Biesta understands, the world itself is unreachable and the knowledge of the world ('world view') is only attainable as interpretations from individual perspectives. Therefore, for Biesta, education in such perspectivism would be the endeavor of selecting and representing certain aspects of the world for the students, in other words, providing certain world views to the students and thus ends up in the post-truth aporia.

On the other hand, in a world-returning configuration of human beings and world,

> [t]here is an entirely different attitude and hence an entirely different encounter with the world possible, one where the world comes to us, gives itself to us, surprises us, and where, with the rather strong words Marion uses, the world *commands* us and *summons* us to come to experience it (ibid., p. 85). (p. 97)

And such configuration which puts world in the centre also demands a different form of education than selecting and representing, that is, one of pointing the world to the students, of redirecting students' attention to the world, of inviting students to attend to the world (pp. 75-88). Therefore, as he emphasizes:

> [I]t is the world ... that teaches, and what teachers do is to try to keep students "turned" towards the world and "open" towards the world, so that it may become possible for students to attend to the world and, in one and the same move, attend to themselves, so to speak, by encountering the question what the world, this world, this reality right her [*sic*] and right now, is asking from me. (p. 99)

The 'world-centred education' Biesta proposes is certainly appealing and inspiring but it is also not without criticism. Researchers have critically discussed central ideas Biesta presented in this book and related works such as 'subjectification' (e.g. Papastephanou, 2020; Thompson, 2024; Guillemin, 2025) and Biesta also addresses some of the criticisms (e.g. in Biesta 2024b). Here, I focus on the the challenge of 'post-truth' and argue that without clearer elaboration, Biesta's 'world-centred education' cannot avoid the same difficulty faced by perspectivism or 'perspectival' education.

One issue that causes confusion in 'world-centred education' is the role of teachers. As mentioned above, instead of 'representing', Biesta imagines a different mediating role of the teachers between the world and the students, i.e. that of 'pointing' or 'redirecting the students' attention'. And this, for Biesta (2024a) 'releases teachers from the impossible task of adjudicating between perspectives' (p. 13). However, educational pointing is not *merely* saying "You, look there!". As Biesta (2022) discusses through recourse to the works of Klaus Prange, good educational pointing needs to be 'understandable', 'appropriate' and 'connectable' (p. 85). It means that, when pointing the world to the students, the teacher should do it in a correct, transparent and comprehensible way, so that the world is accessible to the students and has connections with the students' interests (pp. 85-86).

I agree with Biesta here, that 'pointing' needs to meet certain criteria to be educationally favorable. However, this also exposes 'world-centred education' to the post-truth problem: *on what foundation can we say a teacher's 'pointing' is 'correct, transparent and comprehensive'?* Let us consider a classroom of environmental education. The teacher can point a heavily polluted river to the students and show them the damage to the environment in a 'correct, transparent and comprehensive' way from a scientific *perspective*. This would call on the students to condemn the factories that is harming the

environment. On the other hand, the teacher can also point to the history of expansion of global capitalism that explains why the polluting factories were built in developing countries instead of developed countries and this is also 'correct, transparent and comprehensive' from a political-economical *perspective*. And arguably this would make a very different appeal to the students. Therefore, even in 'world-centred education' where the 'world' is supposed to do the teaching, the teachers still need to grapple with the post-truth situation where multiple ways of 'pointing' from different *perspectives* seem to be equally 'correct, transparent and comprehensive'.

As such, I argue that by simply claiming that educators should let the world 'appears as 'appeal' or 'call'' (Biesta 2024, p. 12) cannot avoid the post-truth difficulty he attributes to perspectivism. Even worse, in granting a mysterious 'world' the authority of calling, demanding, summoning the students to experience it in certain ways, this approach risks downplaying the importance and complexity of teachers' mediating role and concealing the post-truth problem that still exists. In the following sections, I argue that instead of too quickly rejecting perspectivism as a whole, it is precisely through a closer look at the rich philosophical discourse around perspectivism that we can draw more well-grounded implications for education in facing the post-truth problem.

Nietzschean perspectivism

In this section, I turn to the discussion of Nietzschean perspectivism which not only has richer connotations than Biesta's account, but as I will discuss later part, also has more potential in addressing the post-truth problem. As one central theme alongside 'nihilism', 'the will to power', '*amor fati*', and 'eternal recurrence', 'perspectivism' holds great importance in Nietzsche's philosophy and many researchers have discussed and debated about its definition and connotation (e.g. Nehamas, 1982&1985; Clark, 1990; Leiter, 1994; Reginster, 2000&2001, etc.). Settling the debates is beyond the scope of this paper. Here I aim to provide an inevitably rough, but to some extent approximate sketch on perspectivism in Nietzsche's philosophy.

Rejection of distinction between true world and apparent world

Firstly, Nietzsche clearly rejects the two-world metaphysics in Kant, i.e. the dichotomy of noumenal world (world of things-in-themselves) and phenomenal world (the world as perceived by human mind). In *Twilight of the Idols* (1976=1889), After tracing the conceptual history of 'true world' (Plato, Christianity, Kant) as a 'history of error', Nietzsche comes to his ultimate stance: "The true world—we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! *With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one*" (p. 486). For Nietzsche, if there is no 'true world', it is also nonsensical to speak about an 'apparent world' as the appearance of the 'true world'.

In rejection of the two-world metaphysics, Nietzsche also rejected the transcendental reason as the foundation for knowledge. Instead, knowledge of the world, or of something, is certainly perspectival. As he claims in *The Will to Power* (1968=1901):

> The question 'what is that?' is an imposition of meaning from some other viewpoint. 'Essence,' the 'essential nature,' is something perspective [*sic*] and already presupposes a multiplicity. At the bottom of it there always lies 'what is that for me?' (for us, for all that lives, etc.). (p. 301)

In other words, when I have knowledge about something's nature, the knowledge is neither a correspondence with the thing-in-itself, nor some fallible construction of our cognitive functions, but instead it must be knowledge in relation to my viewpoint. Hence, Nietzsche not only rejects the world as 'thing-in-itself', but at the same time also rejects transcendental subjectivity. Here, we can see how Biesta's 'externality claim', i.e. world viewer is *outside and before* the world, does not apply to Nietzschean perspectivism. Such subjectivity outside the world is a Kantian one—in fact, Biesta (2024) also considers Kantian epistemology as a consequence of perspectival reason (p. 4)—while for Nietzsche, the knowing subject is always *in* the world of myriad perspectives and always *in relation to* the known things.

Perspective is not freedom, but constraint

Secondly, Biesta's (2024) 'freedom claim', i.e. "we are just free to tell the world what it is or what it ought to be" (p. 5) also fails to apply to Nietzschean perspectivism. What Biesta

means by 'free' here is not clear, as it can have two non-contradictory connotations: it can mean that we are *free to* switch between different viewpoints, or it can also mean that our perspectives are absolute and therefore *free from* outside judgement. But no matter which freedom Biesta's understanding is, it cannot be coherent with Nietzschean perspectivism. In *The Gay Science* (1974=1882), Nietzsche writes:

> We cannot look around our own corner: it is a hopeless curiosity that wants to know what other kinds of intellects and perspectives there might be... But I should think that today we are at least far from the ridiculous immodesty that would be involved in decreeing from our corner that perspectives are permitted only from this corner. (p. 336)

In this paragraph, Nietzsche bluntly dismisses the two possible modes of freedom Biesta suggests, the first as 'hopeless curiosity' and the second as 'ridiculous immodesty'. Therefore, we can infer from this paragraph that for Nietzsche, firstly, having a perspective is rather a constraint: it is the condition which we are bound up with and cannot change freely. And secondly, there is no single perspective that is absolute and universal for all.

Besides perspective as cognitive condition, Nietzsche makes this point even more strongly when he writes about perspective as moral judgement. In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1966=1886), Nietzsche views morality as, far from command of God or categorical imperative, rather 'tyranny of such capricious laws', which 'constitutes a long compulsion' to people in different cultural and historical settings (p. 100). Even someone, for example the anarchists, who despise the abject submission to capricious laws and thinks of themselves as free from compulsion:

> But the curious fact is that all there is or has been on earth of freedom, subtlety, boldness, dance, and masterly sureness, whether in thought itself or in government, or in rhetoric and persuasion, in the arts just as in ethics, has developed only owing to the "tyranny of such capricious laws"; and in all seriousness, the probability is by no means small that precisely this is "nature" and "natural"—and *not* that *laisser aller*. (ibid.)

Therefore, when it comes to morality, Nietzsche contends that our practical reason is not *laisser aller*—free choices—but constrained by collective perspective of the cultural historical context. As Nehamas (1985) compendiously summarizes: "Perspectives cannot be adopted at will; new interpretations, which necessarily involve new forms of life, are reached only through great effort and only for what at least seems like good reason at the time" (p. 52).

By far, I have discussed how the first two claims Biesta makes about perspectives are inapplicable to Nietzschean perspectivism. However, the third claim, i.e. the 'relativist claim' is the most important when it comes to the post-truth problem. In fact, based on the discussion above, it seems that for Nietzsche, we are all ultimately embedded in our diverse perspectives and there is no transcendental perspective from where universal truth about the world can be attained, which seems to exactly approximate the post-truth situation. Therefore, in the following section I will discuss the question that, given the 'embeddedness' of our perspectives, does it mean that for Nietzsche, there is no objectively justifiable criteria under which we can compare or judge between perspectives?

Criterion for comparing perspectives: true and false

Nietzsche certainly rejects notions such as 'universal truth', therefore in a sense we can call him a relativist. But this does not automatically mean that for Nietzsche, we can by no means decide if one perspective is 'truer' than another, or one perspective is just as good as any other. Instead of perspectivism, the later stance is rather what Nietzsche calls 'nihilism', its fundamental assumption is that "if some single standard is not good for everyone and for all time, then no standard is good for anyone at any time" (Nehamas 1985, pp. 70-71). Then, what are the criteria of a 'truer', or 'better' perspective for Nietzsche? Section 12 of the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1989=1887) sheds great light on this question:

> There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective "knowing"; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity," be. (p. 119)

From this paragraph, at least we can infer that Nietzsche does not reject 'objectivity', or a

more objective, more complete observation of something. But we must be aware of what Nietzsche means by 'objectivity', as he writes several lines before this paragraph:

> [T]o see differently in this way for once, to *want* to see differently, is no small discipline and preparation of the intellect for its future "objectivity"—the latter understood not as "contemplation without interest" (which is a nonsensical absurdity), but as the ability to *control* one's Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so that one knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge. (ibid.)

We can see from these paragraphs that for Nietzsche, 'objectivity' does not mean that the knowledge is disinterested correspondence with the thing-in-itself and therefore independent from individual perspectives, but instead it depends on one's 'ability to *control* one's Pro and Con and to dispose of them', and the more affects, more perspectives we can integrate and employ, the more 'objective', more 'complete' our knowledge will be. In other words, to know something firstly means to know what that thing means for oneself, for our affects, interests, desires, intellectual curiosities and other psychological conditions. It means that we should have the self-knowledge of the pros and cons of these factors and know how to control and dispose of them, in order to have a more 'objective' knowledge of the object. On the other hand, if we cannot control the pros and cons of our psychological factors, our knowledge will be distorted and erroneous. It is in this sense that he criticized the ascetic ideal of the Christian priests at the beginning of the section: "it will look for error precisely where the instinct of life most unconditionally posits truth" (p. 118). It means that, the affects of the ascetic priests, i.e. their 'anger, fear, voluptuousness, revenge, hope, triumph, despair, cruelty' (p. 139) and most of all their *resentment* (p. 117), inevitably distort and falsify their perspectives on the reality, as "all they are capable of is a *dishonest* lie" (p. 137).

Therefore, we can say that Nietzsche does have a criterion for 'truer', more objective knowledge, which firstly involves a self-knowledge of one's interests and affects, and secondly requires self-control by disposing of the affects in order to integrate more perspectives and diminish distortion of reality.

Criterion for comparing perspectives: life-promoting and life-harming

However, on the other hand, we cannot neglect the fact that Nietzsche denies the unquestioned value of truth, as he writes: "The will to truth requires a critique—let us thus define our own task—the value of truth must for one be experimentally *called into question*" (p. 153). It means that truth is not necessarily good and falsity is not necessarily bad, sometimes truth can be bad and falsity can be good, with the question that must be asked is: *good or bad for whom, on what standard?* Nietzsche's answer is that:

> The falseness of a judgment is for us not necessarily an objection to a judgment; in this respect our new language may sound strangest. The question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating. (Nietzsche 1966=1886, p.11)

In other words, if it preserves or promotes life of individual and the species, even falsity is valuable, and if it is harmful or devastating for life, even truth is valueless. One clear demonstration of this standard is again Nietzsche's evaluation of Christianity: on one hand, as we mentioned, Nietzsche contends that the Christian perspective distorts reality with its resentment therefore it's false, but Nietzsche does credit Christianity for being life-preserving, even though it preserves a degenerating life: "*the ascetic ideal springs from the protective instinct of a degenerating life* which tries by all means to sustain itself and to fight for its existence" (Nietzsche 1989=1887, p. 120). For such degenerating life, truth will be harmful, because they don't have the psychological strength to face the reality of life, "who among them could endure a single *truth* 'about man'?" (p. 138). As Nietzsche clearly states:

> Something might be true while being harmful and dangerous in the highest degree. Indeed, it might be a basic characteristic of existence that those who would know it completely would perish, in which case the strength of a spirit should be measured according to how much of the 'truth' one could still barely endure—or to put it more clearly, to what degree one would *require* it to be thinned down, shrouded, sweetened, blunted, falsified. (Nietzsche 1966=1886, p. 49)

As such, we can conclude that Nietzsche does have criteria to compare between perspectives, therefore a radically relativist claim of perspectivism as found in Biesta's understanding cannot be applicable to Nietzschean perspectivism. Moreover, we need to distinguish between Nietzsche's criterion of 'true and false' perspectives, and of 'life-promoting and life-harming' perspectives and be aware that Nietzsche attaches greater importance to the latter.

We are now in a position to infer what Nietzsche's standpoint would be in the post-truth situation. Firstly, Nietzsche would agree that all knowledge of the world is perspectival and there is no absolute standard of objectivity. He would further claim that notions such as 'transcendental subjectivity', 'universal truth' are invented to preserve degenerating life that cannot endure the reality of life: "without accepting the fictions of logic, without measuring reality against the purely invented world of the unconditional and self-identical, without a constant falsification of the world by means of numbers, man could not live' (p.11). But he would also call the post-truth situation 'nihilistic': everyone thinking that they are free to interpret the world in whatever ways they want and any interpretation is just as good as another. He would urge us to realize the fact that we are all constrained by our perspectives and it is precisely through knowing and controlling our interests and affects that we can gain 'objective' knowledge of things and the world. But such self-knowledge and self-control needs great 'strength of a spirit', and without such strength, affective factors such as resentment will distort our knowledge of the perspectival reality and result in a degenerated life. Therefore, in a post-truth situation, the question for Nietzsche would not be how to sanction between different perspectives, but rather how to cultivate the spirit's strength to endure more truth, or to say, how to eventually become 'free spirits', the connotation of which will be discussed later.

Implications of Nietzschean perspectivism for education

In previous section, I have discussed the connotations of Nietzschean perspectivism and henceforth I will look into its educational implications. In the past decades, researchers have

elaborated on the relationship between Nietzschean perspectivism and education (e.g. Ramaekers, 2001; Jonas & Nakazawa, 2008; Jonas, 2009; Yacek, 2014; Jonas & Yacek, 2019; Stolz 2021). While making reference to some of these works, I attempt to contribute to this discussion by focusing on the post-truth problem. As discussed above, for Nietzsche, the post-truth problem ultimately boils down to how much 'truth' one can endure or utilize to promote one's life. Therefore, educational implications should also be derived from this angle, i.e. how to foster strength of spirits in students for more truth?

Firstly, students must realize their embeddedness in an arbitrary cultural and historical context. Enlightenment thinkers assume that humans are essentially self-directing rational beings while cultural and historical context are merely external factors. For Nietzsche, from the very beginning of our lives, we are already constrained by the arbitrary laws of our culture, our collective perspective (Nietzsche 1966=1886, p. 100), and it is only from this starting point that we can even talk about freedom and overcoming of the constraint. As Ramaekers (2001) correctly summarizes: "[o]nly from within a particular and arbitrary framework can freedom itself be interpreted *as* freedom. In other words, Nietzsche points to the necessity of being embedded in a particular cultural and historical frame" (p. 257).

Students need to then be able to confront this constraint—to engage with their cultural and historical perspective—in a proper way and education plays a crucial role in this. On one hand, it can be anticipated that Nietzsche is against the dogmatic way of teaching, i.e. presenting perspectives as universal and absolute. On the other hand, Nietzsche is also against the overly humble way, i.e. presenting one's perspective as *merely* a perspective, as found in common classroom statements like "I am only presenting my opinion and you are all free to have yours". Arguably, Ramaekers' work (2001) implies this connotation, as he writes, "[e]ducation as teaching to lie, the necessary precondition for the child to find her own path, means education as realising that it is *merely* a lie", and in such education, "room is made for the appreciation of lying as lying" (p. 264). And eventually "the child must make her own lies, again and again" (ibid.). This approach correctly understands Nietzsche's perspectivism in a sense that there is no universal truth, however, it also risks implying—or

at least is not incompatible with—the nihilistic claim that one's perspective is only good for her/himself and is of no use for anyone else. Teachers certainly should not adopt this nihilistic way, for it would leave students without enough strength of spirit, adrift in the mire of various innate interests and affects which they do not yet have control of, and this will also hinder them from seeing things with greater 'objectivity'.

So then in what fashion should teachers present their perspectives and cultivate strength in students' spirits? The teacher should demonstrate to students how she controls her innate interests and affects in order to have a more objective knowledge from her perspective. Let us recall the classroom of environment education where the representations of a polluted river are 'correct, transparent and comprehensive' from both scientific and political-economical perspectives. For Nietzsche, the teacher does not need to adjudicate between these perspectives, but she needs to demonstrate why both perspectives appeal to her: because she cares for both natural environment and global justice—this is her innate interests and affects. The teacher also does not need to impose her perspectives on the students. Students are encouraged to have their perspectives, but the teacher should help them realize the implicit interests, affects and desires that constitute their perspective and help the students practice controlling them. In other words, the teacher should present her perspectives with truthfulness, which means that she has faith in her perspective—the interests and affects without which she cannot live—but at the same time she also recognizes the limitations of her perspectives, that others' lives may depend on completely different interests and affects.

In this sense, I agree with Jonas & Nakazawa (2008) that obtaining perspectives with greater 'objectivity' is of great importance in educating individuals and elevating cultures. We can say that learning to control ones innate interests and affects and dispose of them in order to adopt more perspectives—learning to 'see'—is a necessary *first* step of cultivating strength in spirit. As Nietzsche writes,

Learning to *see*—accustoming the eye to calmness, to patience, to letting things come up to it; postponing judgment, learning to go around and grasp each individual case from all sides. That is the *first* preliminary schooling for spirituality: not to react at once to a stimulus, but to gain control of all the inhibiting, excluding instincts. (Nietzsche 1976=1889, p. 511).

However, we also need to be aware that for Nietzsche, greater objectivity', more 'complete' knowledge is not enough, especially when it creates an illusion that a greater objectivity means closer to the absolute truth on this issue. To overcome this illusion, the *second* step would be not clinging to the obtained knowledge and always seeking to depart from one's current perspective and ultimate goal of this second step is the becoming of 'free spirits'. As he writes:

Conversely, one could conceive of such a pleasure and power of self-determination, such a *freedom* of the will that the spirit would take leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, being practiced in maintaining himself on insubstantial ropes and possibilities and dancing even near abysses. Such a spirit would be the *free spirit* par excellence. (Nietzsche, 1974=1882, pp. 289-290)

Why would free spirit take leave of certainty and seek overcoming of her own perspective? Firstly, there is simply no permanent truth that we can cling to or abide in. For Nietzsche, the best 'truth' we can get is not a universal, permanent one, but always a perspectival one in relation with one's living conditions. And as one's living conditions are open to change, so must be the perspectival truth. Moreover, the changing of one's living conditions is not a passive adaptation to the changing environment, but must be an active pursuit of the free spirit. When a learner exhibits her 'will to truth' in pursuing a more objective knowledge of something, such a pursuit is also not disinterested, but must originate from her interests and affects, e.g. her dissatisfaction with her current perspective. And in obtaining knowledge, her dissatisfaction is resolved and hence her perspective inevitably changes, Yet, the new perspective will evoke new dissatisfaction in the learner as long as she does not cling to the knowledge she obtained, as long as she has the strength of free spirit to escape 'again and

again from the musty agreeable nooks' (Nietzsche 1966=1886, p. 55) of the knowledge and believes she previously established.

As such, a 'free spirit' should not only learn how to see with greater objectivity but also should be able to move on from the obtained knowledge without clinging to the illusion of permanent truth. It can be inferred that for Nietzsche, the constructing and deconstructing of one's perspectival truth, or to say, the self-overcoming of the free spirit is never-ending, continuing throughout our ones entire life. Hence, as Nehamas (1985) concludes, rather than 'a traditional theory of knowledge', Nietzschean perspectivism is rather 'the view that all efforts to know are also efforts of particular people to live particular kinds of lives for particular reasons' (p. 73).

Conclusion: Education as life-long self-overcoming of free spirits

In this paper, after critically analyzing Biesta's critique of perspectivism, I have provided a more in-depth elaboration on perspectivism based on Nietzsche's philosophy and what implications it may have for education in a post-truth era. For Nietzsche, the absence of universal criteria for truth does not automatically mean that we can no longer decide if one perspective is better than another. As we discussed, Nietzsche does have criterion for 'objectivity of knowledge' or perspectival truth, which is to what extent the person is able to control and dispose of her innate interests and affects. Moreover, Nietzsche does not simply assume that the more perspectival truth the better, because if the person does not have enough strength in her spirit, truth can be devastating and harmful for her life. Hence Nietzsche would advocate cultivating of strength of spirit in students in a post-truth era, so that they ideally become free spirits who are truthful with their perspectives and able to obtain and also deconstruct knowledge, depending on their life conditions.

It is noteworthy that the educational implications we have thus far drawn from Nietzschean perspectivism have similarities with Biesta's 'world-centred education'. Both view educational questions as fundamentally existential questions about "how we exist as human beings 'in' and 'with' the world, natural and social" (Biesta 2022, p. 25) and this

question guide their respective exploration of 'subjectification' (Biesta) and becoming of 'free spirits' (Nietzsche). However, Biesta's unfair critique of perspectivism creates difficulties in his approach. Even though he correctly criticizes the inundation of impulse, desire, and opinions in the post-truth situation, Biesta too quickly rejects the value and validity of perspectives altogether, and too naively attributes the effect of 'subjectification' to a mysterious 'world' which makes appeals to us.

On the other hand, Nietzsche makes it clear that we need to carefully confront the cultural and historical perspectives in which we are embedded and learn to control our innate interests and affects for a more 'objective' knowledge. This is the first step to overcome the impulsive reaction to foreign perspectives—such as xenophobia, resentment—which prevails in a post-truth era. And the second step is the never-ending self-overcoming, deconstructing of one's perspectival knowledge when one seeks to live a better life or elevate one's culture as 'free spirit'. For Nietzsche, instead of the revelation from the 'world', it is the continuous effort of the educators and students that can navigate them through the storms of misinformation and reactionary affects in the post-truth era.

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Working Around Public Policy Towards a Grounded, Filipinized Philosophy Education

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Abstract

Amidst a backdrop of highly Westernized philosophy education in the Philippines and the continuous disregard of Filipino philosophy as philosophy, FPA Demeterio III relegates the question and debate of the existence of Filipino philosophy as "retrogressive." He instead creates a grand taxonomy of Filipino philosophy that enumerates twelve forms of the discipline, which he whittles down to five forms with highly developmental potentials for both scholars and teachers alike to dedicate their study to.

My study then attempts to answer the following research question: Is the present state-recommended undergraduate philosophy curriculum in the Philippines capable of developing Demeterio's articulation of the five forms of Filipino philosophy with high developmental potentials? This study will compare Demeterio's taxonomy to the state-recommended undergraduate curriculum of the Commission on Higher Education, if it can be able to support Demeterio's framework on its own, or push for a reform.

Existing public policy in the Philippines recommends the study of Filipino philosophy as a "philosophical investigation of the existence of [Filipino philosophy]," not presupposing its arguably already established philosophy in the country. State-recommended curriculum, as well as curriculum of top universities in the country, place primacy on Western philosophical canon, often overshadowing the study of Filipino philosophy, and subsequently, undergraduate research interest on the topic. This, along with the defeatist attitude of some

Filipino scholars in talking about the discipline itself, is an unproductive way to develop the discipline, especially among young, budding philosophers in the Philippines.

This paper explores the possibility of working around public policy to better improve the way philosophy is being taught in the Philippines that puts Filipino philosophy at the forefront. In doing so, it is imperative for me to utilize the current structure of the curriculum. A complete overhaul of such is a highly bureaucratic process that would cause more delay than productivity. In my study, I find alternative ways of philosophizing on Filipino thought, following the five forms of Filipino philosophy with high developmental potentials. I have found that an interdisciplinary way of philosophizing, that is, philosophizing on Filipino literature, history, anthropology and other disciplines of study, can be a way to further develop Filipino philosophy. It can be seen that core subjects or general education courses in college can be utilized as a way to philosophize in the Filipino context amidst a highly Western philosophy curriculum. By the end of the study, I propose a "liberation framework," which seeks to liberate philosophy education in the Philippines from its Western underpinnings and prove obsolete and irrelevant the debates on the existence of Filipino philosophy. This framework would aim for the formation of students in Filipino philosophy that have a sense of the Filipino identity in their philosophizing, representative of the Filipino wonder, and celebrates the Filipino sensibilities.

Introduction

Following a surge of nationalistic thought brought about by the Martial Law period in the Philippines during the early 70s and 80s, several disciplines, including philosophy, underwent "Filipinization." Teachers in colleges and universities at the time started to reject previously set Western and colonial standards of education and started adapting fields to the Filipino context. For philosophy, Fr. Roque Ferriols, SJ from the Ateneo de Manila University, started teaching philosophy in the Filipino language. While he was adamant that he was not forming a "Filipino philosophy,"[8] his pioneering move to contextualize philosophy in the Philippines was caught on by other Filipino thinkers. Dr. Florentino Timbreza also taught in Filipino and published articles on Filipino thought. At that same period of time, Leonardo Mercado started to write on Filipino Philosophy. A decade later, Dr. Emerita Quito wrote a monograph on the state of philosophy in the Philippines. Others followed in their footsteps. Eventually, Filipino philosophy grew as a discipline that spans several generations of thought, with earlier thinkers hoping that the future of the discipline would live on with present generations.

Upon observation, however, it would seem that there is a dwindling interest in research and academic careers among undergraduate students, especially when it comes to research in Filipino philosophy. Most students enter into the program either for ecclesiastical formation or with the intent of preparing for law school. If they do exhibit an interest in research, their research focuses mostly on explicating Western thinkers and theories. Very little research has been done by undergraduates (and even those in the postgraduate programs) about philosophy in the Philippines. I posit that this disinterest can be attributed to the formation of students in the discipline.

At present, formal formation in philosophy starts on the undergraduate level. Bachelor's degrees in philosophy are designed to give students fundamental knowledge on philosophy—its history, theories and critiques—toward shaping them to become critical (and hopefully, philosophical) thinkers. For Philippine philosophy education, the majority of

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[8] Roque J. Ferriols, "A Memoir of Six Years," *Philippine Studies* 22, no. 3/4 (1974): 339.

schools that offer philosophy programs follow the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) recommended curriculum as a framework for the formation of students. Arguably, there is very little leeway to develop Filipino philosophy, given CHED's recommended curriculum, as it is heavily rooted on Western tradition and standards, as well as explicitly denying a presupposed existence of Filipino philosophy.

This paper will thus examine the current state-recommended curriculum of the undergraduate Philosophy program, if it currently has the capacity to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to develop Filipino philosophy. I will first explicate the brief background of a Westernized, colonial education. This will be followed by a discussion of Feorillo Demeterio III's five highly developed forms of Filipino philosophy, which is the main framework of comparison against the current state-recommended curriculum for philosophy. After comparing Demeterio's framework to the curriculum, I will then discuss the proposal of employing an interdisciplinary approach to teaching philosophy. I will conclude with a liberation framework, which seeks to liberate Philippine philosophy education from its Western underpinnings and promote a Filipino approach to teaching and learning philosophy for the furthering of Filipino and indigenous philosophy.

Western Underpinnings of Education in the Philippines and the Filipinization Movement

The Philippines has long been haunted by its colonial history—from the three centuries-long colonization by the Spaniards, to the ever-present imperialism of the United States. The country's past has bled through the present, not only with a permeating colonial mentality that spans across all aspects of the Filipino culture, but also with its education system that takes influence from its colonizers. Top universities from the country trace their roots back to its establishment by both the Spaniards and the Americans. Curricula and pedagogy are continuously being revised to serve international standards and foreign interest.

Some of the first universities established during the colonial period with established philosophy programs are patterned after Western tradition. The University of Santo Tomas,

established during the Spanish colonization and is the oldest existing university in the Philippines, has its roots in the Scholastic-Thomistic school of thought.[9] Jesuit-run Ateneo de Manila University is focused on the phenomenological tradition.[10] The University of the Philippines, founded during the American colonial period, bears the Anglo-Saxon, analytical philosophical tradition.[11] These universities are also among the top universities in the Philippines, with CHED naming them Centers of Excellence in Philosophy, paragons and catalysts of philosophy education that other universities and colleges should strive to emulate.

Renato Constantino has already decried "The Mis-education of the Filipino," that critiques the underlying colonial agenda in the Philippine education system, mainly used by Americans when they colonized the Philippines. He writes, "Education, therefore, serves a[s] a weapon in wars of colonial conquest."[12] American forces introduced public school systems to "pacify" the Filipinos who were then threatened by another colonizer after they had declared their own independence from the Spaniards.[13] As such, the American colonizers utilized (and, arguably, weaponized) education within their public school systems to educate young Filipinos into "good colonial[s]," while slowly eroding indigenous knowledge that held revolutionary and liberative ideas against the colonizers.[14]

It would seem that Filipino scholars of philosophy are reaping the fruits of this colonial past, not only by being immersed in a highly Western form of education in their formation, but also by being thrust into the debate of whether Filipino philosophy exists or not. While CHED has mandated the study of Filipino Philosophy as a three-unit seminar course, how the state agency describes the course and how it should be taught presents more questions than answers:

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[9] Emerita Quito, *State of Philosophy in the Philippines*, Monograph Series 5 (Research Center of De La Salle University, 1983), 15.
[10] Quito, *State of Philosophy in the Philippines*, 34.
[11] Quito, *State of Philosophy in the Philippines*, 34.
[12] Renato Constantino, "The Mis-Education of the Filipino.," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 1, no. 1 (1970): 21, 75316569, https://doi.org/10.1080/00472337085390031.
[13] Constantino, "The Mis-Education of the Filipino.," 21.
[14] Constantino, "The Mis-Education of the Filipino.," 24.

This seminar course does not presuppose the existence of Filipino Philosophy, rather it is aimed at the philosophical investigation on the existence, or development of it. As such, it is offered to allow students to search rather than to discuss a specific course on Filipino thought. The course therefore is a survey of the corpus of writing of published Filipino Philosophers.[15]

It can thus be observed that Filipino philosophy courses at the undergraduate level of philosophy mainly focus on *searching* for Filipino Philosophy—its existence and development—rather than actual discussions on specific topics within the discipline.

Not presupposing the existence of Filipino Philosophy would tend to cause some issues. While such discussions are important, I have found it to be quite repetitive, as discourse regarding the existence of Filipino philosophy would often lead to more disagreements than answers between Filipino philosophers and scholars. It has come to the point that the Filipino philosophy that undergraduate philosophy students know, is more of debates of whether it exists or not, rather than a creation of a national identity within the discipline of philosophy. Within this type of curriculum, undergraduates' experience of studying Filipino philosophy would tend to deal more with how different thinkers conceptualized and/or problematized Filipino philosophy, and less of how they developed *actual* Filipino thoughts and ideas within the discipline.

It can also be said that CHED's description of the Filipino philosophy course also mirrors a defeatist attitude among other Filipino scholars, who are skeptical of its development especially among newer generations of thinkers.

A Defeatist Attitude against Filipino Philosophy

The attitude that some Filipino philosophers (Filipino in the sense of their nationality, not necessarily practicing Filipino philosophy *per se*) have towards Filipino philosophy has been

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[15] "CHED Memorandum Order No. 026-17 - Policies for BA Philosophy Program," Jurisprudence PH | Legal Research in the Philippines, accessed February 27, 2024, https://jurisprudence.ph.

generally defeatist, in the sense that they shut it down even before it has the chance to flourish.

Emerita Quito in her seminal work *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines*, outlines some reasons why Filipino philosophy stands underdeveloped. She considers two different levels of philosophy in the country—academic and grassroots philosophy. The academic level, usually practiced by universities has no "real philosophers," in the Philippines, and is only loosely implemented when there are mentors or professors of certain philosophical trends (Quito gives Thomism as an example.)[16] On the other hand, the grassroots have no idea of philosophy, however "pilosopo," which is a Filipino term to refer to "philosopher" or, colloquially, someone that "argues lengthily, whether rightly or wrongly." The use of the term dates back to national hero Jose Rizal's character "Pilosopo Tasyo (Tasyo the Philosopher,)[17] who was often called a lunatic because of his long-winded arguments brought about by his extensive knowledge and philosophical education. This understanding of philosophy and philosophers had trickled down to the cultural vision that is detached from the academe and often has negative connotations like unintelligibility. This is why she thinks that Filipino philosophy is still "in the process of formalization."

Alfredo Co seems to share the defeatist sentiment, by expressing disagreement with what his colleagues had referred to as Filipino philosophy at the time. To him, when his colleagues had taken semantic analyses of words across Filipino languages to map out a Filipino philosophy of the human person, pinpointing moral sayings (or aphorisms) across generations of Filipinos and teaching philosophy in the Filipino language, this is not philosophy.[18] This is only mere appropriation, mere translation—but not philosophy.

And, as recently as 2021, Noel Pariñas analyzes through analytical philosophy why there is an "impossibility of the existence of Filipino philosophy,"[19] as philosophy was

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[16] Quito, *State of Philosophy in the Philippines*, 9.
[17] Quito, *State of Philosophy in the Philippines*, 9.
[18] Alfredo Co, "Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Fifty Years Ago and Fifty Years from Now," in *Across the Philosophical Silk Road: A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo Co* (University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2009), 6:57.
[19] Noel Parinas, "Filipino Philosophy?," *Academia Letters*, ahead of print, May 13, 2021, 4, https://doi.org/10.20935/AL422.

developed by the Greeks and Western influence deems non-Western thought as non-philosophy.[20] He deemed the premises of Filipino philosophy as problematic. Some of the premises that he refuted were:

A philosophy is Filipino if the language used is Filipino

A philosophy is Filipino if the citizenship of the one philosophizing is Filipino

A philosophy is Filipino if the classes or categories used are indigenous Filipino[21]

He refutes the first as he does not consider translation of work as an alteration of the identity, and the second as he does not see that the citizenship of the philosopher should be ground for the identity of philosophy.[22] With the third, he says that it is "even harder to establish a Filipino philosophy on the bases of the classes or categories used," citing questions of "purity" and "authenticity" when it comes to becoming Filipino.[23]

One can only conclude that the attitude comes from the need to align oneself with preconceived notions of philosophy. Arguably, these standards and notions are catered to Western interests. Largely accepted "philosophical canon" consist of Western texts, which are widely read in philosophy schools across the globe. The oft-made description "All philosophy is a footnote to Plato," seems to be the guiding principle of philosophy in contemporary time, as well as its education of scholars in the discipline. Emerging philosophical theories and/or fields go through a litmus test of whether the questions they are posing are philosophical or not—with fields named considered only as "legitimate" philosophy if they follow certain standards that usually align with mostly Western canon.

The preoccupation with wanting to be "legitimized" as a philosophical field has become a systemic issue within Filipino philosophy circles. Endless debates on whether Filipino philosophy exists or not has become subjects of papers on the discipline for decades, up until the present. The problem with wanting to be legitimized is that it perpetuates Western ideals and holds Filipino philosophy up to the approval of the dominant ideology. Kristie

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[20] Parinas, "Filipino Philosophy?," 3.
[21] Parinas, "Filipino Philosophy?," 4.
[22] Parinas, "Filipino Philosophy?," 4.
[23] Parinas, "Filipino Philosophy?," 4.

Dotson in her work, How is this paper philosophy? notes how a "culture of justification"[24] has become prevalent in the field, which excludes minorities and diverse practitioners from comfortably practicing philosophy. Professional philosophy, as Dotson has claimed, has become a hostile environment for diverse voices in philosophy, who constantly feel the need to justify their philosophical practices as they do not fall into "commonly-held, univocally relevant justifiable norms."[25] These justifiable norms, however, have only excluded the philosophy of diverse practitioners within the discipline and have labeled them as "not philosophy."

Justifying the practice of Filipino philosophy, therefore, has become a repetitive and unproductive discussion that does not help to develop the discipline. It's even more so unproductive when we realize that Western parameters are usually used in order to tell if the philosophy of the Philippines is a philosophy or not. So as long as "philosophy remains restrictive to only one tradition,"[26] and does not accept other traditions, the purpose of philosophy stands to be unfulfilled.

Demeterio's Taxonomy of Filipino Philosophy

With the defeatist attitude and the long-winded debates on the existence of Filipino Philosophy, Feorillo Demeterio III took it upon himself to respond to the "retrogressive question"[27] in his paper *Status of and Directions for "Filipino Philosophy" in Zialcita, Timbreza, Quito, Abulad, Mabaquiao, Gripaldo, and Co*. Here, using the articulations of six prominent Filipino philosophers of Filipino philosophy, he came up with a grand taxonomy of the different forms of the discipline, which can be seen in the framework below:

Grand Taxonomy of Filipino Philosophy[28]

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[24] Kristie Dotson, "HOW IS THIS PAPER PHILOSOPHY?," *Comparative Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (2012): 6, https://doi.org/10.31979/2151-6014(2012).030105.
[25] Dotson, "HOW IS THIS PAPER PHILOSOPHY?," 6.
[26] Dotson, "HOW IS THIS PAPER PHILOSOPHY?," 10.
[27] Feorillo Demeterio III, "Status of and Directions for 'Filipino Philosophy' in Zialcita, Timbreza, Quito, Abulad, Mabaquiao, Gripaldo, and Co," *Philosophia (Philippines)* 14 (May 2013): 186.
[28] Demeterio III, "Status of and Directions for 'Filipino Philosophy' in Zialcita, Timbreza, Quito, Abulad, Mabaquiao, Gripaldo, and Co," 208.

I. Untextualized Discourse

   A. (1) Grassroots philosophy

   B. Academic philosophy

      1. (2) Lecture on Scholasticism and Thomism

      2. (3) Lecture on Other Foreign Systems

II. Textualized Discourse

   A. Nonacademic Discourse

      1. (4) Critical Philosophy as Nonacademic Discourse

   B. Academic Discourse

      1. Categorized by Method

         a) (5) Logical Analysis

         b) (6) Phenomenology/Existentialism/Hermeneutics

         c) (7) Critical Philosophy

         d) (8) Appropriation of Foreign Theories

         e) (9) Appropriation of Folk Philosophy

         f) (10) Philosophizing Using the Filipino Language

      2. Categorized by Content

         a) (11) Exposition of Foreign Systems

         b) (12) Revisionist Writing

         c) (13) Interpretation of Filipino Worldview

         d) (14) Research on Filipino Values and Ethics

         e) (15) Identification of the Presuppositions and Implications of the Filipino Worldview

         f) (16) Study on the Filipino Philosophical Luminaries

This framework provided a starting point for strengthening the existence of Filipino philosophy, as the discipline finally had names for the forms of philosophy that scholars and

instructors were already doing. It also provided fields of study in which scholars and teachers in the field can focus on in developing their ideas, research and curriculum.

Comparing the CHED Curriculum to Demeterio's Articulation of Filipino Philosophy

To reiterate, Demeterio's goal with articulating the twelve useful forms of Filipino philosophy is for scholars, instructors and other stakeholders to use these as a framework to develop further studies in Filipino philosophy. We shall now compare the aforementioned five highly developmental forms of Filipino philosophy to the current undergraduate philosophy curriculum of CHED.

The following is the sample curriculum by CHED that is recommended to be followed by colleges and universities in the Philippines that are offering philosophy.

CHED Sample Curriculum[29]

I.   General Education Courses

    A. Understanding the Self

    B. Readings in Philippine History

    C. The Contemporary World

    D. Mathematics in the Modern World

    E. Purposive Communication

    F. Art Appreciation

    G. Science, Technology and Society

    H. Ethics

II.   Professional Courses

    A. Logic

    B. Introduction to Philosophy

    C. History of Western Philosophy 1

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[29] Jurisprudence PH | Legal Research in the Philippines, "CHED Memorandum Order No. 026-17 - Policies for BA Philosophy Program."

D. History of Western Philosophy 2

E. History of Chinese Philosophy

F. History of Indian Philosophy

G. Existentialism/Phenomenology/Hermeneutics/Post Modernism

H. Cosmology/Philosophy of Science and Technology

I. Advanced Philosophy of Man/Human Person/Rational Psychology/Philosophical Anthropology

J. Epistemology/Theory of Knowledge

K. Metaphysics

L. Theodicy/Philosophy of Religion

M. Political Philosophy/Social Philosophy

N. Philosophy of Language

O. Aesthetics/ Theories of Art

P. Modern Asian Thoughts

Q. Comparative Philosophy (East-West)

III. Seminar Courses

A. Seminar on Filipino Philosophy

B. Special Questions in Philosophy

C. Special Questions in Ethics

D. Seminar on Contemporary Philosophy

E. Seminar on Plato/Seminar on Aristotle

IV. Electives

V. Foreign Language

VI. Undergraduate Thesis/Oral Comprehensive Exam and Synthesis Paper

VII. Mandated Subjects

A. Physical Education

B. National Service Training Program

We can look at CHED's sample curriculum and divide it into common themes:

1. General Education

2. Historical Courses (all historical Western courses)

3. Major Branches of Philosophy (Metaphysics, Epistemology, etc.)

4. Asian Philosophy (Chinese, Indian Philosophy, etc)

5. Seminar Courses

6. Other requirements (Thesis Writing, Comprehensive exams, etc.)

At the level of recommended policy, it seems that there is not much room to develop Filipino philosophy. A chunk of the curriculum is reserved for historical Western philosophy. Alongside these are major branches of philosophy which mainly focus on Western theory. Taking for example the Metaphysics course:

"This course is a general survey of the metaphysics of Plato, Aristotle, Lao Zi, Shankara, St. Thomas Aquinas, Martin Heidegger."[30]

The suggested outline and readings that CHED gives surround these (mostly Western) thinkers, leaving no leeway to develop Filipino thought within this area of study. This predicament can also be seen in other major philosophical branches, like Epistemology and Phenomenology, with suggested readings and course outlines sourced from Western philosophers like Norris Clarke, St. Thomas Aquinas, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, and Soren Kierkegaard among others.[31]

As the state-recommended curriculum stands, developing Filipino Philosophy through Demeterio's twelve useful forms proves to be a challenge. The following table shows an

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[30] Jurisprudence PH | Legal Research in the Philippines, "CHED Memorandum Order No. 026-17 - Policies for BA Philosophy Program."

[31] Jurisprudence PH | Legal Research in the Philippines, "CHED Memorandum Order No. 026-17 - Policies for BA Philosophy Program."

illustration that compares the twelve forms to its possible fields of development with the subjects of the current curriculum.

12 Useful Forms	Possible Fields of Development
Critical Philosophy as Nonacademic Discourse	Political Philosophy
Logical Analysis	Logic
Phenomenology/Hermeneutics	Contemporary Western Philosophy
Critical Philosophy as Academic Method	Political Philosophy, Thesis Writing
Appropriation of Foreign Theories	Comparative East-West, Thesis Writing
Appropriation of Folk Philosophy	Filipino Philosophy
Philosophizing with the Use of Filipino Language	Western and Eastern Philosophy (Historical courses)
Interpretation of the Filipino Worldview	Filipino Philosophy
Research on Filipino Values and Ethics	Filipino Philosophy, Ethics
Identification of presuppositions/ implications of the Filipino worldview	Filipino Philosophy
Revisionist Writing	Comparative East-West, Thesis Writing
Study of Filipino Philosophical Luminaries	Filipino Philosophy, Thesis Writing

It can be observed that Filipino Philosophy takes the brunt of the development of the twelve useful forms within the curriculum, followed by Thesis Writing (because students with specific research interests may knowingly or unknowingly develop these forms through their theses.) Comparative Philosophy is also a field where the twelve useful forms are developed, provided that the comparison between Eastern and Western philosophies include Filipino philosophy or offer a Filipino vision in the comparison. Western philosophy (historical courses and major idea courses like political philosophy and logic) can only be developed in limited forms and in specific conditions (e.g. when historical Western

philosophy courses are taught in the Filipino language.) Thus, this observation stresses a need to redirect philosophy education in the Philippines in order to form Filipino philosophers early on in their undergraduate education.

Redirecting philosophy education becomes necessary if one takes into account how the state sees Filipino Philosophy and its implication on instruction. As seen in the earlier course description, Filipino Philosophy mainly focuses on the issues of the discipline. Only points such as the study of Filipino philosophical luminaries, appropriation of folk philosophy and interpretation of Filipino worldview are touched upon in the study of Filipino philosophy, but not so much explored in-depth. While these curricula do expose students to foreign philosophical systems, there is some difficulty in aligning foreign and Filipino contexts, especially as texts studied are written in or translated to English and are studied in English, which have different nuances when it comes to culture and language. Much is lost in translation, which contributes to the wide gap and the disconnect between Filipino contexts and foreign philosophical systems. If the actual Filipino philosophy subject within the curriculum is already weak with its connection to some forms of Filipino philosophy, then how would the discipline fare if it had to bear the brunt of developing it within a curriculum that puts primacy on Western thought?

With philosophy education originating primarily from the Philippines' colonial history, it is now important to look at philosophy education in the Philippines at present through a postcolonial lens. Noah Romero describes the education system in the Philippines as "products of a postcolonial context."[32] This is particularly evident in how philosophy education started and developed in the Philippines, as articulated above. The philosophy of education in the Philippines, in general, is a mirror of Western ideals. Romero describes the philosophy of education that the country is utilizing in its system as "tethered to colonial onto-epistemologies."[33] In other words, this system as we know it is tied to colonial

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[32] Noah Romero, "Postcolonial Philosophy of Education in the Philippines," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education* (2020), 13, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.1575.
[33] Romero, "Postcolonial Philosophy of Education in the Philippines," 4.

knowledge and colonial being, and that any attempts to fully Filipinize the curriculum is actively in conflict with the goals of the state to develop itself in a postcolonial period.

From Twelve to Five: Demeterio's Five Forms of Filipino Philosophy with Highly Developmental Potentials

However, mere articulation of the twelve forms of philosophy proves insufficient to solve the problems that Filipino philosophy has been facing. Even though a diagnosis can be made when comparing the twelve forms to CHED's recommended curriculum, there are still structural problems that persist even after Demeterio had laid out the discipline and articulated its forms.

A year after writing *Status of and Directives for Filipino Philosophy,* Demeterio had concluded that Filipino instructors and professors (and, arguably, even young students and scholars) of philosophy have been "trapped in unfavorable context,"[34] probably due to neoliberal policies, bureaucracy and a general ignorance of the humanities in a society that seems to favor market-driven progress. This pushed him to revisit the forms that he had articulated in his earlier taxonomy to pick out forms that can be further developed by scholars and instructors where they can invest limited time and resources onto. He first begins by eliminating some forms from the taxonomy he had created, such as Filipino philosophy as (1) grassroots philosophy, (2) lecture of Scholasticism and Thomism, (3) lecture on foreign systems and (4) non-academic crucial analysis. He has specific reasons for excluding these forms; he doesn't consider grassroots philosophy as philosophical discourse, for the reason that it is more of a "collective mentality of the Filipino people," he sees the lectures on Thomism and other foreign systems as not being contributive to production of substantial texts and that non-academic critical analysis is "totally beyond the

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[34] Feorillo Demeterio III, "Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy," *Philippiniana Sacra* 49, no. 147 (2014): 190, https://doi.org/10.55997/ps2005xlix147a4.

control of the members of the academe."[35] He then analyzes the remaining twelve forms by comparing them to a set of rubrics which he made on his own:

Component	Description
Filipinoness	If the underlying problem, its input, its theories and concept and its agent (the scholar) of the form is Filipino.[36]
Cognitive Level	If the form articulated is of a higher level of cognition (based on Bloom's Taxonomy).[37]
Inherent Emotional Energy	If Filipino philosophers are motivated to study the form, based on the clarity of the problem, its relevance and the community of scholars surrounding it.[38]
Impact	If the general public receives the studies about the form well.[39]
Sustainability	If the form is able to continue the production of studies.[40]

Using this rubric, he arrived at five forms with the highest developmental potentials, which could be used as an initial framework of focus to develop Filipino philosophy. The forms are as follows:

1. Academic critical analysis

2. Appropriation of foreign theories

3. Appropriation of folk spirit

4. Presupposition and implications of the Filipino worldview

5. Research on Filipino ethics and values[41]

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[35] Demeterio III, "Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy," 191.

[36] Demeterio III, "Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy," 198.

[37] Demeterio III, "Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy," 199.

[38] Demeterio III, "Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy," 199.

[39] Demeterio III, "Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy," 203.

[40] Demeterio III, "Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy," 205.

[41] Demeterio III, "Assessing the Developmental Potentials of Some Twelve Discourses of Filipino Philosophy," 218.

These forms are, arguably, the encapsulation of what Filipino philosophy is, as most of the corpus of Filipino philosophy may fall under one or more of these categories. Thus, it can be said that these forms can already sufficiently represent the essence of Filipino philosophy, and can be given more attention in research and development, and in the formation and education of Filipino philosophers.

Thus, finding a source for Filipino thought can be a starting point for pursuing Filipino philosophy, especially now that Demeterio has enumerated five highly developmental forms of Filipino philosophy that he encourages teachers, scholars and students to invest their time in. This begs the question, "How can these five forms be exemplified in such a Westernized curriculum?"

An Interdisciplinary Approach

We go back to the CHED's curriculum structure, where, alongside major subjects that make up the bulk of the required coursework for philosophy undergraduates, is the general education (GE) curriculum required across all disciplines. The GE subjects comprise the fields of Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Philippine History, Art and Literature.

Employing an interdisciplinary approach within the undergraduate curriculum is a way to exemplify Demeterio's five forms with highly developmental potentials. On one hand, some of the forms have already been practiced within the major subjects in the curriculum as teaching methods, like the appropriation of foreign theories and academic critical analysis. In some way or another, teachers would use localized examples and connect topics to the current state of affairs in order to apply foreign theories in local contexts. Critical analysis has also been done within the curriculum as training for students to utilize philosophical texts and ideas to deconstruct pressing issues and to examine them in a careful, evaluative manner with logical arguments.

On the other hand, while the practice of some highly developmental forms has been ingrained within some major aspects in the curriculum, it would be more beneficial to the curriculum if all of the forms would be practiced and developed. Especially since it has been

found that the curriculum is highly Western in nature, it is more crucial to apply the practice of the highly developmental forms of Filipino philosophy within the study. There is a need to encourage within the study the emphasis of Filipino worldviews, Filipino values and folk (or grassroots) philosophy, that are equally as important as existing philosophical canon.

Major philosophy subjects mostly emphasize the philosophical canon consisting of major Western thinkers and major Eastern philosophies and belief systems. This is mostly the case, because it is imperative for students to be given training and education in the existing philosophical canon to be globally competent. The foundations of philosophy are also found within this canon, which are essential for philosophy students to learn and master throughout their education. As such, sources within major philosophy subjects are mostly Western, and, most of the time, with no leeway to introduce Filipino sources that offer a more localized take on philosophical ideas.

Thus, the suggestion to look into the general education curriculum as a way to develop Filipino philosophy alongside major subjects in the curriculum. Interdisciplinarity is indeed possible in the undergraduate curriculum, as the presence of general education subjects offer perspectives coming from different fields of study. I illustrate in the following table how the study of philosophy can intertwine with some fields in the general education curriculum, which are exemplified by studies by Filipino philosophers.

Interdisciplinary Fields	General Education Subjects	Exemplar Papers
Philosophy and Literature	English, Filipino Literature	Thomism and Filipino Philosophy in the Novels of Jose Rizal: Rethinking the Trajectory of Filipino Thomism (FPA Demeterio) Mula Bayang Sawi Hanggang Lupang Hinirang (Agustin Rodriguez)
Philosophy and Language	Filipino, Communication	Loob as Relational Interiority: A Contribution to the Philosophy of the Human Person (Albert Alejo,

		SJ) Reflections on Buut-Loob-Nakem (Fr. Leonardo Mercado)
Philosophy and History	History, Rizal, Social Sciences	Outline of a Project in Filipino Ethics (Manuel Dy Jr.)
Philosophy and Social Involvement	National Service Training Program (NSTP), Philosophy General Education Subjects (e.g. Ethics)	Narrowing the Gap between Theory and Practice: Community of Inquiry and Its State in the Philippines (Marella Ada V. Mancenido-Bolanos)

These are a few of many exemplary papers and studies that have utilized philosophy in an interdisciplinary way. These scholars have made use of the different fields of literature, language, history and social involvement in order to articulate a Filipino philosophy present within these disciplines. They take from literary texts, historical events, spoken words and Filipino experiences to investigate philosophical questions like "What is the Filipino nation?", "How does the language of the Filipino reveal its identity?" or "What does it mean to be within the Filipino society and engage with the people within it?"

It shows that philosophy in the Philippines is capable of being developed alongside other fields of study, and gives a more holistic view of the different aspects of Filipino culture, traditions and society by integrating its criticality. Other disciplines outside philosophy expose us to different aspects of the existing reality in the Philippines by articulating influences within these disciplines brought about by the current state of affairs of the nation. Philosophizing alongside the practices of each discipline (e.g. employing literary analysis techniques or creating communities of inquiry within social groups whilst looking through a philosophical lens) allows for a more comprehensive perspective of the Filipino identity within a Filipino society. In this way, educators and students alike may also be able to see how Filipino philosophy is interdisciplinary in nature, and that there exists a myriad of

resources that they can use to further develop the field toward a better understanding of what being Filipino entails.

Towards an Liberation Framework for Philosophy Education

In conclusion, I would like to propose a liberation framework for directing the future of philosophy education at the undergraduate level. A liberation framework is necessary, as the Westernized traditions of the undergraduate philosophy curriculum has produced Western-influenced individualism within Filipino philosophy circles. In effect, Filipino thinkers *themselves* turn to question the validity of Filipino philosophy, which, upon observation, does not conform to Western standards of philosophy. Unproductive preoccupations of justification then cloud the discourses of the discipline, and the development of the discipline *itself* goes stagnant.

I propose a liberation framework with the following components: (1) an attitude shift in philosophy education, (2) the use of the Filipino language as a medium of instruction and (3) a redirection of the Filipino philosophy course from the original CHED course description.

Attitude Shift in Philosophy Education

Western philosophical attitudes within traditions are more individualistic in nature. The preoccupation with having a "pure" field of philosophy has also bled through philosophical traditions of the universities that ascribe to them (e.g. when a school follows a continental, phenomenological tradition, it strictly adheres to such with their pedagogy). Major subjects and core philosophy subjects are taught while bound to their own themes and following the Western philosophical canon with no room to discuss emerging Filipino concepts. There is a tendency for teaching philosophy subjects in a vacuum—to each its own.

Filipino contexts, on the other hand, are inherently interdisciplinary, as the culture itself is openly communal in nature. Many disciplines in the Philippines, in the process of Filipinization, have intersected with each other and have created new discourse on indigenous thought. An example of this intersection of disciplines is in Leonardo Mercado's

Buut-Loob-Nakem, which is not only a philosophical endeavor but also anthropological and psychological as well. Buut-Loob-Nakem has been a point of discussion of Filipino philosophy, Sikolohiyang Pilipino and Pilipinolohiya, disciplines which have developed and are continuing to develop what the indigenous concept of "loob" truly means for the Filipino and their history.[42]

In this regard, philosophy education in the Philippines must be allowed to intertwine with other disciplines for a more holistic approach in the training of future Filipino scholars in philosophy. It would open up more possibilities for Filipino students to find more ways to philosophize—in Philippine literature, history, language or even in their social involvements. Instructors in philosophy can integrate different disciplines into their courses by letting students explore fields beyond philosophy. Works of Philippine literature or historical accounts can be included in required reading lists. Course requirements can also integrate different core or general education subjects by asking students to lift different perspectives from their classes and explore them philosophically.

As the value of *bayanihan* emphasizes solidarity within the Filipino people in times of need and crises, it can also be said that academic disciplines in the Philippines, especially Filipino philosophy, can be in solidarity with each other in times of intellectual need. Waning interests in Filipino philosophy and other Filipino disciplines can be rejuvenated if there is an opportunity for different fields of study to be in discourse with each other and create new conversations about the ever-dynamic Filipino identity.

Filipino Languages as a Medium of Instruction

Using Filipino languages as a medium of instruction is not only essential for the intellectualization of the language, but also promotes the diversity of Filipino culture. It has to be understood that the Filipino identity is not one, single archetype—it spans across diverse cultures and traditions marked by different experiences of the Filipino across the archipelago.

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[42] Atoy M Navarro et al., "Kasaysayan, Lipunan, at Sikolohiyang Pilipino," *DIWA E-Journal* 1, no. 1 (2013): 3.

This pedagogical approach in teaching philosophy has been done by the Ateneo de Manila University, pioneered by Fr. Roque Ferriols, and is a practice still being done by the university in teaching core curriculum courses in Ethics and Philosophy of Religion, and in major courses like Ancient Western Philosophy. Fr. Ferriols' rationale behind teaching and philosophizing in the Filipino language is to "awaken other people into living."[43] Language, especially the mother tongue, is a way of life. There are nuances to be seen in language, and the Filipino language, having its own nuance, is a way to live within the Filipino sensibilities.

Delivering philosophy lectures in Filipino is also something that Emerita Quito has suggested in her monograph as a way to alleviate the issues that Filipino Philosophy had been facing and to further its development as a discipline. She noted that there is a need for the Filipinization of disciplines to push through, as Filipinos should be able to express themselves in their own language in order to be able to produce notable texts.[44]

Thus, educating students in the Filipino language is a practice that should be done in order to enrich the education of philosophy students. Filipinization of philosophy via the pedagogical methods is essential for the intellectualization of the language. This allows for the recognition of Filipino as the language of the academe, or, the language of philosophy, for that matter. This also exposes the students to the different nuances of the Filipino language when discussed in philosophical discourse. For example, how "loob" and its multiplicity of meanings and usages is a conception of the Filipino human person and how it is innately relational. Or how "Meron" can be explored as a concept which articulates the metaphysical Being, expressed in a word commonly used in everyday conversation.

The use of other mother tongue languages in the Philippines as a medium of instruction may also be explored. Doing this pushes for the intellectualization and the further development of indigenous philosophy in other parts of the Philippines, enriching the Filipino identity with indigenous perspectives.

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[43] Ferriols, "A Memoir of Six Years," 340.
[44] Quito, *State of Philosophy in the Philippines*, 57.

Redirection of the Filipino Philosophy Course

We go back to the original CHED course description of the Filipino Philosophy course, where it "does not presuppose the existence of Filipino Philosophy,"[45] and is "offered to allow students to search rather than to discuss a specific course on Filipino thought."[46] I have emphasized in the earlier chapters the problematic notion of not presupposing the existence of Filipino philosophy, while in fact it had already existed in the first place. This point is further driven by the fact that Demeterio had already articulated a taxonomy of the discipline which has a multitude of forms of Filipino philosophy that can be further developed through study and research.

It is high time that CHED and other scholars, who have been skeptical of the existence of Filipino philosophy, reevaluate and redirect the Filipino Philosophy course to how it must be taught in the first place. It should no longer be a study on the debates of its existence to shift the responsibility onto the students to look for Filipino Philosophy. Rather, the course should be a celebration of Filipino thought. The course must allow an avenue to study theories, engage in discourse with different Filipino philosophies (may it be on the academic or grassroots level), get to know the luminaries that have influenced philosophy from its first inception up until the present and to look at the future of Filipino Philosophy in the new generation of philosophy students.

These three components are necessary to forward the liberation of the Filipino philosopher, whether they be tenured or budding, from the Western ideals ingrained in philosophy education and the inherent bias of the philosophical canon it is based on. This framework, then, can be a foundation to holistically educate the Filipino philosopher of today and of tomorrow.

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[45] Jurisprudence PH | Legal Research in the Philippines, "CHED Memorandum Order No. 026-17 - Policies for BA Philosophy Program."
[46] Jurisprudence PH | Legal Research in the Philippines, "CHED Memorandum Order No. 026-17 - Policies for BA Philosophy Program."

Educating the Future of Filipino Philosophy

It is undeniable that the future of Filipino Philosophy lies in the hands of the next generations. But until they are educated within Western frameworks that continue to glorify and perpetuate Western canon, the discipline that luminaries before us have labored hard to Filipinize, will slowly go stagnant.

Educating the future of Filipino philosophy within a liberated, Filipino framework is a way to ensure that the legacy of Filipino luminaries continues, and the development of the discipline flourishes. A Filipino philosophy education entails employing interdisciplinary approaches, using Filipino and other mother tongue languages in the Philippines as the medium of instruction, and focusing discussions on Filipino discourse and theory. What this education will produce are students who have a strong sense of the Filipino sensibilities amidst a highly Westernized curriculum. These are students who strive to look at philosophical questions in a Filipino context, and frame their perspectives not only in their own lived experiences, but also in the encounters of their *kapwa*. They are not afraid to be critical of preexisting (mostly Western) philosophical canon and would bring Filipino theories into existing discourse. These students would not only hold an interest in Filipino philosophy, but a passion to keep it alive by continuously contributing to the discipline—through research, writing and discussion.

To conclude, what a Filipino education in philosophy will produce is a movement towards an establishment of a national philosophical identity. One that does not seek to legitimize itself to follow Western standards of what the dominant ideology dictates philosophy to be. One that truly represents the Filipino wonder. One that celebrates the Filipino mind and its sensibility. One that loves wisdom the way its people do—a loud, full, expressive love, bound by a collective desire to learn more, do more and be more.

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