

2011

# Towards an ethics of otherness: re-considering birth, time, and silence in education

Hillary Procknow

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, hprocknow@gmail.com*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_dissertations](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations)



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Procknow, Hillary, "Towards an ethics of otherness: re-considering birth, time, and silence in education" (2011). *LSU Doctoral Dissertations*. 1026.

[https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_dissertations/1026](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/1026)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [gradetd@lsu.edu](mailto:gradetd@lsu.edu).

TOWARDS AN ETHICS OF OTHERNESS:  
RE-CONSIDERING BIRTH, TIME, AND SILENCE IN EDUCATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice

by  
Hillary Cynthia Procknow  
B.A., University of Texas, 1997  
M.S.A.S., University of Texas, 2002  
December 2011

© 2011  
Hillary Cynthia Procknow  
All rights reserved

For Truman Lyle and Lennon MarySue

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the faculty of Louisiana State University's Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice for their tireless support of me and this work. Of particular note, I would like to thank Denise Egéa-Kuehne, who provided emotional support and intense theoretical insight. This work would not be what it is without her enduring dedication to me and all her students. I also want to thank Petra Hendry who has read this work countless times, made it readable, and pushed me to make decisions about it that I would not have made otherwise. Both Drs. Egéa-Kuehne and Hendry welcomed my two children into their classes before and after their births. For that, I am eternally grateful. Further, Earl Cheek helped make my continuing enrollment a reality, and for that I appreciate him very much. Lois Stewart, Joyce Stevenson, and Amber Salvadras saved me innumerable times. I want to acknowledge Bill Doll and Bill Pinar for welcoming me to LSU's program and for being wonderful and joyful company. I give my greatest gratitude to Steve Ross at the University of Texas. He is a radical teacher.

I give my heartfelt appreciation to my writing group, who read my work, encouraged me, and helped form a special community that I will always cherish. Karin DeGravelles, June Newman Graham, and Marianne Fry, I am indebted to your generosity and camaraderie. I would also like to acknowledge my fellow graduate students who shared in many trying times and many potluck occasions: Sean Buckreis, Jie Yu, Tammie Jenkins, Nicholas Ng-a-Fook, Sybil Durand, and Bruce Parker. Marina Basu, I love you unconditionally. I keep Prajñi in my heart.

Many thanks are due to my loving family who has supported me in ways unimaginable. Mom and Dad get special thanks for giving me life and helping me to live it. Nathan, Jana,

Paige, Zoe, Luke, Mimi, Pops, Maria, Al, Jonathon, Reneau, Trevor, and Nate, I love you all.

Chris, we miss you. Your boys inspire me daily.

Finally, to John, thank you for being with me, standing by me, and believing I could do this.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction: Historical Perspectives.....	1
Contextualizing the Problem.....	2
Research Questions.....	6
Knowledge, the Self, and Ethics.....	7
Scientific Background.....	7
Kant’s Ethics: The Categorical Imperative.....	10
Student Visions of the Self.....	12
Pragmatist Relations: John Dewey and Jane Addams.....	15
Relational Ethics and Ethics of Care.....	20
Existentialist Thought: Martin Buber (1878-1965).....	22
Dis-locating the Self.....	26
Constructing the Relational Self: Pedagogy and Ethics.....	30
Levinas and an Ethics of Otherness.....	33
Concluding Remarks and Chapter Preview.....	39
CHAPTER 2: BIRTH.....	42
Swollen with Ideas.....	42
Introduction.....	42
Contextualizing Birth.....	44
Nietzsche and the Process of Giving Birth.....	47
Nietzsche and Knowledge.....	48
Modern Knowledge.....	48
A Nietzschean Relation to Knowledge.....	52
Giving Birth.....	54
Intellectual Pregnancy and Bodily Pregnancy.....	54
Nietzsche and the Body.....	55
Full of Otherness.....	57
Teachers of the Future: Regarding Pity and Care.....	60
Pity.....	63
Caring as Respect for Otherness.....	64
Concluding Remarks: Recovery.....	68
CHAPTER 3: TIME.....	70
Life Time.....	70
Introduction.....	70
Contextualizing Time.....	71
Scientific Time.....	71

Poetry .....	75
Henri Bergson .....	78
Background .....	78
Duration .....	79
Past and Present .....	84
Thinking <i>Othello</i> in Duration.....	87
Michel Serres .....	90
Background .....	90
Serres and Metaphors of Time .....	91
The Contemporaneity of the Car.....	95
Time as Ichnography.....	99
Concluding Remarks: Flashback .....	101
CHAPTER 4: SILENCE.....	106
A Myth .....	106
Introduction.....	107
Contextualizing Silence .....	108
Philosophical Treatments of Silence.....	108
Schools and Silence .....	111
Serres and Four Iterations of Silence .....	114
I. Language as Mastery .....	116
II. The Edge of Language (the face of the other).....	122
III. Silence and Invention.....	125
IV. Language Transformed.....	129
Concluding Remarks: A Moment of Silence .....	131
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION .....	134
Re-Introduction .....	134
Ethics and Knowledge .....	135
Connecting Birth, Time, and Silence.....	141
Birth and Time .....	143
Time and Silence.....	148
Implications for Education.....	151
Concluding Remarks.....	158
WORKS CITED .....	161
VITA.....	171



## ABSTRACT

The notion of the self in Western literature has overwhelmingly focused on separation and individuality, and has conflated knowing with being. This work proposes to retell the story of the modern Western individual through the themes of birth, time, and silence (as they represent the lifecycle), in an effort to locate the self as one who is called forth by the other, as discussed in the works of Emmanuel Levinas. By re-theorizing the moments of birth, time, and silence as moments of living for the other, rather than as moments in which selves become more autonomous, the self can be understood as an ever-changing entity whose primary responsibility is to respond to the other. Each theme is discussed in its historical context and contemporary function in education, and is subsequently analyzed as a moment of living for the other. Birth is discussed through the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, and the author argues that the metaphor of giving birth to the other and letting students give birth is appropriate for teaching. Time is addressed through the works of Henri Bergson and Michel Serres. In this chapter, time is likened to poetry, and the notion of modern time is criticized for its insistence on linearity, for which Bergson and Serres offer alternate possibilities. The work returns to Serres to discuss the possibility of experiencing silence as an opportunity for meeting the other, rather than signaling an end. Through this approach, knowledge is removed as the foundation of the self, and meaning, as created with the other through an ethical relation, is posited as an alternative to knowledge. Ultimately, the retelling of the story of life through birth, time, and silence offers new ways to imagine existing ethically in the world. The conclusion asks the reader to reconsider creativity and peace in terms of rethinking the self through the other.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Rather, what I would like to suggest is that knowing itself remains partial and deformed if we do not develop and practice an epistemology of love instead of an epistemology of separation.... I maintain, however, that truth itself – *veritas* itself – eludes us if we bring to the world and to each other an epistemology of separation only.  
(Zajonc, 2006, p. 1744)

### **INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES**

There is no question that the nature of the self (and whether there is such a nature) is a contentious concept. Ancient philosophers, such as Socrates and Plato, to contemporary theorists (Haraway, 1990; Lyotard, 1993 [particularly p. 14-15]; Derrida, 1978; Deleuze & Guattari, 2009; Foucault, 1988; Fox-Keller, 2003) have engaged in discussions over what it means to be a self, how we come to know that there is a self, and what makes the self possible. Historical assumptions about the self both affect, and are affected by, what we know, or what we think we know, about the world. As has been argued (Berman, 1981), and will be elaborated on below, the dominant, Western concept of the self as a unitary, autonomous individual was forged during the time of the Scientific Revolution. This period was characterized by an epistemology grounded in knowledge as objective, which required the notion of separation as essential to the “self;” one could recognize objectivity in the world because the self was separate from it.

In contrast to the notion of the individual as separate from the rest of the world, ideas of relation and otherness offer a very different idea of what comprises a self and how a self comes to know in the world. Relationality cannot be understood simply, nor can it be accomplished in such a manner. It is not merely a reduction of two or more entities into one. Such a view would

suggest a modernist understanding of the self, a scientific notion of reductionism. Rather, as Emanuel Levinas (1985) states, “The true union or true togetherness is not a togetherness of synthesis, but a togetherness of face to face” (p. 77). Being in relation, being “face to face,” consists in acknowledging not only that the other is not reducible to ourselves, but also that we, as selves, are not characterized by, or recognized solely as, individuals making decisions within the confines of our own mind. We *are* “in relation,” and the attempt to understand ourselves as such marks a shift away from modernist thought. This notion of relation is extended beyond relations with other people and includes relations with concepts and views of the world, because our concepts themselves are derived from, and formulated by, the relations we develop. The essential aspect to note concerning relations is that *relations always imply an other*. This may be an other within us, or another person, or an idea. One cannot have relations without an other. To be in utter solitude, devoid of relations is never a condition in which we find ourselves. Our selves are born into a relational setting, simply by virtue of having been born.

## **CONTEXTUALIZING THE PROBLEM**

The focus of this work is to re-envision the self not as an entity separate from everything else in the world, but as something that comes into being and exists because of its relations with, interdependence with, and dependence on, what is other than the self. A new understanding of the self as it exists because of its relations with otherness will lead to a new understanding of ethics and pedagogy. Such a renewed understanding has implications for the very definition of knowledge, because knowledge, as it is described in modernity, demands a subject separate from the object of study in order to obtain objective knowledge.

Rather than telling the story of the self-as-separate, I propose to tell the story of the self-in-relation-to-the-other by redefining key moments in the story of life in terms of otherness. I

have chosen to concentrate on the themes of birth, time, and silence to discuss the important and far-reaching ways that relations can be understood in the generation and re-conceptualization of knowledge. Birth, time, and silence are representative of the lifecycle, of being a self, and their reconceptualization challenges the deeply rooted understanding of the individual self that was developed during the modernist period beginning with the Scientific Revolution. Birth, as we are brought into the world through this singular act, time, as it is described and experienced as linear and progressive, and silence, as it traditionally points to an ending or death, are considered fundamental aspects of the modern self. The modern self is constructed as unitary through the story of birth, time, and silence. Rethinking these themes as they appear when confronted with otherness will help to reevaluate what it is that we make of life, this life that we live and how that bears on what and how we know. Understanding these themes in light of their relation to otherness will offer the possibility to re-imagine the self as it exists in relation, as it is only possible through relations. Such an approach offers new insights into thinking about and being in the world, particularly when we see selves as more than just selves, but as selves that exist only because of, and precisely due to, our connection with others and ideas. Each of these themes will be analyzed both literally and metaphorically.

In contrast to modern writings which locate the self as a separate and stable individual, much postmodern literature struggles with the notion of *an* individual. In general, postmodernism is characterized by the “loss of self.” (Bertens, 1993, p. 64).<sup>1</sup> In fact, Bertens writes, “The postmodern self is no longer a coherent entity that has the power to impose...order upon its environment.... Identity has become as uncertain as everything else” (p. 65). So, while

---

<sup>1</sup> Fokemma and Bertens (1986) cite Gerald Graff, who describes postmodernism as the “dissolution of ego boundaries,” Daniel Bell, who writes postmodernism is “simply the decomposition of the self in an effort to erase the individual ego,” and Ihab Hassan, who writes, that following Nietzsche, the Self is “really an empty ‘place’ where many selves come to mingle and depart” (p. 38-39)

modernism focuses almost exclusively on the individual self, postmodernism has difficulty locating any self to analyze, to contend with. The unitary self in modernism and the erasure of the self in postmodernism both present ethical dilemmas, because it is unclear wherein ethical action lies. Turning toward otherness, not as a compromise between stability and nothingness, but as an alternative different from both, offers the opportunity to experience and understand ethics in a new light.

An orientation to otherness is a form of relationality, because it insists on the condition of being in relation. However, in a move beyond traditional understandings of relationality, Levinas (1985) asserts that the other always exists before me; the other calls me into existence; and I am always in relation to and responsible for the other who has called me into existence. In order to argue for the ethical primacy of knowledge created in relation, I have divided this chapter into three sections. The first section presents an abridged survey of how epistemological frameworks, visions of the self, and descriptions of ethics in different historical periods reflect each other and come to create a coherent worldview. This is to say, that knowledge, the self, and ethics in any particular period work together to create an intertwined and inseparable vision of the world. This survey, though brief in comparison to its scope, comprises the majority of this chapter, as it is necessary to establish the link between these three areas. Its aim is to draw out the fact that what we count as knowledge bears on what we think is ethical and what we consider to be the role of the self.

Rather than pinpointing individuality or obscuring its existence altogether, a relational understanding of the self can help establish a field in which ethics can occur. Many authors, even those writing in the field of postmodernism, have argued – and I agree – that relationships form the very foundation of knowledge; that without relationships (with people or with other

entities in the world) there would be nothing called knowledge, nothing to learn at all (Bateson, 2002; Bertens, 1993; Doll, 1993; Haraway, 1984). Again, Bertens writes, “Meaning is the result of interaction; it is not discovered as a given in a text [or the world], but is created in an interactional process between reader and text [world]” (p. 64). In a very simple way this is an obvious claim. If one accepts that others, indeed otherness, form part of an ontological foundation for our human condition, particularly as Levinas has argued, then the ways in which we conceive our relationship with the other will be paramount to understanding how and what we learn.

Imbedded within the possibility of seeing selves and the creation of knowledge anew lies an ethical imperative. By positing a relational self, it is understood that knowledge derives from relations with others. In the construction of a relational self, knowledge itself becomes ethical, by virtue of the fact that knowledge is part and parcel of the relations in which we engage. In such a view, the quest to *cultivate* knowledge and learning becomes a misguided proposal. Knowledge and learning happen *de facto* in our relations, from which we cannot separate. The imperative becomes to act ethically in our relations in order to live with ethical knowledge<sup>2</sup>. Supporting the idea that knowledge and ethics are inseparable, Terry Eagleton (2008) insists that ethics is not only a matter of application (decision making and actions), but that “ethics is a question of knowing and thinking,” and that ethics “concerns the ways by which we customarily establish bodies of knowledge and patterns of reflections, our ways of producing and maintaining certainty, and our styles of good sense” (p. 5). Eagleton is not only alluding to the difference between morals and ethics; he is asserting that ethics and what we know and how we think are all intimately tied together. Knowledge and ethics cannot be separated. Thus, the desire to question

---

<sup>2</sup> I tentatively retain the use of the word “knowledge” here as I introduce various ideas and theorists. The word itself, though, becomes increasingly problematic through the discussion of the other later in this chapter and in subsequent chapters.

established habits of thinking and to introduce new modes of thinking is an ethical pursuit. The ultimate goal of this work is to understand how envisioning a relational self will help redefine what counts as knowledge, with the hope that this newly recognized ethical knowledge will help us live more ethically with one another.

Alternative ways of looking at the self and relations may suggest more purposeful and meaningful ways of being in the classroom than currently exist. For example, if in under our current system of education, we see students as individuals whom teachers are meant to help achieve autonomy; if we view knowledge as something that can be transmitted; if we believe that successive years of education mean greater progress, we are left with a particularly competitive and rigid system of education. Understanding relations as meaning-creation turns the pursuit of learning from the *search for knowledge* to the building and re-building of the self, the self being continually re-formed through new and different relationships.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Three related questions arise in dealing with the relational self and the reconsideration of birth, time, and silence:

- How is a modern self understood, and consequently, what happens when a relation with the other is taken to form the basis of one's existence?
- Freed from a modernist focus on individuality, how do the notions of birth, time, and silence inform a different view of the self?
- What are the pedagogical implications for an ethics of otherness in which the self is reconsidered?

The sort of radical re-envisioning of the self that I am exploring is difficult given the long history of the self conceived in modernist terms. In order to accomplish this, I will retell the

modernist story of the self, as it has been constructed through birth, time, and silence, with a focus on relational concepts that prioritize the other. This will allow the re-presentation of a self grounded in ethical relationality and will provide a basis for ethical knowledge.

In the following section, I discuss the origins of the unitary self as developed during the Scientific Revolution and elaborate on how the ideas that were borne from the Scientific Revolution helped solidify the modernist notion of an individual self, separate from others and the world. I then discuss Immanuel Kant's ethics as informed by scientific reason. I include a discussion on student reflections on the notion of the self to provide examples of how modernist assumptions of the self permeate our thoughts. I explained earlier by way of Eagleton's (2008) treatment of ethics, that ethics, bodies of knowledge, and how knowledge is generated are all intertwined. What we<sup>3</sup> make of knowledge both limits and offers possibilities of what it means to be ethical. What we consider to be ethical limits and offers possibilities of what we count as knowledge.

## **KNOWLEDGE, THE SELF, AND ETHICS**

### **SCIENTIFIC BACKGROUND**

The Scientific Revolution was a period of extraordinary change and upheaval in the way people thought about, and participated in, the world. Though it is impossible to offer exact dates for its occurrence, it is generally said to have taken place between 1550 and 1700 CE. Today, in the contemporary Western world, we take for granted so many of the ideas that were new and foreign before the events of the Scientific Revolution. For the most part, we understand that objects and living beings alike can be measured in any number of ways, and that measurements provide an equalizing factor when comparing objects or people. For that matter, we see our

---

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this work, I use "we" to indicate issues that are wide-spread in the general culture. For example, I use "we" in this instance to indicate that consequences of thinking through ethics and knowledge will be relevant to many people. I maintain the use of "I" when I assert my arguments.



“selves” as individual entities, separate from all others, capable of comparing one person to another.

Before the Scientific Revolution, however, life was experienced much differently. Categories of measurement and ideas that separated one thing from another, one person from another, a person from the world, were not existent, at least not prevalent, in medieval Europe. Life before the Scientific Revolution was experienced in a qualitative manner. Before the development of quantifiable measurements and the possibility of separating the self (or subject) from a phenomenon (or object), people experienced the world and the objects in it *not* as separate from one’s self. As Morris Berman (1981) states:

The cosmos, in short, was a place of *belonging*. A member of the cosmos was not an alienated observer of it but a direct participant in its drama. His personal destiny was bound up with its destiny, and this relationship gave meaning to his life. (p. 16, emphasis in original)

Understanding and knowledge came not through the separation of one’s self from the world “out there,” but rather through “merger, or identification with one’s surroundings” (Berman, 1981, p. 16). Existence was not defined by one’s separateness from everything else. Steven Shapin (1998) states it in this way, “The human body (the microcosm) was connected to the universe (the macrocosm) through a series of occult correspondences and influences” (p. 42).

This view of the world and of the self is in stark contrast to ideas of the world and the self we experience today. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and René Descartes (1596-1650), both major contributors to the development of the Scientific Revolution, helped forge the idea that separation and quantification were essential characteristics of the universe. Descartes is often credited with the notion of the mind-body split we tend to accept today (See his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 1993). He theorized that there were only two kinds of substance that comprise the world: *res extensa* (extended substance or matter) and *res cogitons* (thinking substance or

mind). For him, these substances were wholly separate; they could not interact with each other nor affect each other. This is very much at odds with the consciousness that predated the Scientific Revolution. Whereas before, a person, or subject, was a participant with, or part of, the world around him or her, for Descartes's emerging world view, a person, at least his or her thoughts, could not participate with the world. And because Descartes's preferred method of arriving at information concerning the world and the condition of humanity was solitary contemplation, no interaction with the world was required to arrive at truth or knowledge. Thus, "The identification of human existence with pure ratiocination, the idea that man can know all there is to know by way of his reason, included for Descartes the assumption that mind and body, subject and object were radically disparate entities. Thinking, it would seem, separates me from the world I confront" (Berman, 1981, p. 34).

For his part, Bacon was trying to conceive of a science that would overturn ancient Aristotelian thought, which Bacon disdained for its deductive (distill the essential nature of a phenomenon then look for many instances of it) rather than inductive (find many instances of a phenomenon then theorize a law or rule to describe it) method. For this reason, Bacon is known as the Father of Induction. What is important to note about Bacon, however, is his insistence that scientists separate themselves from their objects of study (See his *The New Organon*, 1960). He aimed to undo the damage he perceived Aristotle had done to science. To accomplish this, Bacon needed to eliminate the subjective experience from science altogether. A fundamental aspect of Bacon's approach to seeing the world was that the proper way to investigate the world and uncover knowledge was to separate oneself from the world and put objects (nature and people included) in artificial circumstances in which they would perform in ways in which they would not ordinarily, were they left in their "natural" environments. Reflecting on this now

standard mode of Western thinking, Jürgen Habermas (1995) writes, “Occidental self-understanding views human beings as distinguished in their relationship to the world by their monopoly on encountering entities, knowing and dealing with objects, making true statements, and implementing plans” (p. 154). Science and rationality, taken as the most important or as the only ways of experiencing the world, have led to a portrait of the self as one whose highest attainment is that of knowledge and the ability to manipulate the world for his or her own purposes.

#### KANT’S ETHICS: THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

The attendant ethical vision sprung from the fruits of scientific rationalization is most apparent in the work of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). As the Scientific Revolution had already been well established during his writing career, one can see that Kant’s ideas on what constitutes ethics are highly influenced by what was counted as knowledge during that period. If knowledge during the Scientific Revolution came to mean what could be discerned by measurement and separation, by not participating, then the treatment of ethics by Kant could also be described similarly. In fact, Guyer and Wood (1999), in the Introduction to Kant’s most well-known and highly influential treatise, *Critique of Pure Reason* (first published in 1781), write, “Kant was intent on showing that human freedom, understood not only as the presupposition of morality but also as the ultimate value served and advanced by the moral law, is compatible with the truth of modern science” (p. 2). That is to say, Kant, for whom freedom as an individual represented the highest form of rationality, believed that ethical laws were to be found in the universe and were compatible with scientific discovery.

Kant’s Categorical Imperative (first elaborated in his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 1785) is his proclamation that reason, as the height of human activity, can determine

what kind of actions are moral, and that only good will in the intent of the actor can establish whether or not an action is morally good. But, as ethical laws, compatible with the structure of scientific laws, are independent of those who must follow them, and independent of situational factors, one may know the proper attitude and course of action to take in advance of any moral dilemma. The same attitude that Descartes and Bacon set forth for scientific knowledge becomes apparent in Kant's treatment of ethics. There are laws guiding ethics that may be known in advance and are separate from those who are subject to those laws. The Categorical Imperative is an objective view of how one might act morally, and can be fulfilled without relation, simply by employing the faculty of reason. The nature of the Categorical Imperative is summed up by Kant in this way, "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (p. 30). For Kant, one should make moral decisions based on what everyone should do. In such a view of universal ethical laws, there is no room for relationality, particularly not for relations with what is other than we are able to understand, because the laws have been decided in advance, which assumes a sameness to all situations and all actors. Kant's vision of ethics is inextricably linked to the form of knowledge that was purported by science, and both depended on seeing the self as individual and autonomous.

For all of the extremely important and fascinating contributions scientific thought has made, the tendency to separate and place emphasis on rational thought has its drawbacks, namely that relationships, how lives garner meaning through relations, and the other which is not able to be rationalized or known, have all been woefully disregarded. All this bears on how we think of ourselves and what we value in terms of education and knowledge. It is not the purpose of this work to naively return to a manufactured ideal of what life was like prior to the Scientific

Revolution, which is, in any case, an impossibility. Rather, it is an attempt to place new and re-imagined importance on the relationship with the other and how that might bring to bear new insights in the realm of epistemology, what we consider as knowledge, and how these insights might help us to re-evaluate the status of education.

## STUDENT VISIONS OF THE SELF

The legacy of the Scientific Revolution's impact on the ways we understand the self becomes apparent when I ask my students to reflect on the nature of the self. For four years, I taught the course Education, Schooling, and Society at Louisiana State University. It is a required course for students seeking certification in Secondary Education, but also serves as a General Education course. The aim of the course is to teach students about the history and theory of education in the United States. Early on in the semester, I liked to ask my students what a person is. After reading *No Education without Relation* (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004), I also liked to ask them what the purpose of schools is. My thinking was that there should be some connection between what we think people are and how we educate them; that if we had some collective notion of what we thought it meant to be in the condition of being a human, of being a self, we might have some understanding of what education should look like. Is this, after all, not the aim of educational and cognitive psychology? I received a fairly narrow range of answers regarding what students think a person is, with a few more interesting comments. By and large, students define people as "individuals." Here are some of the typical comments I received, as written by students:

- "A person is an individual. Each and every individual has characteristics that set themselves apart."

- “A person is a being with self-awareness, possessing the cognitive ability to recognize him/herself as distinctly unique or isolated from their environment and surroundings.”
- “A person is a unique personality that is formed by genetics, personal choice, and experience.”
- “One identifies a person by unique physical and mental attributes. Tangibly speaking, one person is the same as another.”
- “A person is able to think freely and make judgments or decisions on their own, usually. A person is an individual.”

It is not surprising that students see people, indeed themselves, in this light. They have been educated to see people like this. In most schools in the United States, we work on our own, for our own individual grades and personal goals. The history of our country is told as the story of the development of the rugged individual, one who needs no one else in order to survive. We are raised to look down upon the reliance on others. We should “make it on our own.” What these students’ comments all share in common is the sense that each person is separate from everyone and everything else and that a person makes himself or herself through his or her own intent and action in the world.

However, I have received responses from students that suggest some more interesting possibilities for what it means to be a person, again presented as the students wrote them:<sup>4</sup>

- “A person is something that has a personality, feelings, emotions, and needs. They show affection towards others, and give to those less fortunate. A person also has the ability to learn and communicate.”

---

<sup>4</sup> My students and I typically have a lengthy discussion concerning the possibilities for “What is a person?” I feel obliged to note that many students wonder about people who exist in a vegetative state, the status of a fetus, and many other extraordinarily complicated ethical issues concerning the definition of a person.

- “A unique soup of opinions, ideas, emotions, and perspective crammed in a flesh and bone shell used to physically express that person’s inner features. A being that adds mystery, intrigue, and light or darkness in a given day.”
- “A person is someone who interacts within a society.”
- “A person is a human who is able to show compassion and higher thought, communicating these and other emotions toward other people.”
- “What makes up a person? I’m tempted to say things like the capacity to learn or individual body parts, but the only characteristics that all people have are the ability to communicate with other people.”

These students’ thoughts get at the notion that people are not simply individual monads, not just isolated, atomic beings who bump into others by chance. They suggest that being in relation with others is a fundamental aspect of humanity. I am, of course, particularly fond of the student’s response that offers the task of adding mystery and intrigue as part of being a person. It seems, at some level, some students do realize the necessity of others in our lives. I must admit, though, that it is terribly difficult to ask them to imagine other ways of being educated or to reconsider the definition of knowledge, even if we concede that relationships form the foundation of personhood. Many offer group work or learning communities similar to magnet programs. But they still see “education” as sitting in a school and learning the “foundations,” which at best they can take out into the world in order to learn more about what *really* interests them.

In contrast to a modern or scientific focus on the individual self, more recent theorists and schools of thought have sought to reconsider the notion of the individual. In the following section I discuss John Dewey and Jane Addams as they are much lauded American educators.

As part of the Pragmatist movement, they attempted to elaborate a rejoinder for the individual situated in isolation as perpetuated by modern scientific thought. These are brief discussions of their work, meant to emphasize the close links among their ideas of knowledge, selves, and ethics.

#### PRAGMATIST RELATIONS: JOHN DEWEY AND JANE ADDAMS

Perhaps the most widely recognized American educator is John Dewey. He, along with Jane Addams and William James, formed the base of the Pragmatist movement in education, often noted for its focus on the needs of the child, rather than the sometimes arbitrary demands of the teacher or administrators. But the Pragmatists represent more than just a shift towards concern about the whole child. They were an interesting transition in the historical movement away from modernist ideas of separation and certainty. As a philosophical movement, they were contending with the ever more-apparent limitations of scientific inquiry. They were grappling with the fundamental issue of how people relate to one another and how these relations make a difference in how and what we know. Reflecting on these difficult notions, James (2006) wrote, “Things are ‘with’ one another in many ways, but nothing includes everything, or dominates over everything. The word ‘and’ trails along after every sentence” (p. 145). This illustrates the central problem the pragmatists were dealing with: that all things in the world are connected, and that there are things we are not even aware of whose existence affects what we know. Because of this it seems impossible to come to concrete knowledge about the universe, as we are never presented with a totality of information. Writing about James’s life, historian Louis Menand (2001) notes that James “thought that certainty was moral death, and he hated to foreclose on anything” (p. 75).



While the Pragmatist understanding of relationality still preserves certain aspects of the modernist individual, I will discuss the importance that both Dewey and Addams placed on the role of relationships, as well as provide ethical descriptions which follow from their conceptions of knowledge.

JOHN DEWEY (1859-1952)

In his *My Pedagogic Creed* (2010), Dewey states, “I believe that all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race” (p. 84). This underscores the weight he placed on the interconnections between the individual and society. This is an aspect of education that contemporary critics seem to have forgotten: that education cannot take place without the individual participating in the larger consciousness of the social sphere. Education today consists primarily in the consumption of facts with little participation on the part of the student in contributing to, and being critical of, what society deems appropriate to label as education.

Indeed, at a time in America’s history when the goals of education were contentious,<sup>5</sup> Dewey and the Pragmatists stressed the larger social world and building bridges between it and students as fundamental to learning. In *Democracy and Education* (1997), Dewey famously said, “A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (p. 93). He undoubtedly recognized the severe limitations placed on life and experience when relations are given a lower priority, or none at all. He understood that a democracy does not exist without shared experience; that a democracy is not only individuals acting in their own self interest. Likewise, schools cannot simply be about

---

<sup>5</sup> It seems, in fact, that the goals of public education have always been in contention. The basics of a curriculum have never gone unchallenged and have been highly debated since the Common School Movement in the 1840s and 1850s. The Progressives came on the heels of the Social Efficiency movement, which attempted to make the production of “good workers” the main goal of schooling (Cuban & Shipps, 2000).

individuals learning individual lessons that neither relate to their lives, nor engage their lives with the surrounding community.

Dewey's significance in education and philosophy in general will not soon be forgotten. And while I do not want to diminish his contributions, I would like to note the separation between self and community that is present in his work. Clearly, he acknowledges that self and community work in tandem and within a particular socio-historical context, but the division between self and other is still strong. To be sure, C.A. Bowers (1987) locates Dewey's work squarely in the modernist framework, stating, "Dewey argued that the only reliable source of authority we could have is the scientific mode of inquiry" (p. 34). For Dewey, the scientific method allowed the possibility of studying change and progress, qualities that were not emphasized in the "premodern" view of the world that Dewey sought to overcome. Indeed, Bowers argues that Dewey's focus on progress and forward movement also indicates his modernist tendencies. And while Dewey championed the "growing interdependence of social life" (Bowers, p. 36), he still maintained the modern notion of self and other with strict boundaries.

For instance, he states,

I believe that the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself. Through these demands he is stimulated to act as a member of a unity, to emerge from his regional narrowness of action and feeling, and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs (Dewey, 2010, p. 84).

The value of developing relationships is apparent, yet, Dewey still speaks of individuals and belonging to a larger group. Let me repeat that his work is extraordinarily important. I do think that schools should be involved in helping students see in what ways they contribute to, and are enhanced by, the presence of others. I do think students should be aware of the welfare of

others; and I do think that schools are appropriate places to learn such valuable lessons. What I want to draw out of Dewey's work is that, while it reintroduces the importance of community in the life of the individual, it still relies on making divisions between self and other. As with many other theoretical concepts, it would not be helpful to completely do away with the notion of the individual. But there seems to be plenty of room to rethink what the "individual" means and how that word can be transformed in the context of relations.

In *Dewey and Eros* (1997), Jim Garrison discusses the work of Dewey and Addams, claiming that for both, bestowing value on others as an expression of love "is best understood as artfully creating better relationships, more democratic communities, and less oppressive scripts for performing social roles such as caring" (p. 58). For both Dewey and Addams, part of learning and living is the "artful creation of better relationships" (p. 58). Perhaps even more than Dewey, Addams expounds on the centrality of relations to the meaning we make in life.

#### JANE ADDAMS (1860-1835)

A fellow Pragmatist educator, Jane Addams was born into a life of privilege, one she at times lamented. Garrison (1997) reveals that, "Addams expressed the emptiness and world weariness of young women sensitive to social needs and problems, but forbidden to respond to them meaningfully: 'You do not know what life means when all the difficulties are removed! I am simply smothered and sickened with advantages'" (p. 58). Addams, as a young woman born to a time and social class that prevented her from acting meaningfully in the world, was communicating the loneliness and hopelessness that occurs when people are precluded from forming relationships. It is telling that she exclaims that she does not know what life means when there is nothing to work for or against. Without the possibility of forming relationships, particularly with disadvantaged women, immigrant women, poor women, women who were in so

many ways different from her and what she knew, Addams felt she could not even understand what it means to live. Addams yearned to make relationships with others in order that she, too, could live.

Addams's work represents a particularly remarkable move in the role of the individual acting in society. Working during the same time period as, and often alongside, Dewey, she manages to discuss the importance of the interdependence needed to fulfill the promises of democracy, by deemphasizing the importance of individual rights. According to Crocco, Munro, and Weiler, (1999), Jane Addams's work in the Chicago women's club movement was dedicated to the idea that "true democracy was based on community networks, not individual rights" (p. 21). So, while the nature of the individual self is not questioned, a shift away from the focus on individual rights becomes apparent, and M. Regina Leffers (1993) describes Addams as having "the distinctive ability to see individuals as wholes that are interconnected and interrelated parts of ever-larger wholes" (p. 69). In arguing for the need to be connected with all humanity, not just the privileged, Addams (2009) herself writes,

To shut one's self away from that half of the race life is to shut one's self away from the most vital part of it; it is to live out but half the humanity to which we have been born heir and to use but half our faculties. (p. 57)

The interconnectedness that was so vital to Addams's concept of democracy allowed her to embrace "diversified human experience" and, as Crocco, Munro, and Weiler (1999) claim, "The process of being in relation with others was the heart of her understanding of democracy" as such (p. 25). Addams's work, then, is distinguished from Dewey's in the value she places on communal versus individual rights. And while both Addams and Dewey respected and appreciated differences in individual experience and the knowledge stemming from that experience, neither challenged the accepted notion of a stable and locatable self. This approach

to the individual and knowledge can be likened to two systems of ethics, relational ethics and an ethics of care (Noddings, 2004); I provide a concise description of them below.

## RELATIONAL ETHICS AND ETHICS OF CARE

According to Slattery and Rapp (2002), relational ethics “advocates that one do ‘what is fitting’ in order to be true to one’s character and responsible for one’s actions and their consequences on others...[it] strongly emphasizes actions that acknowledge our relational bonds with other people” (p. 55). Unlike traditional, normative systems of ethics, such as Kant’s, within relational ethics,<sup>6</sup> there are no objective claims to what “should” or “ought” to be done. Such claims can only be made outside particular situations and removed from the individuals in them.

Mary V. Seeman (2004), a psychiatrist, advocates working within a relational ethics framework when helping make decisions for patients, and suggests that individual rights are not necessarily the most important factor to consider. Much like Jane Addams, Seeman offers that community understanding and consideration are much more important than considering the autonomy of the individual. She explains:

In West European and North American culture, one’s right to autonomy usually trumps competing rights, such as right to optimal health. In contrast to a competing rights perspective, relational ethics emphasizes the connectedness of disputing parties and the value of co-operation. Relational ethics, here defined as moral responsibility within a context of human relations, recognizes the human interdependency and reciprocity within which personal autonomy is embedded. (p. 201)

What Seeman is suggesting here is that an ethics which starts with relationships, rather than autonomy, might prove to be more tolerable or even more fruitful than an ethics starting with the individual. In relational ethics, one makes decisions based on the networks of relations, who will be affected by decisions and actions, what those involved have to contribute to the issue, etc.

---

<sup>6</sup> Relational ethics and relational pedagogy are two separate academic pursuits involving similar ideas, but are not interchangeable. I am using the labels as they appear in the literature of their respective fields.

The “one” making the decision is not the only actor. She concludes: “The premise of relational models is that decisions can best be understood in the context of social networks and communities” (p. 203). One can see the similarities between Dewey’s notion of the individual in relation to the community and the individual under consideration in relational ethics. The self is still unitary, but is now found in the context of community. A pedagogy enacted under these notions places importance on social networks, but still retains individuality.

Also moving away from traditional systems of ethics, Noddings (1994) claims that moral statements are not truths and are not based on justification. Rather, she advocates an ethics of care, which is based on an obligation “to do what is required to maintain and enhance caring” (p. 95). This sense of obligation to others and making decisions based on these obligations align her with Addams. The stress here is placed on the importance not only of being aware of relations, but on the duty to care for others’ needs as defined by them, rather than how I might define their needs.

Still, relational ethics, while it introduces communities and others into the decision making process, and an ethics of care, while it provides the notion of obligation, maintain the core notion of the individual. An ethics beginning with the other will be more closely in line with the efforts I make to decentralize the modern autonomous individual and will be further elaborated below.

Born just after both Dewey and Addams, Martin Buber disputed the conventional ways in which relationships were conceived. In his understanding of relations, the boundaries of the self become capable, to some extent, of permeation. His I-You relationship challenges the possibility of locating the self as a fixed entity.

## EXISTENTIALIST THOUGHT: MARTIN BUBER (1878-1965)

Philosophically classified as an existentialist, Martin Buber was a Jewish mystic and teacher, and wrote the highly influential philosophical treatise *I and Thou* (1971, first published in German in 1923), which deals with what Buber claims are the two fundamental relationships in which people are capable of participating. He states that there are two basic words we can speak: I-You and I-It (p. 53). Whenever we say “I,” either “You” or “It” is also implied, depending on the relationship in which we are at the moment. One cannot say “I” without implying one of the two basic words. I-It sees all other things and people in the world as discreet entities. We use this word when we use someone as a means to an end, when we see objects and other subjects, placing limits on what we see in them. I-It is the word we use most often and it includes He’s and She’s. I-It is not, of course, something we can do without, but it is not capable of expressing more meaningful relationships, relationships which do not see particular characteristics within a confined being. I-It may be likened to the modernist notion of the self as separate and distinct from others. On the other hand,

Whoever says You does not have something for his object. For whenever there is something there is also another something; every It borders on other Its; It is only by virtue of bordering another. But where You is said there is no something. You has no borders... whoever says You does not have something; he has nothing but stands in relation. (Buber, 1971, p. 55)

When I say “It,” I see the other person as finite, as already defined and determined. When I say “You,” however, I cannot say what the other is; “You” is not defined; “You” is not capable of being determined in advance. Buber continues in his description of I-You: “Measure and comparison have fled. It is up to you how much of the immeasurable becomes reality for you...[You] cannot be surveyed: if you try to make it surveyable, you lose it” (p. 83). This is to say, that when one enters into an I-You relationship, there is no system for establishing what

“You” is. The only way to settle on the value of something prior to being in a relationship with it is to measure it and compare it to what one already knows. Buber insists that there is no way of deciding on value at all when one speaks “I-You.” The other simply *is*, and cannot be compared with others to determine its use or value. Such comparison is possible only when one speaks “I-It.”

Weinstein (1975) writes that as an educator, Buber “believed that all a teacher can do for his students is no more than ‘point the way’ and merely give direction, but not prescribe the manner in which one should strive for that direction” ( p. 83). This follows logically from his presentation of I-You. Assuming that student and teacher are in I-You relation, and that I cannot place limits on You, then it would be impossible for the teacher to decide in advance what direction a student must take or how the student should go about setting on an educational journey. To determine prior to the experience, before the teacher is in relation to the student would be to treat the student as an “It.” Similarly, despite being pressed to expound on a moral framework:

Buber refused to offer a moral system, insisting that by so doing he would injure the core of his views...Buber knew that man is in search of a moral system which would remove from him all insecurity, all unrest about meaning, all terror of decision, all abysmal problems, but like [his mentor] Rabbi Bunam, he not only declined but vociferously opposed these expectations and indeed refused to offer such a system of ethics (Weinsten, 1975, p. 82).

If Buber finds it unethical to treat another as already understood, and thus limited in capabilities, it stands to reason that he would not be able to offer a moral or ethical framework, which would then prescribe behaviors and views from outside an I-You relationship. Such a framework would function to flatten all I-You relationships into I-It relationships, creating boundaries and setting limits on the possibilities of relationships as well as on the knowledge that might come from relationships. If one refuses to place limits on You, refuses to define or categorize You,



one could not develop a system of ethics with which to deal with and prescribe interactions with You. In order to insist on a system of ethics, one would need to know in advance, before the encounter, before the relationship, what You was, and this is not possible in Buber's understanding of the I-You relationship.<sup>7</sup>

Stressing the vital importance of relations in the world as well as in education, Blenkinsop (2005) explains that,

...for Buber, the infant is unable to become fully adult without being immersed in relationship and then coming to full awareness of it, and it is the educator who can play a pivotal role in supporting the development of this adult relationality through encounters with both individual humans and the larger non-human world. (p. 285)

Writing before the postmodern era, but surely in response to modernism, Buber is a theorist who insists that being in relation is fundamental to the human condition.

Blenkinsop further addresses the primacy of relations stating, "the self is discovered and nurtured by means of continually more reflective and conscious relationships, so that the individual becomes a person 'in between' others, as Buber said" (p. 304). This is a beautifully worded expression, conveying the dissolution of what we have traditionally considered an individual. In this light, one becomes a being "in between." The boundaries for the individual begin to soften. This is a much different view of people than has been fostered in Western culture, and has potentially dramatic implications for what is understood as knowledge, since knowledge occurs in relation with an other.

Still, existentialism is characterized by its focus on the self's experience in the world which occurs in time before otherness, even as Buber takes care to attend to relations with the

---

<sup>7</sup> It must be noted that for Buber, as a devout Jew, "The cornerstone of his assumptions is his belief that there is in reality an absolute Supreme Being, namely God...[Who is] the source of all values and moral obligations" (Weinstein, p. 83). This work, however, will not deal with the religious considerations of Buber.

self. And while Levinas was a follower of Buber's work, there remains a gulf between how Buber and Levinas envisioned a relation in education. As Strhan (2007) points out,

We can see that although Buber's account of teaching, like Levinas's, involves an encounter with alterity, there is a significant difference in that Buber implies a drawing out from the learner of 'his powers', as in the traditional conception of education derived from the Latin 'to draw out'. For Levinas, in contrast, teaching is the experience within the self of what could not have come from myself—of the idea of infinity, of the site of the opening of language. (p. 422-423)

Strhan here is expressing one of the major differences between Levinas and other theorists who address the notion of the other. For Buber, there is a special relationship with the self and what is other than the self that can be attained through the I-You relationship. But Buber's account of alterity is not radical enough to withstand Levinas's primacy of the other. Buber sees the moment of education as one in which, like the Greek Maieutics, the powers and abilities present within the individual are guided out by the teacher. For Levinas, however, learning occurs when I experience something within me that is not a part of me, something within me that I cannot recognize or in any way "know." This will become increasingly important in the following chapters.

Furthermore, the relationship that Buber describes is symmetrical; it is even. As Levinas himself points out, "For if the self becomes an I in saying Thou, as Buber asserts, my position as a self depends on that of my correlate and the relation is no longer any different from other relations...The formal meeting is a symmetrical relation and may therefore be read indifferently from either side" (Levinas, 1987, p. 72). Though Buber's work with the I-You relationship acknowledges the impossibility of ever "knowing" an other and allows for the possibility of a field in which ethical decisions are made in relation, the symmetry of the relation means that my knowledge and my ethical actions always exist on the same level of importance as those of You. As I will expand on below, for Levinas, I owe my being to the other. The relationship between

self and other is not one of equals. I am at the mercy of the other, whom I can never fully know. Because my existence is dependent on the other, I am not a unified subject as modernism posited.

The theorists in the following section stretch further to dislocate the self as the primary focus of investigation by placing additional emphasis on the fraying borders of the individual and the implications for engaging in relationships when one no longer considers the self to be separate from “other.” Their efforts mark the conclusion of the first portion of this chapter, which has sought to illustrate how understandings of knowledge, the self, and ethics all combine within a particular historical setting to illuminate and determine one another.

### **DIS-LOCATING THE SELF**

This discussion has moved from the Scientific Revolution through modern educational thinkers and now to those who are counted in the post-modern movement. To interrupt the concentration on the individual self as the primary focus of study is both necessary and instructive, but an ethics which maintains the primacy, the originary position of the self, before the other, will not provide a ground for ethics in which responsibility toward the other is always the reason for existence, in which responsibility to the other is how the self is understood. It is necessary to argue for the fractured, split, multiple self in order to be in relation with the other. Because the self is called into being by the other, because existence depends on the other, one is always in a state of multiplicity. I must first present arguments that contend that the self is not fixed and isolated, that the self is not the figure of lone-attainment that the Enlightenment projected. Once that is established, we may find a site of responsibility in the other, for whom each person exists.

In this section, I first discuss three theorists who offer alternative ways of understanding the self, emphasizing the relational nature of people and selves and critiquing the modernist notions of separation and individuality. These ideas further de-center the core individual with which my work has grappled. I then offer more recent work in the field of distributed cognition as an indicator of the ways in which our minds can only be understood through the lens of relation, as compared to earlier scientific notions of mind that exist solely in the individual.

In an effort to explain a new understanding of politics, Noëlle McAfee (2000) emphasizes the extent to which relationships are paramount, stating that, “The most fruitful response to our situation is to recognize how indebted we are to each other, which may allow us to forge a better future together” (p. *xi*). While this may at first seem an innocuous statement, she, along with others who will be discussed at length in this work, makes a much stronger statement about why relationships are so important, namely that “we are situated in a web of relationships that continuously constitute our very identity” (McAfee, p. *xi*). That is, the very ways in which we understand ourselves as selves, the identities which we project and whom we think we “are,” are all fundamentally constituted by our relationships with others and the world around us. In contrast to Bertens’s claim in the Introduction that in the postmodern, the self is lost, a relational self is not lost, but located and possible only through relations. Again, because of the relational foundation of our subjectivity, because others are part of our subjectivity, understandings of the self and knowledge are based in ethics.

Similarly, Donna Haraway (1990) describes the self as “split and contradictory” (p. 183), and suggests a “splitting of senses, a confusion of voice and sight rather than clear and distinct ideas” (p. 186) as the basis for rational thought. For Haraway, it is precisely in the splitting and confusion that she finds room for responsibility, because the self is “always constructed and

stitched together imperfectly and *therefore* is able to join with another” (p. 183). The split self allows for connections with others. This sense of incompleteness is much different from the ideas of personhood that my students tend to offer. But, in seeing ourselves as incomplete, we might be able to understand ourselves in relation to others much better.

Finally, I would like to introduce a term from the feminist scholar Jessica Benjamin. In her book *The Bonds of Love* (1988), she develops the term *intersubjective view*, which is in contrast to the intrapsychic view advanced by Freud. The intrapsychic view emphasizes what happens within an individual by screening out others and how the individual learns to separate himself or herself from others. In contrast, “The intersubjective view maintains that the individual grows in and through the relationship to other subjects.... [It] refers to what happens in the field of self and other” (p. 20). Notice, Benjamin is suggesting here that the intersubjective view is not about focusing on any one person, or two people for that matter. It deals with the *field* of self and other, the area that surrounds two subjects. It should be noted, too, that Benjamin does not deny the intrapsychic (people do, it seems, have internal thoughts and workings) or devalue it, but asserts that it has been further developed and that new attention should be paid to the importance of relationships and how we grow through them. Benjamin beautifully states,

The problem with this formulation [the subject separating oneself in order to become a “self”] is the idea of separation from oneness; it contains the implicit assumption that we grow *out of* relationships rather than becoming more active and sovereign *within* them, that we start in a state of dual oneness and wind up in a state of singular oneness. (p. 18, emphasis in original)

The views of McAfee, Haraway, and Benjamin all relate the importance of others and their philosophical work suggests there is much to be learned from the deep consideration of what we

make of relationships. Approaching the self from a different perspective, that of science, recent contributions in the area of distributed cognition also confront the modernist individual.

Gavriel Salomon (1993) and the contributors to the volume *Distributed Cognitions: Psychological and Educational Considerations* challenge some of the issues cognitive psychology and neuroscience have traditionally assumed were more or less settled, particularly the assertion that cognition exists in the individual, in a person's head. Salomon indicates that while less radical claims of distributed cognition still maintain "solo" as well as distributed cognitions, more radical views of distributed cognition assert that, "cognition *in general* should be reexamined and conceived as principally distributed" (p. xv, emphasis in original). That is to say that cognition – awareness, knowing, perceiving, etc. – takes place in the world and among people, not (at least not exclusively, or even primarily) in a single person. Alterman (2007), also working within the field of cognitive science, states with others (Cole & Engerström, 1993; Lenot'ev, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978) that, "Intersubjectivity – literally 'between subjects' – is arguably the organic structure of human cognition" (p. 815-6). And Pea (1993) in discussing distributed intelligence argues that "intelligences revealed through these [cognitive] practices are distributed – across minds, persons, and the symbolic and physical environments, both natural and artificial" (p. 47).

This type of psychological investigation supports a renewed emphasis on attending to relations, and in turn underscores the ways in which science and other systems of thought not only help establish views of the self and the world, but are also influenced by changes in thought that occur outside those very systems. A number of educators working in the field of complexity contend with similar notions of mind and its existence as part of the world, rather than as the possession of an individual (Davis & Sumara, 1997; Doll, 1993; Doll, Fleener, Trueit, & St.

Julien, 2005). Work towards understanding how cognition is located between subjects is in stark contrast to, say Descartes's work as previously discussed, in which he details how one may turn inward and reflect in total isolation to discover truth in the world. Relational epistemology (or here, distributed cognition) suggests that there is no learning without confrontation with an other.

In the preceding depictions of the self, the self is not a unitary being, and the fact that knowledge and ethics are bound together becomes more apparent. While a strictly scientific presentation of the world might have us believing that knowledge and ethics are separate pursuits, that what I know and how I act are different questions, an understanding of the world in which I exist due to my relations with others highlights the relationship between ethics and knowledge. When my very self-ness depends on others, what I know issues from my relations with them. Those relations are the domain of ethics and will generate what and how I know.

### **CONSTRUCTING THE RELATIONAL SELF: PEDAGOGY AND ETHICS**

A recent book edited by Sidorkin and Bingham (2004), *No Education Without Relation*, addresses many different aspects of relational pedagogy. None of the authors in the collection gives a definitive answer to the question "What is relational pedagogy?" though the introduction offers historical examples of those who engaged in, or advocated, such a practice. They list the philosophers Martin Buber, Mikhail Bakhtin, John Dewey, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Martin Heidegger as some who are part of "a long philosophical tradition of emphasizing relations" (Bingham & Sidorkin, p. 1). Bingham and Sidorkin also list Nel Noddings, Jane Roland Martin, and Carol Gilligan as those who have developed "examples of theoretical constructs that take human relationships to be the primary building blocks of reality" (p. 1). The authors of the volume claim to "try to understand human relations rather than educational processes, behaviors,

methods, curriculum, and so on” (p. 2). Many of them do so in terms of the individual in relation to broader networks.

To reiterate the commitment of the authors of *No Education without Relation*, the point of this work is not to dwell on something like a curriculum, because the nature of a relation is such that there can never be one focus only. There are always at least two entities in a relationship, and what is important is what happens between them. As Pijanowski states in this volume,

Here [in the territory of relational pedagogy], neither the teacher [as in traditional education] nor the student [as in progressive education] dominates the landscape. Rather, the relational space between teacher and student, student and student, student and curricula, and student and community commands attention. Influenced by communication theory, feminist philosophy, race theory, and psychoanalytic theory, relational pedagogy proposes that education is possible only through and with human relations. In this lush terrain, therefore, the purpose of education, teaching objectives, and learning outcomes are one and the same: to form relations. (p. 104)

Similarly, Bingham and Sidorkin (2004) state, “Once the relational basis of a school organization is destroyed or severely limited, it becomes more and more difficult to achieve high academic standards” (p. 2). As I stated earlier, I do not want to see education or the collection of knowledge as an end in itself. If relationships are fundamental to humanity, education should work towards their betterment. I would like to make one more note about the interplay between relations and education. I am making a stronger claim here than Pijanowski appears to be making in the above quote. He argues that the purpose of education is to form relations, and I agree with this. However, I think it is more appropriate, as I alluded to in the Introduction to this chapter, to argue that relationships themselves are the generators of knowledge. It is not only that we must have and nurture relationships in order to learn; it is that relationships create what we learn. The view of Pijanowski and other similar comments on the formation of relations coincide with Dewey’s view of the individual as a self situated in a community.



The introduction for *No Education without Relation* is written by all of the contributors as a manifesto. In this manifesto, the following question is posed: “Why do schools remain?” in light of the fact that, in our current historical moment, information is readily available in so many places indicating that schools are hardly necessary as a source of information. The authors respond by making the rather simple, but somehow entirely radical claim that:

[E]ducation is not mainly about the facts that students stuff into their heads. They [schools] remain because education is not mainly about developing thinking skills. It is not about gaining knowledge. School remains because education is primarily about human beings who need to meet together, as a group of people, if learning is to take place. (p. 5)<sup>8</sup>

M. Jayne Fleener (2002) points to the significance of relationships, particularly when considering education. She claims,

My teaching radically changed when I stopped thinking of students, learning, knowledge, teaching, and schooling as ‘things’ from a production perspective...Examining and shifting our ideas about the purpose of schooling with an underlying logic of relationship has the potential to infuse the curriculum with meaning and purpose, rekindling the spirit and heart of learning. (p. 80)

This sentiment gets at the heart of one of the aims of my work, which is to begin to find ways to see education and learning as meaning-full, to do away with tired notions of education that see students sitting bored and idle and alone in their desks, receiving knowledge that is packaged for consumption, not transformation. Fleener emphasizes that the “logic of relationship” helps her see that “the moral purpose of education has implications for education that may transcend the logic of domination” (p. 95). One of the ultimate calls of a relational pedagogy or relational epistemology must be to recognize that education as domination, as administrators or university “experts” dominating teachers, or teachers dominating students, prevents students, teachers, and

---

<sup>8</sup> I think it is important to point out, as others have, that meeting and education need not always and necessarily be between human beings. See Buber (1973, p. 47), for instance, where he discusses his relationship with a tree; also the works of Henry Thoreau, Elaine Riley Taylor (2002), Derrick Jensen (2006), and Jane Roland Martin (2011) in which one’s relation to nature is explored. See also John Llewelyn (2000), who addresses one’s relation with nature in the context of Levinas.

experts alike from flourishing. Relation, rather than domination, has the potential to allow us all to participate in a meaningful education, indeed a meaningful life. Questioning the apparent limits of the self involved in a relational pedagogy is paramount to this task.

## **LEVINAS AND AN ETHICS OF OTHERNESS**

All along, I have been emphasizing the importance of relations, asserting that they are the foundation for how we come to know and experience the world. As I have been alluding to through the mention of Levinas, however, there is a particular presentation of relations that bestows a foundation to ethics and responsibility. In contrast to modernism's focus on the autonomous individual, and against the loss of the self that characterizes postmodernism, Levinas's ethics finds that the self is ethical not only because of its incompleteness, but primarily because it has been brought into existence by the other who demands that I respond to his or her call.

Levinas argues that the tradition of Western philosophy has been to focus on the individual, on the ego, as the principal unit of investigation (1980). Moran (2000) argues that Levinas's philosophical work "turned towards elucidating the irreducible priority of the 'other,'" away from a system that "prioritized 'the Same' (*le Même*), the self-identical, over the diffuse and wholly other" (p. 337). Levinas charges that the West's focus on the solitary individual is symptomatic of what he sees as its larger philosophical project. This project is the attempt at totalizing and explaining the world into a one-ness that can be known by me. For Levinas (1985), knowledge is the result of this drive toward totality, and it therefore subsumes all other experience with the world and with the other. For instance, he writes, "One can see this nostalgia for totality everywhere in Western philosophy, where the spiritual and the reasonable always reside in knowledge. It is as if the totality had been lost, and that this loss were the sin of

the mind” (p. 76). In other words, Western philosophy sees the inability to totalize all events and experiences under one system of rationality as the ultimate sin, one that must be corrected. Its entire history has been scratching to regain the elevated status of “all-knowing.”

Levinas (1980) contrasts totality with infinity. While in the West, he finds the drive to totality, he urges instead, the acceptance of infinity. Knowledge, as a totalizing system, is always what it is; there is nothing more to knowledge than can be known. Of infinity, he writes, “[it] overflows the thought that thinks it” (p. 25), meaning that the infinite is never able to be encapsulated in thought or knowledge. The other, which is infinite, can never be totalized. He goes on to declare that subjectivity is “founded in the idea of infinity” (p. 26), suggesting that, as a being, I am called into existence by what can never be contained. My very existence depends on that which cannot be known. Moreover, the aim to totalize all things with rationality (and Levinas places this desire squarely in the hands of Descartes), is a form of violence to the other. The project of knowing is the project of erasing the other. Levinas (1980) elaborates:

But violence does not consist so much in injuring and annihilating persons as in interrupting their continuity making them play roles in which they no longer recognize themselves, making them betray not only commitments but their own substance, making them carry out actions that will destroy every possibility for action. (p. 21)

Violence to the other is not simply about murder and the physical horror of political war (though these acts are included in violence). Violence is also what happens when, in an attempt to know, we interrupt others becoming more or other than they were; it is when we refuse to see that the system of knowledge under which we work makes each of us commit acts that prevent other possibilities from coming to light. Violence is the cutting off of possibility, the ratcheting off of infinity.

For Levinas (1980), totality is a war in which “Individuals are reduced to being bearers of forces that command them unbeknown to themselves” (p. 21). This is to say that, under the

totalizing system of knowledge, people without even realizing it, are soldiers in a march to make everything known, to bring everything into the system. The cost of the war of totality is the erasure and death of everything other than what we know. All otherness must be consumed and made to fit the model of knowledge already in place.

In order that we not be confused about so-called “peaceful” times, that we not confuse time in which states are not engaged in a political war, with actual peace, Levinas (1980) warns that, “The peace of empires issued from war rests on war. It does not restore to the alienated being their lost identity” (p. 22). Here we find the necessity for an ethics that begins not in an ontology of knowledge – of erasing difference – but for a first philosophy of ethics – a philosophy that begins with ethics and the responsibility to the other above all other commitments, and not with knowledge about how the world might be understood. The above quote reveals that any system built on the violence of totality never returns to peace. It is in a constant state of violence, because it never lets the other exist on its own terms. In knowledge, the other is always prevented from being and becoming himself or herself.

Moran (2000) writes that for Levinas, “the ‘other’ is not another me, nor is it something defined by its relationship with me, but rather something or someone completely other and unique” (p. 337), and because he wants to resist totalizing concepts that erase otherness, the relationship that Levinas understands between the self and the other is not one of synthesis. The relationship between the self and the other is characterized by Levinas’s term of being “face-to-face.” The specific relation that Levinas describes in being for another is the face-to-face relationship, in which the other is not understood into myself, but appeals to me to let him or her exist without the violence of consuming him or her. Denise Egéa-Kuehne (2008), who has written extensively on Levinas’s ethics in the area of education, writes,

it is before the Other and the face of the Other that the individual can have the pure experience of the other. Levinas sees it as one and the same with ethics, inasmuch as one is aware that one is responsible for the other, that the existence of the other is more important than one's own. (p. 32)

Notice that being face-to-face means never melding the self and the other, but means always being receptive to the other. Descriptions of relationships which contain both the self and the other and then fuse them into one fall into the violent trap of totality that Levinas (1985) has argued persists in Western philosophy. Indeed, he argues that, "The first word of the face is a 'Thou shalt not kill.' It is an order. There is a commandment in the appearance of the face, as if a master spoke to me" (p. 89).

The goal (if one could speak of goals in terms of the other) is not to fuse two things or beings into one. The ultimate ethical challenge is to allow the other to exist on his or her own terms and to not understand the other in my terms, to not "know" the other. Levinas (1985) summarizes the face-to-face relationship in this way:

The relationship between men is certainly the non-synthesizable par excellence...the interpersonal relationship is not a matter of thinking the ego and the other together, but to be facing. The true union or true togetherness is not a togetherness of synthesis, but a togetherness of face to face. (p. 77)

This is new territory, in that while Levinas does not begin with a self and then proceed to construct the world and otherness in relation to the self, neither does he blend the self and the other into one entity.

The irreducible and ultimate experience of relationship appears to me in fact to be elsewhere: not in synthesis, but in the face to face of humans, in sociality, in its moral signification. But it must be understood that morality comes not as a secondary layer, above an abstract reflection on the totality and its dangers; morality has an independent and preliminary range. First philosophy is an ethics. (Levinas, 1985, p. 77)

This is the heart of the matter. The proper relationship between myself and what is not myself does not appear after I have reflected on what it means to be ethical to the other. The face-to-face relationship means that I bear the infinity of the other and my responsibility to the other

before and above anything else. I do not become one with the other, as that would mean that I have understood the other into my self. And I do not develop a set of rules governing ethical relationships. I am always already being faced with the other and everything, including knowledge, issues from that relationship.

Levinas's ethics goes beyond relational ethics or an ethics of care because it begins with the existence of the other and constructs the self through that relationship (Critchley, 2007). Cohen (1985) states regarding Levinas's ethics: "Its priority is affirmed without recourse to principles, without vision, in the irrecuperable shock of being-for-the-other-person before being-for-oneself, or being-with-others" (p. 10). In this particular formation of relationality, ethical action derives its primacy from being *for* an other. Ethics does not take place in the individual acting within relationships or out of obligation to others, because there is no self without being called upon by the other. My existence is always for the other; my obligation is to be for the other.<sup>9</sup> From this, Levinas (1985) states, "true human subjectivity is indiscernible" (p. 78), meaning that I am not an isolated subject, but am constantly changing in my relation for the other; the other constantly forms my subjectivity. Again, Moran states, "Levinas sees all traditional ethics and philosophy as grounded in *egoism*, which understands my relation to myself as the primary relation.... Against this egoism, he wants to argue that my *responsibility to the other* is the fundamental structure upon which all other social structures rest" (p. 321, emphasis in original).

This indiscernibility, in which my subjectivity depends on the other, leads Levinas's ethics, as opposed to traditional systems of ethics, to stress heteronomy rather than autonomy.

---

<sup>9</sup> An unavoidable question arises in the prospect of being for the other, because one does in fact have to consider one's own desires and needs. This problem is dealt with in many respects in Levinas's discussions on justice, in which one finds himself or herself in the presence of more than one other. This important issue cannot be fully developed here.

As Anna Strhan (2009) notes, “The term heteronomy literally means, as its etymology suggests, being ruled or governed by the other.... For Levinas, heteronomy is the state of the self approached by the Other and elected to a position of responsibility for them” (p. 5). That is to say that Levinas understands that the self is such not because it is separate from others and governs itself, but because it is brought into being and is governed by the other. What is more, I am always the single person responsible for the particular other that has called to me. The “election to responsibility,” being chosen by the other, “shows the subject as unique in the way that it alone can respond to the appeal of the Other in heteronomy” (Strhan, p. 8), meaning that I can never defer my responsibility to another.

Still, to be sure, heteronomy does not mean that the other has power over me. Kodelja (2008) writes that Levinas,

does not defend heteronomy as a submission to the tyrannical will of the other.... He defends an entirely other sort of heteronomy, a heteronomy which does not abolish freedom, but rather makes it moral. This kind of heteronomy is the so-called heteronomy of the face. It is the heteronomy of the face of the other, the heteronomy of a being who is in a “face-to-face” encounter with me. In such a relationship, the other is not someone who has power to subject me to his or her will. Just the opposite, the other has no power over me. (p. 187)

We see in the notion of heteronomy that, unlike previous systems of ethics, the individual is never in the place of justifying his or her freedom against the pressures or power of the world. Being for the other means my first concern is never for my rights or my freedoms. The other, by calling to me and calling me into existence, limits my possible actions, but gives my freedom a moral dimension, allows me to act in my freedom with morality. This is another departure from traditional systems of ethics, because there is no abstract notion of freedom in which human freedom is inherently good. In heteronomy, freedom becomes a moral practice, not determined in advance by empty appeals to what rational beings would have freedom be. Being governed by

the other is in stark contrast to the autonomy highlighted by modern ethics and modern education, in stark contrast to “knowing oneself.” I take as my point of departure Levinas’s first philosophy of ethics because it demands an alternate view of the self, how one acts ethically, and how one begins to know differently in a world that has deemed everything knowable.

Relational ethics situates us with others; an ethics of care introduces obligation; an ethics of the other dissolves the self that can then only be constructed through the relationship with the other. In this light, the self begins with the obligation placed on it by the demand from the other. Finally, “In the face-to-face encounter [Levinas] sees, beyond all knowledge, an ‘elevation’ of the ethical order” (Eg a-Kuehne, 2008, p.29). This reevaluation of knowledge in light of an ethics founded in the other is what must be done after reconsidering what life might mean otherwise.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS AND CHAPTER PREVIEW**

The self can be seen in myriad ways, and can be considered differently from the way it has been posited in a modernist framework. We can rethink the modernist story of the individual through birth, time, and silence, by casting these moments as opportunities to be-for-the-other. Where in a modernist framework, knowledge tends to be seen as fixed, out there, waiting to be discovered, a relational approach to knowledge recognizes that knowledge is what happens in the relations we develop with others, ourselves, and the world. Relationality would not suggest that knowledge is limited to scientific concepts that purport to uncover the “true” nature of reality. Rather, relationality and a relational self suggest that knowledge itself is ethical. Being in relation to the other and being for the other provide the basis for ethical knowledge. When the self is understood as possible only through the call into being by the other, knowledge is the relation with the other, and is thus ethical.



For each of the three themes, I have chosen to deal primarily with the works of one or two thinkers who have written expressly about or otherwise addressed the issue of otherness in relation to that particular theme. For instance, in Chapter 2, I deal with Friedrich Nietzsche, his remarks regarding birth and pregnancy, and how Nietzsche's views of birth and pregnancy suggest going beyond one's identity. In Chapter 3, I contend with Henri Bergson and Michel Serres and how their theorization of time offers possibilities of otherness; and finally, in Chapter 4, I return to Serres and cull remarks on silence from his work to find silence's relation to the other.

Birth, in a modernist understanding of the self, happens once; it is a singular event in which the individual is brought into the world. And under a modernist vision of the self, this newly born individual is prepared to take in all the knowledge existing in the world and become more of an individual. Under a relational view of birth, birth happens many times, because the self is formed anew with new relationships. The self is reborn, in Levinasian terms, by each call from the other. Knowledge, in this light, is born again, as well, with each new relation. Chapter 2, centered on birth, begins with the work of Nietzsche, owing to his descriptions of knowledge and creativity ripe with the language of birth and pregnancy, and argues for giving birth as a condition of teaching.

Chapter 3 concerns modernism's treatment of time as linear and progressive. The individual in modernist time becomes more oneself, grows into oneself, finds oneself over time. In this chapter, I explore Henri Bergson's counterpart to measured time, which is duration, and discuss some of the many of Michel Serres's metaphors of time. Duration is the actual experience of time we have, a time which cannot be reduced to units of measurement. For Bergson, duration is a real entity that exists in the world, while clock time, as it measures and

creates instances of sameness, is merely an abstraction that represents duration spatially. Serres's metaphors, evoking many similarities to duration, help express the denseness of our experiences with time. The work of both authors lead to a description of time matching Levinas's, in which time is a way in which the other comes into being

Chapter 4 will address the phenomenon of silence. In the modernist tradition, silence indicates an end, a lack of progress, a death. Modernism's characteristic of logocentrism, the fixation on rationality associated with speech making, privileges naming and understanding at the expense of the other. Within the framework of an ethics attendant to the other, silence offers the opportunity to begin again, to be reborn through a relationship with the other that lets the other exist without naming him or her. Silence allows the other to speak on his or her own terms.

Chapter 5 will serve as the concluding chapter. It will offer a view of the self as it is re-theorized through the ethical and relational treatment of birth, time, and silence, and will examine the implications of such a self in regards to knowledge and meaning. In this conclusion, I will bring birth, time, and silence together and offer a portrait of an ethics of otherness that values creativity and responsibility rather than repetition and separation in pedagogy.

## **CHAPTER 2: BIRTH**

Thus, fecundity, for Levinas, is a way of expressing the alterity of the other without domination.

Furthermore, phenomena such as fecundity express experiences which are not illuminated by light but rather are somehow shrouded in darkness.

Fecundity expresses a phenomenon in which I can be related to the other without being either annihilated (as in death) or absorbed completely by the other.

(Moran, p. 338-339)

### **SWOLLEN WITH IDEAS**

*When I am writing or attempting to express a particularly challenging idea, I frequently experience shortness of breath. I am often exhausted after a day or week of carrying around ideas in my head. While wrapped up in thinking, I cannot sleep well at night. I toss and turn and cannot find a comfortable position. I worry. And, I eat more, a lot more, when I am trying to finish an academic project. I eat for multiplicity. When I am trying to think, when I am thinking hard, I am very aware of how my body moves; I feel like other people are staring at me because I must look odd. I feel like I am strange when I am swollen with ideas, likely because I feel like there is something inside me that I cannot get out. Confronting the strangeness in me is part of the difficult work of trying to make room for otherness in the world. It seems there is something inside my body, something unknown, inexpressible. I often wonder what is going to come out of me when I sit down to write...*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The metaphor of giving birth has no doubt been used in various contexts (see, for example, Kahn, 1995). In fact, the Greeks used the term *maieutic* to describe what we commonly refer to as the Socratic method: the dialogic back and forth between teacher and

students, culminating in the students' "giving birth" to ideas already existing within them. *Maieutic* is the Greek root for "midwife," illustrating the role of educator as one who helps give birth (*Maieutic*, 1996, p. 333).<sup>10</sup> Levinas, however, argued against teaching as maieutic, because, Socrates, the self-described barren mid-wife, believed that his role was simply to bring out of students what was already existing inside them. For Levinas (1985), this is "to receive nothing of the Other but what is in me" (p. 43). Interestingly, while Levinas does not subscribe to a maieutic description of teaching, he speaks of fecundity, the ability to produce, as a powerful relation with the other. As is noted in the opening quote, fecundity, for Levinas, "is a way of expressing the alterity of the other without domination" (Moran, 2000, p. 338). I side with Levinas in asserting that learning and producing thought do not amount to the revelation of what was existing within me without regard to otherness. I will, however, propose that this understanding of maieutic is misguided, because, in the end, giving birth always means that something new has come to me.

This chapter uses the metaphor of giving birth as a methodological means for seeing knowledge as created by relations, as a product of relations. In contrast to modernist thought that conceives of knowledge as existing *a priori*, without concern for conditions and context, this treatment of birth asserts that knowledge is a result of the relations in which we are engaged and provides support for my aim of participating in the act of reconsidering our relations to ideas we take for granted. Seeing knowledge as something to which we give birth highlights both its relational status and its ethical status, as it always involves at least two entities. It implies that knowledge is born from relations (as all births stem from a relation). It is also a call to take

---

<sup>10</sup> The development of the notion of midwifery can be found in Plato's *Theaetetus* 149a-151d; 184b-210b-d (*Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1996, p. 333).

responsibility for our knowledge, to take care of it, as it is something to which we have given birth.

## CONTEXTUALIZING BIRTH

If modernism sees knowledge as a given fact of the world, as the sheer uncovering of what already exists “out there,” a relational approach with respect to otherness will, in contrast, see knowledge as what occurs in relations. In the modern story of the individual, birth is a singular event, occurring once, and ushering a person into the world, ready to take on the trajectory of ever more progress in knowledge, and ever greater independence from others. The modern individual is born one time. The relational self, however, is born again...and again and again. Every time I come into relation with an other, I am reborn and my knowledge and understanding of the world is reborn, as well.

Robbie Kahn (1995) argues that the modern story of the individual begins with a birth, after which the infant must grow increasingly more autonomous, independent, and out of relations with others. She states:

Books on child development focus upon the experience of the child rather than the mother and overwhelmingly stress *separation* from the mother. If socialization occurs between generations, why can't the younger generation educate the older generation? Consciously or unconsciously, a mother so educated may rethink, as I did, the model of human development in the West...that maturity equals autonomy and separation. (p. 96, emphasis in original)

This view of the individual parallels the story of knowledge as developed during the Scientific Revolution. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Francis Bacon and René Descartes sought to develop a system of knowledge that could remove the individual from the “equation.” There was to be no relationship with the object of study, and the more the individual was able to remove himself or herself from the object, the better. Knowledge was not a matter of relations.

Similarly, the story of life today suggests that one becomes more oneself the less one depends on others.

Kahn's call to rethink the definition of maturity has implications for how we conceive of knowledge, as well. In a relational framework, there is no knowledge without relations. Our relations themselves are the progenitors of knowledge. Mature knowledge is not the result of separation, but rather of relations. A vision of knowledge that is born out of relations means that knowledge, relational knowledge, comes back to give birth to us. As I will discuss below, Friedrich Nietzsche's description of knowledge highlights a personal relationship with it, and discusses the creation of knowledge through metaphors of birth and pregnancy.

I would like to further contextualize the discussion of giving birth in education and giving birth to knowledge by way of an interesting juxtaposition whose benefit in education and philosophy has already been discussed. The lessons of death offer a fount of ethical and philosophical issues. As Kahn (1995) discusses, "Many stories in Western culture focus upon the instructive properties of death, from the *Illiad* to Tolstoy's 'The Death of Ivan Illych.' But few show what meanings birth might provide, both for the one giving birth and the one being born" (p. 102). Even contemporary continental philosophers interested in breaking down rigid forms of meaning and understanding in Western thought focus substantially on what may be learned from death. Heidegger (1996) and Derrida (1993) in particular are two thinkers who do so. Kahn reminds us, too, that birth as a metaphor is not meant to exclude men or women who choose not to give birth or who are unable to give birth or conceive. Rather, the point is that we all come from and share this aspect of our lives. We are all of us born. If we are always in the process of being born, if we are always becoming new, our knowledge, as it is born from us, is

always new and changing. Static knowledge – knowledge that is not part of continual birth – enters death.

Puolimatka and Solasaari (2006) write about how an “Education for Death” can be insightful and appropriate for all ages:

Since death is an unavoidable part of the human condition, the consciousness of death may be a precondition for understanding life. It is a foundation for self-knowledge, because it provides a conception of the ultimate limit of human existence. At the same time it sharpens the question about the meaning of life. What could be the meaning of a life which has a limited duration and which ends in a way that totally annihilates life’s external achievements from the point of view of the individual herself? (p. 201-202)

As we all face death, all of us, too, are born. Every one of us has the experience of being born. What might we learn from such an experience? The act of creation, creativity itself, perhaps, depends on what one thinks it means to be born. Is being born the same thing as appearing from nothing? How does one find oneself in the position of being born? Where does one begin...nowhere if not from two already existing beings.

Puolimatka and Solasaari (2006) write that,

Becoming more aware of one’s mortality can inspire a person to live more fully and awaken a passionate interest to find the best way to live one’s life. It can awaken a passion to understand life’s fundamental questions and to live life intensively, not merely to inspect life theoretically with a cool and dispassionate attitude. An awareness of the temporal finitude of human existence emphasizes the urgency of life’s decisions. (p. 206)

If this is the case, might an awareness of birth awaken a passionate interest to find the best way to create beauty in others’ lives? Might it awaken a passion to be tender to others, knowing what it takes to give birth to those lives, their thoughts, their ideas? Yes, might an awareness of the temporal finitude of human existence emphasize the urgency of life’s decisions...for others? If we attend to the idea of giving birth, then we must immediately understand that we are giving birth to an other...whether to another human or an idea. Giving birth necessitates an other, even if I am giving birth to my self, to an other in me. So, perhaps, a pedagogy that minds the process

of birth could help one be more mindful of others, of otherness. After all, Heidegger says that one can only die for one's self. It is the only act that one must do alone. Giving birth, then, might be something that must be done with, for, an other.

## **NIETZSCHE AND THE PROCESS OF GIVING BIRTH**

Nietzsche's contribution to the field of philosophy is far reaching. One of his most important contributions was to question the stability and fixed notions of knowledge and truth. In many instances, he does this with words associated with the feminine, such as "pregnant," and "full of life," using them to communicate that knowledge is created and born, not packaged and given. Furthermore, as the feminine is often described as other (Cixous, 1994; Kristeva, 1991; Levinas, 1985), and because caring is considered a feminine trait, the demonstration of caring as a means of respecting otherness is appropriate for an ethics in which knowledge comes from relations with the other. In this chapter, I want to highlight Nietzsche's arguments against the fixed presentation of knowledge and show that for Nietzsche, it is always possible to be other than we think we are. This chapter addresses the otherness inside us, and calls for the gentleness necessary to be shown to students and their creations, as they are both, in the end, other. In the first section, I present Nietzsche's attitude toward modern knowledge and provide textual examples of his treatment of pregnancy and birth in relation to the creation of ideas. Nietzsche also presents an interesting mark in the shift away from modern thought because of his insistence that the body is the site of knowledge. This is strongly contrasted to modern thought in which the body was separate from the mind, and the mind itself separate from the world "out there." In the second section, I argue for an understanding of intellectual pregnancy as instance of bodily pregnancy. I note that combining Nietzsche's emphasis on the role of the body in knowledge creation and his language surrounding birth and pregnancy provides a metaphor of giving birth in



the classroom that is appropriate as it concerns and takes responsibility for the other. Here, I submit that a teacher of the future (Nietzsche depicts philosophers of the future) is one who is full of the other and gives birth to otherness.

In the third section, after arriving at the event of birth, I find it will be necessary to offer a description of the relation with this new other. As I will be arguing that knowledge emerges from relations with others, we will be called upon to take responsibility for that knowledge. My ethical response to the other will manifest itself not as pity, but as an openness to what students, new ideas, others, have to offer. In this section, I provide an account of pity and its tendency toward sameness, and I argue that a qualified reliance on caring, as described by Noddings (2004), helps one respond ethically to the other.

## **NIETZSCHE AND KNOWLEDGE**

Embedded in this point of view is a skepticism of socially legitimated systems of changing individuals. As Nietzsche was a man who felt he had been abused and deserted by medicine, we can see how the medical and psychiatric knowledge of his day might seem like a very blunt instrument indeed, forcing its patients physically and morally into a mould which might constrain the florid excesses of their disease but could not, by definition, cure them.

(Nolan, Brown, & Crawford, 1998, p. 257)

## **MODERN KNOWLEDGE**

The above quote is directed to the psychiatric profession; similarly, schools today might be seen as forcing their students physically and morally into a mould that might constrain their excesses. If knowledge is about an overflowing, an excess, which will be addressed further below, then schooling today seems to serve a rather contrary purpose. Even with talk about making students well-rounded – a topic which itself has seemed to fall by the wayside as our

country, and increasingly our world, become more focused on producing good workers – the aim of school often serves the purpose of limiting the scope, imagination, and behavior, of its students. Bingham (2001) argues that schools were generated in the first place to make everyone the same, to “promulgate dominant understandings of the self” (p. 339). He continues, “Educational institutions create the very selves that Nietzsche wants to critique. To get stuck critiquing educational institutions any farther downstream than the origin, the self, is already to be playing a game whose rules Nietzsche cannot tolerate” (p. 340). Schools themselves are set up to reproduce the autonomous self, and so no amount of critique farther down the line will alleviate the system. The system itself is wholesale corrupt. The institution we now see as “school” will never do. Nietzsche critiqued schools in Europe, but the schools in the United States were founded similarly: Horace Mann and William T. Harris wanted the “Common School.” By and by, I make no argument that there should not be education available to everyone, and I do mean everyone. Common in that sense, I accept. But, in line with Nietzsche, I reject the “Common” which instructs us all to be common, which requires not only that we self-normalize, but also that we expect others to do the same. This view of common does not take care to give birth to new selves, to otherness. Today’s schooling seems more concerned with students’ gaining in knowledge, and not with being transformed by it. It seems to want to limit the effect that knowledge and experience have on students.

In contrast to a vision of knowledge that promises meaning and experience, Nietzsche critiques modern or transcendent knowledge – knowledge that is beyond question – because it becomes an end in itself. He states, “It is something new in history that knowledge wants to be more than a mere means” (1974, p. 123). Our modern way of construing knowledge as fixed and eternal is such that it assumes that the mere collection of facts in some way creates an “educated”

person. It does not serve the person in his or her life. To be sure, however, Nietzsche does not conceive of knowledge as something which should be put in the service of duties or tasks bestowed upon us by society. Rather, knowledge is relevant only when it is in the service of life, a life that comes from the joy of creating one's own values and giving birth to what has never been seen, heard, or experienced. Nietzsche sees institutional schooling and the dissemination of a "common" knowledge in service to a society which seeks a "common good" *at the expense* of the individual. In *The Gay Science*, he states, "That is how education always proceeds: one tries to condition an individual by various attractions and advantages to adopt a way of thinking and behaving that, once it has become a habit, instinct, and passion, will dominate him *to his own ultimate disadvantage* but 'for the general good'" (1974, p. 21). In short, Nietzsche saw institutional education as that which tries to make everyone the same. It was, for him, the attempt to remove all differences in people, and to coin as evil those things which deviated from "normalcy."

In our classrooms, in general, the task is not to trouble the canon of knowledge. It is to obediently dole out certain versions of history, particular stories of science, and accepted works of literature. Nietzsche says, "The laws do not betray what a people are but rather what seems to them foreign, strange, uncanny, outlandish...the incorporation of what was foreign [was treason]" (1974, p. 43). Our education is similar. We teach that otherness is treason. The curriculum is not simply what has been decided students should learn. It also teaches students what to be afraid of. It teaches them to be afraid of not believing in truth. It teaches them to shake in the absence of rules and guidelines. This lacuna of questioning not only teaches fear of the unknown, it encourages students to accept the position that they could not possibly see things or ideas in this world otherwise; they could not give birth to new ideas. Nietzsche speaks of

persons who can never be devotees of knowledge, those who exhibit a “stupid humility,” who say to themselves, “I do not want to see anything that contradicts the prevalent opinion. Am I called to discover new truths? There are too many old ones, as it is” (p. 25). The constant barrage of facts in service to a dead knowledge leads students to disaffection: “There are too many old facts that I have to memorize, why should I bother creating new ones?” This experience of knowledge is one existing outside of relations. While teaching a course on the history and theory of education in the United States, I asked students to reflect on a reading introducing postmodernism. One young woman expressed her fear over losing a foundation for knowledge, and worried about what our lives would mean if we couldn’t consult the authority of knowledge. This fear is based on what we have taught students about knowledge and learning in school. Her concern was that without appeal to a fixed reality, an authority, we would not be able to make meaning of our lives. I would argue, however, that it is when we place the authority in the experience with the other that we actually begin to create meaning. Contrary to her concerns, it is by removing the external foundation of knowledge and placing it with the other that we come to make meaning.

Hostility towards knowledge creation is an indication of the current static view of knowledge. That is to say, the fear of giving birth to otherness is a symptom of being surrounded by so much dead knowledge. When one sees knowledge only as an accumulation, its transformative effect in our lives is denied, and the possibility of seeing knowledge as something other than an end in itself disappears; knowledge is always only a means to something life-changing. Knowledge, as it is given to students, by teachers, through a governmentally determined curriculum is knowledge born *ex nihilo*; it is the virgin birth; it is knowledge untouched, unsoiled by the muddy affairs of human life. It is passed through teachers with no

trace of blood to show from the signs of struggle and intimacy gained from creating knowledge on one's own terms. Nietzsche recognized the difficulty involved in creating new knowledge, and for him it was a bodily experience.

#### A NIETZSCHEAN RELATION TO KNOWLEDGE

Because Nietzsche wrote against seeing knowledge as fixed, it would be surprising at this point to explicate what it is that knowledge "is." Rather, it might be more beneficial to discuss a general *approach to* or *attitude towards* knowledge. He reflects on the complicated and embodied nature of knowledge and experience, musing:

But to stand in the midst of this *rerum concordia discors* [discordant concord of things] and of this whole marvelous uncertainty and rich ambiguity of existence *without questioning*, without trembling with the craving and the rapture of such questioning, without at least hating the person who questions, perhaps even finding him faintly amusing – that is what I feel to be *contemptible*.... (1974, p. 2, emphasis in original)

Here, I would like to point out that not only does Nietzsche accept the idea that knowledge and experience are perhaps beyond categorization, but I would also like to analyze the language he uses to do this. For him, the process is very similar to the way in which one might describe a sexual encounter. "Trembling," "craving," "rapture" – these very sensuous words incite images of intercourse. The production of knowledge is rooted in an intimate act. He further amplifies this relationship:

It makes the most telling difference whether a thinker has a personal relationship to his problems and finds in them his destiny, his distress, and his greatest happiness, or an 'impersonal' one, meaning that he can do no better than to touch them and grasp them with the antennae of cold, curious thought. (p. 345)

This emphasis on the personal nature of knowledge does not suggest – regardless of how much those afraid of introducing such ideas in the classroom protest – that no knowledge, no "content," can be present in schools. The goal of conceiving of knowledge on such personal terms is to create meaningful knowledge. It might serve one better to use Nietzsche's notion of

*rapprochement* as a guide to dealing with the knowledge encountered in the classroom. When speaking of the tension between poetry and prose, he says, “Often there are *rapprochements*, reconciliations for a moment – and then a sudden leap back and laughter” (1974, p. 92).

Establishing friendly relations can be done with received knowledge. We do not have to hate it. We do not have to ban it. We can just come into brief contact with what has been “established” as “knowledge.” Indeed, without it, we would have nothing to work with in the first place, whether we are speaking of classrooms or not. But, we can work with it briefly, and then go about our way. *Rapprochement* keeps poetry, at least, from becoming vulgar and stupid. The stuff of pop songs. I am not asking to have no knowledge at all. I am not asking to make education bubble gum and pop rocks. Perhaps educators, though, may just briefly kiss established knowledge, glance at it, and then be on their way. Perhaps they should not ask their students to make such early and hasty commitments to knowledge. Students have time to be promiscuous. Furthermore, whatever established knowledge we are working with holds within it the possibility of becoming other, of offering us more than we had seen or expected before.

We can catch glimpses here of how a teacher might approach education, of what might be, in Nietzschean terms, a teacher of the future. While we will discuss this in more detail below, we can keep the following in mind, “One hears only those questions for which one is able to find answers” (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 196). As teachers of the future, might we be able to hear questions for which we have, as of yet, no answers, for which we might never have answers? If a teacher of the future is full of the other, there will be times when there are no answers, because the other is not able to be assimilated into my thoughts and knowledge. As I have suggested, teachers of the future will be full of otherness and Nietzsche experienced knowledge creation

through the body. Being full of the other and creating meaning through the body lead us to begin the process of birth with intellectual pregnancy.

## **GIVING BIRTH**

### **INTELLECTUAL PREGNANCY AND BODILY PREGNANCY**

There are a number of ways in which intellectual pregnancy and bodily pregnancy are similar. Amy Mullin (2005) points out that Western culture has overwhelmingly valued only the product of pregnancy (the child) and paid little attention to the intellectual significance of gestation itself. Meanwhile, she argues, intellectual pregnancy is valued in and of itself; the process of developing ideas is regarded as important. I do not want to conflate bodily and intellectual pregnancy; they are not the same thing. But pointing out their similarities, particularly as they relate to the body, is useful in arguing for teaching as giving birth to otherness. Metaphors of giving birth are appropriate for intellectual work, because the body is indeed involved in that process, and the number of actual similarities between intellectual and bodily pregnancy is not minimal.

Still, my argument is not simply that relations generate knowledge and that the metaphor of birth can describe intellectual creativity; birth offers an opportunity to re-envision a bodily relation to knowledge. Many authors have already argued the importance of the body's relation to knowledge (Grumet, 1989; Kristeva; 1991; Seidler, 1994; Shusterman, 2005; Springgay & Freedman, 2009). I extend this line of thinking to suggest that, (1) the language of birth is appropriate for describing intellectual activity due to its inseparability from the body; and (2) because intellectual pregnancy can be understood as an instance of bodily pregnancy, it is appropriate to discuss teaching as an act of pregnancy and giving birth. Ultimately, giving birth ushers in otherness, and so teaching, as giving birth, must be willing to do the same.

Nietzsche describes the body's passionate response to thinking and ideas. One of his most well-known quotes is the oft repeated, "One must still have chaos within, in order to give birth to a dancing star" (2009, p. 15), words suggestive of unusual beauty that point both to his vision of intellectual activity as birthing, as well as to the sense he has of otherness to and in himself. Mullin (2005), however, argues against his use of pregnancy related metaphors in his descriptions of intellectual and creative acts. She writes that Nietzsche "draws a sharp distinction between bodily pregnancy and spiritual pregnancy, and often speaks of himself as pregnant with ideas" (p. 29). Mullin's greater unease with Nietzsche's use of such metaphors is that he always elevates intellectual pregnancy over bodily pregnancy. It is surely the case that Nietzsche often argues that women are incapable of engaging in the difficult task of philosophy because their bodies and minds are preoccupied with maternal concerns and tending to children. Writing in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1989), he claims, "When a woman has scholarly inclinations, there is usually something wrong with her sexually" (p. 88). I will not take up Nietzsche's contentious relationship with women and feminism here.<sup>11</sup> I am merely suggesting that if the body and mind do in fact enjoy an intimate relationship, and if we know through our bodies, there need not be such a startling division in the discourse surrounding intellectual and bodily pregnancy. Indeed, we do a disservice to the work of understanding embodied knowledge in keeping them separate.

#### NIETZSCHE AND THE BODY

According to Eric Blondel (1991), Nietzsche situates the body as the site of interpretation of the world. Blondel writes that one of Nietzsche's aims is "to express this philosophical

---

<sup>11</sup> The reader is directed to Picart (1999), who evaluates four camps of critiques regarding Nietzsche and his relationship to the feminine: "(1) those who believe Nietzsche's writings are essentially feminist; (2) those who believe Nietzsche's writings are at least potentially useful to feminism; (3) those who maintain that Nietzsche's writings are irredeemably misogynistic; and (4) those for whom a possible connection between Nietzsche and feminism is not even a mentionable or speculative issue" (p. 2). Picart's ultimate aim is to "trace the ambivalences of Nietzsche's textual encounters with the feminine" (p. 37). See also Burgard, 1994; Oliver & Pearsall, 1998; and Paley, 1999.



proposition: ‘everything begins through the body’” (p. 206). The body, for Nietzsche, is how we know the world. It is the “detour” the world “out there” makes on its way to our consciousness. Blondel writes, “prior to the body, there is no order or relation or text, and the world is the greatest possible multiplicity” (p. 206). As our body interprets the world through affects, visions of the world become extraordinarily personal. Blondel points out that this leads Nietzsche to declare against those who insist that facts are all there is to the world, “facts are just what there aren’t, there are only interpretations” (p. 139).

Clearly, because of the importance of the body in Nietzsche’s work, he takes odds with the modern understanding of knowledge as transcendent. Modernity has contributed to the notion that knowledge exists out in the world, independent of our contexts, relations with others, and bodies. Nietzsche describes “genuine philosophers,” philosophers of the future, as those who, rather than accept what they have received as knowledge, create their own. He writes that the task of the philosopher of the future “demands something different – it demands that he *creates values*” (1989, p. 136). For philosophers of the future, “Their ‘knowing’ is *creating*” (p. 136, emphasis in original). Nietzsche saw knowledge as something that is created through the body’s experience in the world. For those who have been convinced that knowledge is something waiting to be uncovered, the work of dis-covering that knowledge is nothing but drudgery. This experience of knowledge is one existing outside a relation with the body and the self. Knowledge created through relations has meaning in life; it is the meaning in life.<sup>12</sup> The refusal to understand knowing as creating maintains the mere metaphorical status of intellectual pregnancy. If knowing is indeed creating, then intellectual pregnancy is an instance of bodily pregnancy.

---

<sup>12</sup>Relatedly, Belenky et al. write, “In response to our question, ‘What was the most important learning experience you have ever had?’ many mothers selected childbirth. It is as if this act of creation ushers in a whole new view of one’s creative capacities” (p. 35).

## FULL OF OTHERNESS

On the way to discussing the teacher of the future, we can arrive at the event of giving birth as a teacher through the idea of “fullness.” To give some understanding to this notion, we can consider the following quote by Nietzsche:

...it [the noble type of man] is *value-creating*. Everything it knows as part of itself it honors: such a morality is self-glorification. In the foreground there is a feeling of fullness, of power that seeks to overflow, the happiness of high tension, the consciousness of wealth that would give and bestow: the noble human being, too, helps the unfortunate, but not, or almost not, from pity, but prompted more by an urge begotten by excess of power. (1989, p. 260, emphasis in original)

Fullness, as described by Nietzsche, is a feeling of not being able to help *but* exude one’s values and will. As he says, it is an overflowing, of energy, of exuberance, of the will to life. This fullness is a necessary condition for teaching. But we should consider with a more feminine eye what fullness means.

In French, *Je suis pleine* literally means, “I am full.” But this phrase is never uttered to convey a condition of satiety. One never says, “*Je suis pleine*,” to indicate that one no longer wishes to eat. Rather, it is a slang saying that means something more like, “I’m knocked up” or “I am a pregnant animal.”<sup>13</sup> It is not a stretch in English, either, that the word “full” indicates pregnancy; being full of life; or for instance, “fleshy and with a rounded shape” (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

Nietzsche repeatedly uses the words “full” and “fullness” to describe the philosopher of the future, someone whose ideas are “untimely.” For example, he describes the untimely

---

<sup>13</sup> Younger French-speaking adults confirm this meaning and often giggle, recalling their intentional misuse of the phrase in order to illicit shock from their elders.

philosopher as one who is “full of hopes that as yet have no name, full of new will and currents, full of new dissatisfaction and undertows” (1989, p. 234). Nietzsche is always reluctant to name or describe that of which the philosopher of the future is full. In fact, he cannot name it because it is unknowable from here. This is why the philosopher of the future is unrecognizable, because he or she has within himself or herself alterity, otherness, strangeness that cannot yet be named.

At this point, I acknowledge that giving birth is not only a task for women. Men can give birth, too, when giving birth is seen as a trait of the feminine. Kelly Oliver (1995) notes that much of Western philosophy, including Nietzsche’s work, conflates three distinct terms: woman, the feminine, and the maternal. Traditional definitions situate “woman” as the fact of being born female; the feminine as a characteristic associated with woman, though it may be exhibited by either a man or a woman; and the maternal as the body that produces life (see, in particular, Oliver’s Chapter 5). Alternatively, I argue that the maternal body can be understood as a body that produces otherness and experiences otherness from within, as a body that experiences fullness that must overflow and escape. Describing the maternal body in this way allows it to be situated as a feminine characteristic, and thus the ability to give birth rightly belongs to both men and women. I am not arguing here that teachers should be seen as replacement parents<sup>14</sup> or that male teachers are somehow feminized men in any derogatory sense. I am arguing that the maternal body is a body capable of giving birth, due to its being full of otherness and constantly changing.

In a section of *The Gay Science* (1974), titled *We incomprehensible ones*, Nietzsche makes clear that identity, the characteristic of always only being what one is, and never being other than – that is, not being able to engage in self-overcoming – is not a feature of those fit for giving birth to the future. He states, “We are misidentified – because we ourselves keep growing,

---

<sup>14</sup> See Grumet (1988) for a discussion on the history of teachers-as-mothers.

keep changing, we shed our old bark, we shed our skins every spring, we keep becoming younger, fuller of the future” (p. 371). Juxtaposing Nietzsche’s words here with Oliver’s description of maternity produces interesting results. Oliver (1995) writes, “In birth, one body is violently separated from another. This separation is necessary for the continuation of the species. Yet, it is with the experience of maternity and birth that identity is most powerfully called into question” (pp. 134-5). This is a crucial link in contending that intellectual work is an instance of bodily pregnancy. Intellectual work of the caliber Nietzsche describes denies identity and refuses labels. The intellectual work he bears in mind allows for a self that is always changing. And as Oliver describes, birth and pregnancy are instances in which there is no clear identity. One must endure the inability to be reconciled with oneself.

What we see, then, is that feminine characteristics, including the ability to give birth – for we are no longer excluding men from this process of begetting – rightly belong in the realm of philosophy and teaching. This is because the feminine is that which it is not.<sup>15</sup> It goes beyond identity. Ironically, however, women become fixed as never fixed. Indeed, being fixed – not able to give birth, really not even able to conceive – is the problem of knowledge that Nietzsche confronted in the first place. Giving birth is that which keeps society reproducing itself in infinitely new ways; it is what allows the other to appear. Giving birth helps call our own identity into question, revealing that which is other inside us, both of which Nietzsche argues are imperative in order to always become fuller of the future.

In the end, it seems that Nietzsche was in fact writing favorably about the feminine, whether or not he was able to acknowledge that to himself. It is in the feminine that we are able to be creative, to get over our selves, and be open to the other. Once again, Nietzsche expresses

---

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, Kristeva’s (1986) characterization of the feminine. Femininity has, for a long time, been characterized as changing and in flux.

this in terms of the feminine: “Compared to a genius – that is, to one who either *begets or gives birth*, taking both terms in their most elevated sense – the scholar, the scientific average man, always rather resembles an old maid...” (1989, p. 206, emphasis in original). In this understanding, the maternal body, as an entity full of otherness, becomes a characteristic of the feminine, and not an entity unto itself, furthering the notion that men and women are able to engage in the birthing process.

### **TEACHERS OF THE FUTURE: REGARDING PITY AND CARING**

What kind of teacher or teaching might one encounter then, under a Nietzschean concept of education? What might a teacher of the future look like? For Nietzsche, it is more about style and character than about following rules. It has less (or nothing) to do with a list of “best practices” and more to do with finding love for life and how that gets borne out with students. He speaks of those who are fit to engage in philosophy; we might use his words for those who are fit to educate:

The lack of personality always takes its revenge: A weakened, thin, extinguished personality that denies itself is no longer fit for anything good – least of all for philosophy...All great problems demand *great love*, and of that only strong, round, secure spirits who have a firm grip on themselves are capable. (1974, p. 345, emphasis in original)

Hicks and Rosenberg (2003) note that Nietzsche employs the figure of the philosopher of the future to counteract the ascetic ideal of denial. This is why philosophers of the future must be full and overflowing – they must be beyond ascetism and self denial. They must be “pregnant with a future” (Nietzsche, 1996, p. 65). Nietzsche (1989) states, “More and more it seems to me that the philosopher, being *of necessity* a man of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, has always found himself, and *had* to find himself, in contradiction to his today” (p. 137, emphasis in original). In the language of otherness, this means that teachers of the future will find that being

open to the other and what is other than accepted knowledge puts them at odds with educational directives, plans that insist teachers know in advance what their students need to know. Further, to be pregnant with a future means that what is inside us waiting to come out is not yet knowable or categorizable according to present standards. The future is what cannot be known.

Declaring that pregnancy and birth are appropriate acts of teaching provides at least two fruitful qualities for teachers of the future. First, it emphasizes that teachers are responsible for their ideas, as a mother is responsible for her child, and suggests that caring for these ideas is important. Interestingly, Nel Noddings, describes the act of caring in words that mimic pregnancy and glorify otherness, similar to Nietzsche's descriptors of philosophers of the future: "When the attitude of the one-caring bespeaks caring, the cared-for glows, grows stronger, and feels not so much that he has been given something as that something has been added to him" (2004, p. 47). When one cares, in the sense of accepting the otherness of the other, one becomes more than oneself. This is what Nietzsche says about one's style, one's will, the inability to be *but* oneself, which is always changing. When one is cared for, and not in the romantic sense, one glows (as if with new life). Something has been added to me. There is something new in me. An ethics of care is not only the embodied ethics of caring for another human, it is the embodied ethics of caring for ideas that challenge our very identity, ideas that introduce otherness into the world, that let that which has not yet arrived come into the world on its own terms. This leads us to the second quality for a teacher of the future.

Being a teacher of the future and giving birth requires that teachers relinquish the notion that they can predict or determine what comes from their teaching. This cannot be done with the birth of a child; neither can it be done in the classroom. As an expectant mother, I cannot predict

who this other will be;<sup>16</sup> as a teacher, I cannot predict what meaning will be made from my teaching, nor can I predict who the others in my class will be. As such, one of the tasks of the teacher of the future is to go beyond measurement. “*In what do you believe?* – In this, that the weights of all things must be determined anew” (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 269, emphasis in original). Teachers of the future must be able to trust – themselves and their students – that when they go beyond all measurements, when they go beyond what is recognizable according to the standards of today—they are still engaged in meaningful activity. This is being in relation to otherness. This is letting the other be born. If our bodies are the loci of understanding and our selves are forever changing, there will never be a point at which we can stop and say this student is here on this chart, making the kind of progress that we have said before the student came to this class, that we wanted this individual to make. How can one ever know? For the teachers of the future, “*Measure* is alien to us; let us own it; our thrill is the thrill of the infinite, the unmeasured” (Nietzsche, 1989, p. 224, emphasis in original).

To see teaching as the possibility of giving birth means that education begins to concern itself with the task of creating anew, to experience what has never been experienced before. Nietzsche expresses creation in this way, “What is originality? To *see* something that has no name as yet and hence cannot be mentioned although it stares us all in the face. The way men usually are, it takes a name to make something visible for them” (1974, p.261, emphasis in original). This quote is profoundly about one’s relation with the other and how that relation speaks to creativity and meaning making. The experience of the other is, in Levinas’s own words, being face-to-face with that which cannot be subsumed under current categories of knowledge, that which cannot be named. The ethical moment is when I can see the face of the

---

<sup>16</sup> Donna Porche-Frilot (2006) provides an interesting discussion on the experience of being from a Cajun-African-American heritage and the experience of truly giving birth without being able to predict what the other might look like.

other and still refuse to name it, to tell it what it is, what it must be. I want to be able to see the things that my students and I give birth to; but these things do not have names yet, and because of this, their existence is refuted. Teachers of the future can forget what they have been told is acceptable, what has already been named and defined for them. They will have the strength to recognize as new and beautiful what has never been seen before. This will be the end of the rejection of what is foreign, and the acceptance of the other within teachers and within students. Originality is the begetting of what has never been recognized before. The tragedy, however, is that such otherness often becomes the object of derision and pity in the classroom.

## PITY

Pity, in Nietzsche's view, results in a loss of life-affirmation, that which makes us embrace life and face it with courage. According to him, pity not only hastens the loss of life force, which has initially been brought about by suffering and struggle, but more importantly, it "thwarts the law of evolution...it preserves what is ripe for destruction; it defends life's disinherited and condemned" (1999, p. 51).<sup>17</sup> Pity, then, helps preserve those things which are life-denying; it prevents being born anew. Our pity, as teachers, displays itself in the classroom as the attitude that students are always lacking in some fundamental way. They need what we have. Pity is the hope that our students will make the same meaning of classroom content as we have made of it, if we as teachers, have made any meaning of it at all. It is the desperate hope that they will want and need the same things from education as we need. And when they do not, we feel sorry for them. In this way, we are not helping students give birth to new knowledge. This pity teaches students to preserve what is already dead, knowledge that has already been established and confirmed, but is no longer generative. "Pity stands in antithesis to the tonic

---

<sup>17</sup> See Grosz (2008) for an extended discussion on Nietzsche and evolution. Here, evolution should be understood as the unfolding into infinitely different and creative ways of being. Thwarting evolution, then, would be to maintain sameness.



emotions which enhance the energy of the feeling of life: it has a depressive effect” (Nietzsche, 1999, p. 7). Thus, through pity exhibited by teachers toward students, education takes on the role of stripping students of that which will make them most connected to life, which will allow them to give birth to otherness. Pity is a powerful equalizer in its attempt to make everything the same. Caring, on the other hand, presents the possibility of not resorting to sameness. Caring, which must be displayed toward that to which we give birth, is an openness to otherness.

### CARING AS RESPECT FOR OTHERNESS

According to Noddings (2004),

Caring involves, for the one-caring, a “feeling with” the other. This “feeling with” is not synonymous with “empathy” as it is usually defined. It does not involve projection into the other, nor does it imply a full understanding of the other. Rather, it involves receiving the other. When I care, I receive this variable and never fully understand other into myself. I become a duality. (p. 45)<sup>18</sup>

I briefly discussed Noddings’s ethic of care in Chapter 1 and noted that, while it takes into account our obligation to others in making ethical decisions, it does not insist on the existence of the other before myself. Still, I find her description of caring useful for understanding a relationship in which I want for the other what the other wants for himself or herself. I discuss caring and pity here as a means of describing the actions of one-caring, but in the end remain committed to Levinas’s primacy of the other. For Noddings, caring preserves the distinctive nature of people. It is not the wish that everyone be the same as I am. In this way, caring is a manifestation of difference. When I care about students, it is not the desire to have them reproduce knowledge that I have given to them. I care in order that I can respond to their otherness, and also so that they become more aware of the otherness within them.

---

<sup>18</sup> For more on the topic of receiving the other, see the section titled “Extreme Fidelity” in *The Cixous Reader* (1994).

Further, I would add to Nodding's statement, I become *at least* a duality. In receiving the other, I would think that I would become not *a* multiplicity, but rather, multiplicity. Not ever being able to define or "understand other into myself," surely means that I must leave open the possibility that I am *more than* duality. I am not just either this or either that; the other is unknown and so cannot be reduced to singularity. At any rate, at a moment of caring or in a caring relationship, if I become multiplicity, I become indeed what it is that Nietzsche expresses when he muses about truth in the preface of *Beyond Good and Evil* (1989): "Supposing truth is a woman. What then?" (p. 1). As Nietzsche takes odds with the Enlightenment's legacy of seeing truth as fixed, when he wonders if truth could be a woman, he is expressing the possibility – given women's traditionally being seen as forever changing – that truth itself is always changing. *Perhaps one of the ways that we can loosen the cord around truth is to open ourselves to caring.* If I am in a caring relationship, as understood by Noddings, I become duality (multiplicity), which means necessarily that I cannot see truth or knowledge as fixed.

Seeing one's self as connected to or dependent on others not only informs our understanding of knowledge, it also has implications for the way one approaches ethics. In investigating the various ways people understand the notion of the self, Belenky et al. (1986) found that "People who experience the self as predominantly separate tend to espouse a morality based on impersonal procedures for establishing justice, while people who experience the self as predominantly connected tend to espouse a morality based on care" (p. 102). They continue in their description of relations and find that those who see the self as possible only through relations are more likely to experience "relationships as 'response to others in their terms,'" rather than "considering others as [they themselves] wish to be considered" (p. 102). Considering this, the display of caring by a relational self respects the other. In such a relation,

care is not the attempt to treat the other as I would be treated; it is not pity. It is caring enough to let the other be other, to let the other be born.

This role of caring as being open to difference is at odds with seeing caring as a form of pity. Caring, especially as a feminine trait, has been considered to be a sign of weakness – weakness being a trait Nietzsche wants to avoid at all costs. However, as Paley (2002) points out, “It is not as if Nietzsche objects to compassion, say, without qualification [...]. What Nietzsche finds offensive is not individual acts of compassion, but the ideology of compassion – the system of values which privileges compassion, and other ‘slave-revolt virtues,’ over self-affirmation, risk taking, aestheticism, and experimentalism” (p. 28). Noddings (2004), having already expressed that caring must be a moment when the one-caring opens up to the otherness of the cared-for, upholds a notion of caring which defies being rule-bound:

It seems likely that the actions of one-caring will be varied rather than rule-bound. Variation is to be expected if the one claiming to care really cares, for her engrossment is in the variable and never fully understood other, on the particular individual in a particular set of circumstances. (p. 50)

This is why the institutional imposition of caring cannot work. Variation is not possible in institutions. That is what makes them institutional; they attempt to make everything the same, neutral. This is also tied up in the de-skilling and management of teachers. Administrators and school boards do not trust them to be able to make their own decisions. And Noddings (2004) insists that because of the individual nature of caring, “Those entrusted with caretaking must also be entrusted with making judgments” (p. 53).

“If I care, I must consider the cared-for’s nature, his way of life, needs, and desires” (Noddings, 2004, p. 45). This is not at all the herd mentality that Nietzsche writes so scathingly about, and this is what prevents a caring teacher from reducing himself or herself to acting out of pity. If we come to students as other, rather than forcing upon them what we want them to know

and our own feelings about the subject, we instead respond to the student according to his or her needs.

Nolan, Browne, and Crawford (1998) write about therapists, who, along with teachers and nurses are considered to practice a “caring” profession. Using Nietzsche as a positive example, they say,

maybe there are ways of enabling clients to make the most of this [assets, such as leisure time, afforded by either mental or physical illnesses] at minimum cost, for example by thinking about philosophy. There are important senses in which clients may be made more happy as they are, rather than being made more like some ideal of an employed, responsibility-encumbered middle class person. (p. 257)

This in itself is a revolutionary idea. What if we stopped yearning for students to understand what we teach in the same way we understand it, which ultimately must be in a way that serves our lives? It also takes the notion of pity out of the equation. When I stop hoping that a student will want what I have, then the student is free to make of knowledge what he or she will, and is no longer bound by tests and ideals to uncover the self-same truth as presents itself to me in a text.

Likewise, Noddings, (2004) wonders about a hypothetical student who does not enjoy mathematics, the subject she teaches. She states,

I must help this poor boy to love mathematics and then he will do better at it. What am I doing when I proceed this way? I am not trying to grasp the reality of the other as a possibility for myself...so my student becomes an object of study and manipulation for me. (p. 45)

If our goal is for students to be happy as themselves, we can “Be interested in what [they’ve] got” (Harvey Sacks in Nolan, et al., 1998, p. 257), rather than try to see them as deficient or lacking. This might be a moment, however, when we drop the pity with which we have been struggling in this section. Our students’ struggles with existential questions are not objects of our control. And if the struggle to which I have been referring throughout this chapter holds any

value at all, it is the struggle itself, being face-to-face with the other, which constitutes learning. Students are going to struggle no matter the curriculum. We just feel like it is safer if none of the encounters in the classroom are exposed as political and personal. They all are. It is just more honest when we say that they are.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS: RECOVERY**

What I have been laboring to illustrate, then, is that teachers of the future – and we may never know what and who they will be – will be full. They will be giving birth. Giving birth in this context is in contrast to giving birth as we have taken it for granted for so long. Giving birth does not begin with an individual who requires a midwife to extract a fully formed individual, which in the end, as Socrates proclaimed, was nothing but what was already in me. Giving birth must be rethought so that we, as educators, can understand what care is required for producing new ideas, so that we are not quick to dismiss this student who produces something we are unable to understand. And teachers of the future will only be able to participate in birth through their personal and passionate relations with the other. Nietzsche (1989), concerned about philosophy's lack of overcoming wrote, "Philosophy reduced to 'theory of knowledge,' a philosophy that never gets beyond the threshold and takes pains to *deny* itself the right to enter – that is philosophy in its last throes, an end, an agony, something inspiring pity" (p. 204, emphasis in original). This is where much of teaching is today. This is philosophy that is afraid to give birth. It takes *pains* not to give birth, to keep the child in. The child cannot cross the threshold. It keeps the other from entering the world. It is not even stillbirth. It is keeping the fullness, the secret of the future, in itself. It is prolonging the pain of birth so that it will never have to take care of what comes next. How can one care for the future? There is no controlling it once it has

arrived; indeed, once the future has arrived it is no longer the future. And as we will see in the following chapter, what remains in the future remains nameless and beyond knowledge.

A philosopher [a teacher] – is a human being who constantly experiences, sees, hears, suspects, hopes, and dreams extraordinary things; who is struck by his own thoughts as from outside, as from above and below, as by *his* type of experiences and lightning bolts; who is perhaps himself a storm pregnant with new lightnings. (Nietzsche, 1989, p. 292, emphasis in original)

Knowledge as it has been defined for use in the classroom can be continually redefined if teachers are open to the possibility of responding to otherness and taking responsibility for the other. A caring relation, which allows the other to be born anew, allows teachers of the future to change and be released from fixed notions of knowledge. Being full of the possibility of the other might let educators see that the process of giving birth to new knowledge can be a meaningful experience in the classroom. Moreover, being born is not something that occurs once in our lives, after which we begin our journey to autonomy. We are all of us born many times as we engage in relations with the other. The other calls us into being, calls us to be born again. In this way, we are constantly renewed, always changing, and never autonomous.

Allowing for otherness means that whatever is brought forth in the classroom cannot always (or even mostly) be predicted. It cannot be foretold. Weakness perpetuates the insistence on quantifiable, measurable, predictable results and refuses the notion that learning or knowledge could mean something *more*, could be transformative, could give birth to new ideas and new selves. Seeing intellectual birth in terms of bodily birth means that when I give birth in the classroom, I acknowledge that I am giving birth to otherness, something that is not me. And this is the mark of creativity and a task of teaching, to help students give birth that is neither me nor them, but is something other. This is immeasurable.

## CHAPTER 3: TIME

Heat Wave Breaks (*Now and Then*)

“In the gasp of silence that follows your new  
heartbeat

Do you catch the echo of the one only just now spent?  
Or does Time itself, in that timeless and crystalline  
heat,

Hang transparent, a concept bleached of all content?  
At this moment can you recall what your own life has  
meant?”

(Penn Warren 1998, p. 376)

“Poetry is the foundation which supports history...the  
act of establishing the essence of poetry, first  
determines a new time.”

(Heidegger, 1996, p. 313)

### LIFE TIME

*swarming here-ness rings  
bind inside and outside to  
me and eachother*

(The author, Spring 2002)

### INTRODUCTION

Though there is no specific record of it, considering literature of the day and other simultaneous technological advances, the first clock in the Western world was likely developed in Europe in the 1270s (Crosby, 1997, p. 78). And while the Chinese had time-keeping devices two to three hundred years prior to this, “it is unquestionable that the West was unique in its enthusiasm for clocks...and in its shift from unequal to equal hours” (p. 81).<sup>19</sup> Fast forward to the present, and we find the educator Ira Shor (1980) lamenting:

The start of every new week sees a hundred million Americans going off to work, while another sixty million march to school. The realm of ordinary routines is simply

---

<sup>19</sup> Since at least 2000 BC, the Egyptians had divided night and day into twelve hours each, meaning that seasonal variations made for variable hour lengths.

enormous. The ordinary experiences of life—school, work, family—not only fill time, but they also shape language, behavior and imagination. In the face of unbroken routines, life’s Utopian possibilities fade. (p. 93)

The West’s focus on measuring in general, and measuring time specifically, seems, as Shor points out, to have put us in the realm of extraordinary mundaneness. Crosby notes that time is an unusual thing to measure in the first place, writing, “Measurements are usually *of* something distinctly itself – a hundred meters of road, of meadow, of lake – but a hundred hours, happy or sad, is a hundred hours of...time” (p. 75). So, even when time drags out due to immense boredom with repetition or when it is compressed into almost nothing when we are at the height of pleasure, clocks tick off each second as if it were the same as every other second.

In this chapter, I plan to explore the works concerning time of two thinkers and their assertions that time is an entity which cannot be measured. In fact, in view of the work of Henri Bergson and Michel Serres, I argue that time is more like one of the least measurable forms we encounter in our world, that is, poetry. The goal of reconsidering the structure of time in terms of poetry is to move away from the experience of time as the movement from one instance of sameness to another instance of sameness. Time, considered as the repetition of one moment after another, structures life and experience in such a way that newness and the unexpected are extraordinarily limited. However, because the act of poetry is the act of creation, time understood as such, can be the movement that, rather than foreclosing on otherness, allows it to exist.

## **CONTEXTUALIZING TIME**

### **SCIENTIFIC TIME**

The nature and characteristics of time have been dealt with philosophically and scientifically throughout written history. It was the Greek philosopher Heraclitus who remarked,



“Upon those that step into the same rivers, different and different waters flow. They scatter and gather, come together and flow away, approach and depart” (Kirk, Raven, & Schofield, 1984). This fragment has been perpetuated as “One can never step in the same river twice,” suggesting that from moment to moment, things change, the world changes, and that there is no possibility of true repetition. Something always changes, even if it is the same one experiencing stepping in the river. If I step in a river once, even if the river does not change at all, then by stepping in the river a second time, I have changed. I have changed from the experience of stepping in the river, and I will experience the river differently the second time because of this. It is unclear, therefore, what the measurement of a second or millennium *means*, what that measurement accomplishes, when it has no bearing on what has occurred or been experienced in that time.

Here, I want to offer scientific and logical descriptions<sup>20</sup> of time as provided by modern science, as much of the rest of this chapter will be devoted to descriptions of time which are explicitly in disagreement with such scientific and logical notions. Modern science has proposed that we think time and space together. Isaac Newton was the first to propose a space-time theory (Norton, 1992), which “is produced by combining the theory of linear time with that of Euclidean geometry and just a little further structure” (p. 208). Norton offers these characteristics of a “very simple theory of time:”

The basic temporal facts of some physically possible world are that it has infinitely many instants, extending indefinitely into the past and future. The set of instants is homogeneous: Every instant is exactly like every other. The set is also assumed to be isotropic: The future and past directions are exactly alike. (p. 195)

Though Norton acknowledges that this is a simple outline for a linear theory of time, indeed it seems to be what most people have been taught about time and how it functions. A linear time like this is time in the background, where every instant is a repetition of the previous

---

<sup>20</sup> See Schlesinger (1980) for extended logical treatments of time problems and propositions.

one, and so on forever. But it is clear from experience that every instant is not like every other. The past is not like the future, or at the very least, there is no way of knowing whether the past is like the future. At any rate, Levinas says that the future is what can never be known or grasped. If the future is inaccessible, how would one go about investigating whether the future is like the past?

Peter McInerney (1991), one of the well-known analytic philosophers of time, has developed a list of what scientists and logicians take to be the most fundamental aspects of time. In McInerney's words, the list provides the "temporal characteristics of ordinary worldly entities that are commonly taken to reveal the essential features of time itself" (p. 50). This list, along with the working definition of linear time, should suffice to give us enough understanding about how science deals with, and understands, time and will also provide features to which I can refer back during the remainder of this Chapter in order to help explain and contrast alternative theories of time. In brackets at the end of each description, I provide a one sentence description in lay terms.

1. "Temporal location – that any non-conscious worldly entity exists at some definite location in one temporal coordinate system in which all other worldly entities exist"; [Objects exist at one point in time.]
2. "Temporal extension or duration – that any non-conscious worldly entity occupies some point or set of contiguous points of this temporal coordinate system (particularly if the temporal coordinate system is understood as a dense continuum of points)"; [Objects exist or endure over several points in time.]
3. "Length of duration – that there is a definite size to the temporal extension of any entity, that is size can be expressed as a multiple or fraction of any arbitrarily selected temporal extension;" [The length of an object's existence can be measured by standard and arbitrary measuring systems.]
4. "Temporal divisibility – that any non-conscious worldly entity's duration that occupies more than a single point can be divided into equally real temporal parts without any change in its non-temporal properties"; [Time can be divided up without changing its properties.]
5. "Earlier-later relations – that the temporal parts of an entity are temporally related as earlier or later than each other, and that the temporal parts of any two entities are temporally related as earlier, later, or simultaneous with each other"; [An object has a

past and a present which are separate from each other, and one object may exist before, after, or at the same time as another object.]

6. “Past-present-future features – that if there is a date at which a temporal part of an entity is present, there is an earlier date at which it is future and a later date at which it is past, and that it passes from being future to being present to being past.” [An object exists in a particular time and there is a time before its existence and a time after its existence.] (p. 50)

In short, the construction and understanding of modern time is one that can be laid out on a line and divided infinitely without changing its characteristics. How time feels and how we experience time are said to reveal nothing of the actual structure of time. Furthermore, this line onto which time has been mapped can never be altered, bent, twisted, or looped.

Modern and contemporary philosophers of note have theorized about the structure of time and its importance in our lives. From Kant to Hegel, Heidegger to Sartre, Kristeva to Serres, time has proven to be elusive. Modern notions of time depict it as an entity that moves, as a substance that slips from the “now” into the “then.” Bowers (1987), who characterizes Dewey as a Modern thinker, for instance, notes that for Dewey, time:

was like the ceaseless flow of a river that carries us toward a continually receding horizon. The movement presses forward in a manner that gives experience, in both its temporal and spatial dimensions, a directional quality of unending novelty....Dewey himself expressed this sense of time when he said that we “live forward.” Modernization, as he viewed it, involved this same notion of moving into the future; but he also understood modernization as moving into an expanding horizon of possibilities that could be realized only as people were prepared to constantly adjust their way of thinking to the continual changes in the circumstances of social life. (p. 32)

I briefly discussed the notion of distributed cognition in Chapter 1 to indicate the ways in which our knowledge and understanding find themselves created by interaction with others and with the world. Cole and Engeström (1993) declare that one of the dimensions in which cognition is distributed is in time. They assert that human beings can “‘reach into’ the cultural past, project it into the future, and then carry that (purely conceptual) future ‘back’ into the present in the shape of beliefs that then constrain and organize the present sociocultural

environment of the newcomer” (p. 21). Dewey, as well as Cole and Engeström, offer much more progressive visions of time than the ticking-off of one moment after another. Still, as I will elaborate on below, Dewey’s vision of time remains within the modernist framework, both because it spatializes time and because of the strong sense of intention on the part of the individual, to which I referred in Chapter 1. While Cole and Engeström describe a time that exists between subjects and not within a solitary individual, their sense of being able to know “in the future” or to understand in any way what the future might bring, is problematic, particularly for Levinas (1990) who insists that “The future is what is in no way grasped” (p. 43).

## POETRY

The word poetry is derived from the Greek *poiesis*, meaning to create or form. The *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (1995) provides this definition for poetry:

Distinctive poetry at its best is an “all-in” maximally dense, simultaneous deployment of linguistic resources – sounds and rhythm as well as sense, the bringing-together of numerous strands of meaning, through metaphor and other figures, through ambiguities (often unresolved), controlled associations and resonances, allusions: all of these contributing to a well-integrated, unified effect. (p. 691)

Gerald Bruns (2002) says of the origins of poetry, “the ancients typically regarded poetry as an instance of the dark saying, the *aenigma*, a word that sometimes gets translated as riddle; but unlike a riddle, the enigma’s darkness is not something that can be illuminated, or eliminated, by reason or interpretation” (p. 208). This understanding of poetry, as something that cannot be solved or fully comprehended, points to poetry’s ability to bring us into relation with the other. I do not aim to provide a full account of the history of poetry here; I simply want to propose that the time we experience in our lives is much more akin to poetry than to the standard metaphors of time as an arrow or as a line that we take for granted. Describing the time of life as “maximally dense,” comprised of “numerous strands of meaning,” and “ambiguous” is perhaps

more appropriate and generative of possibilities than time that functions to keep everything the same.

The poet and activist Audre Lorde (2007) describes poetry in this way, “for it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are – until the poem – nameless and formless, about to be birthed, but already felt” (p. 36). She continues, “Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought” (p. 37). Poetry, it seems, connects us with ideas that are not yet born, connects us with the otherness that has not yet been named. Remarking on poetry, Levinas writes, “The proximity of things is poetry...the poetry of the world is inseparable from proximity par excellence, or the proximity of the neighbor par excellence” (in Bruns, pp. 225-26). This is to say, that our relation with the other, the way in which we stand in relation to the other is, for Levinas, poetry. Poetry is the nearness to the other, which is nameless.

In describing poetic work, Stephen Ross (1990), a professor of Architecture, writes, “It is any work that strives to go beyond, to surpass, to apprehend more than that which is explicitly known and make it into meaningful form. It is work that encompasses both reason and imagination” (p. 15). Combining imagination and reason is of utmost importance to counter an ideal of time born in the throes of modernism which is intent on reducing existence to reason and rationality. Ross elaborates on the relationship between imagination and reason: “it is through a sort of imaginative rationality that man transcends that which is known (explicit, proven, done, factual) in order to apprehend un-known dimensions of meaning” (p. 16). Understanding time as a creative process like poetry, which entails more than reason, is paramount to seeing the other’s possibility in time. By positioning time as poetry, I am not saying our lives are poetic (though that can be argued); I am saying that time itself and time alone is capable of generating a novelty and denseness not afforded by linear, metric time. Time itself brings about the other; time that is

not reduced to repetition is what occurs when the other is allowed to come about on its own terms. The attempt to describe time as an entity that is the same from one measured moment to the next is to erase otherness altogether. Time is poetic; it is capable of producing meaning.

Poetry's essence is qualitative, thus in distinction to modern time which is quantitative, time as poetry cannot be measured; it is beyond measure. In the book *Einstein's Dreams* (1993), Alan Lightman writes, "Suppose that time is not a quantity but a quality, like the luminescence of the night above the trees just when a rising moon has touched the treeline. Time exists, but it cannot be measured" (p. 123). Lightman warns in this vignette of time-as-quality that, "Some people attempt to quantify time, to parse time, to dissect time. They are turned to stone. Their bodies stand frozen on the street corners, cold, hard, and heavy. In time, these statues are taken to the quarryman, who cuts them up evenly in equal sections" (p. 127). Here is the cautionary tale of trying to measure time and make it equal to itself. When time is measured, it is transformed from the ability to create into frozen units of lifelessness.

In what follows, I present Bergson's counterpart to measured time, which he terms duration, and discuss how he sees time operating not as an addition to space-time, but rather as an independent and creative phenomenon capable of producing infinitely different possibilities. In this section I also provide examples from literary criticism as well as from the history of science and genetic research that will help contribute to a better understanding of duration. Following the discussion of Bergson's work, I discuss Serres's (1995) understanding of time as "chaotic" (p.58).

## **HENRI BERGSON**

### **BACKGROUND**

While Newton was the first to think time and space together, it was Einstein's theories of relativity that solidified this notion in the minds of physicists and later in the broader culture. Writing in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bergson was the first major thinker to posit that there was more to time than physics had delineated as "time." Specifically, he was arguing against Einstein's theories of relativity (the special theory of relativity in 1905 and the general theory of relativity in 1916), which claimed to provide physical evidence for space-time as such. He argued that what physics had done was to make a spatial representation of time by putting it on a line. During this time, Bergson wrote not only about logical fallacies he claimed were present in relativity (Hayes, 2009, p. 66), but also about the fact that time described in such a way by physicists removed the experience of time that people actually have. His former student, Herbert Dingle, writing in the Introduction to Bergson's *Duration and Simultaneity* (1965), argued, "In other words, the fact that a piece of algebra corresponds to a piece of geometry is sufficient to guarantee the tenability of a theory; what the algebraic symbols or the geometrical figures mean in terms of experience, of observation is irrelevant" (Dingle, p. *xli*).

The argument between Bergson's and Einstein's supporters (it appears that Einstein himself did not address Bergson's objections extensively) largely fell into an academic and historical abyss. Some, including Gilles Deleuze (1990), a proponent of Bergsonian duration, claim that this is due in no small part to experiments that were technologically impossible during the time Bergson wrote being conducted later and verifying many of general relativity's claims. Dingle, writing closer to the time of the disagreements, but after Bergson's death, was clear that both he and Bergson believed that the dismissal of Bergson's critiques of relativity and the lack

of interest in duration were mounted on personal and political grounds. Dingle concludes with respect to Bergson and his charge against the existence of space-time:

I think there can now be no doubt that the “space-time,” which seemed to Bergson on philosophical grounds to be merely an artificial construction, is in fact just that. The many mystical ideas that have been built on the supposed discovery that there is in nature some objective thing called “space-time,” while space and time are merely the subjective products of our arbitrary analysis of this “reality” – these ideas can now be dismissed as purely fictional. (p. xxxvii)

Despite the relative lack of knowledge about this debate in the history of theorizing time, Bergson’s work in the field of time does still enjoy a place of prominence in philosophical circles (Deleuze, 1990). Indeed recently, Hayes (2009), has undertaken an investigation into questions surrounding relativity that were thought to have been solved and has argued that there are good reasons to suspect that ideology, more than evidence, is what has helped relativity maintain its prominence in physics.

## DURATION

Bergson’s main contribution to thinking on time is his notion of duration. As alluded to above, Bergson proposed a theory of duration in *Time and Free Will* (1913), arguing that Kant, following from Newton, had developed and put forth a theory of time that was spatialized. Bergson argued that time as duration was qualitatively different from time understood as a component of space. According to Bergson (1913), space is an entity that is quantitative in nature. Space can be divided and measured and each smaller or larger portion of space is identical to any other portion of space that is measured to be the same size. He states, “There is no need to assume a limit to the divisibility of concrete space; we can admit that it is infinitely divisible...” (p. 114).<sup>21</sup> Duration, on the other hand, is the qualitative experience of time lived. It cannot be quantified and cannot be broken down into smaller units without fundamentally

---

<sup>21</sup> In fact, it should be acknowledged that the “infinite divisibility” of space may not be appropriate, either. This topic and its relevance to ethics will be addressed in a later work.



changing it. Levinas (2000) himself insisted on using the word duration rather than time, because “time measured, clock time, is not the authentic time” (p. 7). To quantify duration is to make a spatial representation of something that is not spatial. To quantify duration is to, “make differences in kind melt into the homogeneity of the space which subtends them” (Bergson, 1998, p. 236-237). Bergson argues that quantifying duration erases that which is most important to our lives, our actual experiences. Drawing on the relationship between time and poetry, measuring duration would be similar to counting the syllables or letters in a poem, expecting the result to yield answers to its meaning. Bergson (1965) reminds us of the importance of consulting duration rather than the clock, because, “this duration which science eliminates, and which is so difficult to conceive and express, is what one feels and lives” ( p. 13).

To be sure, quantification can be extremely useful, and Bergson’s theory of duration does not suggest that it should not be done. But it has a proper *place*. It is very helpful in a number of areas, particularly if one wishes to measure something. At the very root of measurement, however, is the assumption of sameness. I am able to measure because there is a unit of measurement that remains the same. Measurement, then, is the attempt at repetition. It is the attempt to do away with difference and otherness. And the very desire to measure represents a desire to control, because one does not need to measure without some inclination to ignore or erase what is different between two or more entities for one’s own purposes. Clock time, measured time, is this same moment over and over and over again, the purpose of which is to control what happens and when; it is the abstraction of lived time.

Again, for Bergson, lived time is qualitatively different from measured time. Granting that duration is an actual attribute of life allows for recognition of difference, because nothing is the same from one moment to the next, and my actual experience of life has no relation to a

clock. Bergson (1913) asserts that since our emotions and psychic states are qualitative multiplicity, attempting to measure them is to confuse a difference in degree with a difference in kind:

Here [in the depths of consciousness] we find ourselves confronted by a confused multiplicity of sensations and feelings which analysis alone can distinguish. Their number is identical with the number of the moments which we take up when we count them; but these moments, as they can be added to one another, are again points in space. Our conclusion, therefore, is [there exists a] multiplicity of states of consciousness, which cannot be regarded as numerical without the help of some symbolic representation, in which a necessary element is *space*. (p. 87, emphasis in original)

Adages such as “Time flies when you’re having fun,” or, “Time just seems to drag on” or the feeling of being “pressed” for time, get at this notion of duration. They speak to the experiences we have of time that do not map onto a line of time. A time line is irrelevant to the ways in which we encounter our world. Our emotions and psychic states are qualitative, as are our experiences in the world. Bergson says they flow from one into another; they cannot be divided or described quantitatively. Arguing against Empiricism’s tendency to isolate one psychic state from another, as a series of juxtapositions, Bergson (1996) imagines an alternative, which “is to replace ourselves in pure duration, of which the flow is continuous and in which we pass insensibly from one state to another; a continuity which is really lived, but artificially decomposed for the greater convenience of customary knowledge” (p. 243). This is to say that our experiences and emotions are divided up for the sole purpose of having them conform to standard representations of knowledge.

In fact, what we gain from living and acting in duration is human freedom, the ability to create. Because, unlike an empirical explanation of time in which human action is “the resultant of a mechanical composition of elements,” in duration, Bergson (1996) “saw the action issue from its antecedents by an evolution *sui generis*, in such a way that we find in this action the

antecedents which explain it, while it also adds to these something entirely new, being an advance upon them as the fruit is upon the flower” (p. 186). In this depiction of duration, one sees that the ability to create what has not been named in advance, or to let evolve what could not be predicted, stems from our selves being in constant relation to, and inseparable, from a continuity which brings about newness or otherness.

The tendency to spatialize time springs from the physical laws of the universe exerting themselves on our consciousness and perception of the world. It is not, Bergson argues, the real condition of time as a component of space that pushes us to understand time in such a manner. It is something much less objective, yet something extraordinarily pervasive and potentially destructive. As one of Bergson’s translators reveals,

Bergson well understood, then, that it is our practical routine that has militated against a renewal, or deepening, of our perception; that ‘our senses and consciousness have reduced real time and real change to dust in order to facilitate our action upon things.’ (Jacobson, 1965, p. v)

This issue of habit speaks to what Shor bemoaned at the start of this chapter: our habits, and not natural laws, encourage us to live as if repetition were possible. Unfortunately, this drive toward repetition prevents us from seeing the world anew and directs us toward a life of false security in which we hope we can predict what comes next. Following suit, Kaustuv Roy (2005), one of the few to address the significance of duration in the field of education, writes, “Conventional time as iteration-repetition is homogenous, but our actual experience of time is not. The experience of time is qualitative and creative but loses this quality in the overwhelmingly metricized and serial structure onto which experience is projected” (p. 448). We see then, that the drive to measure time is a result of habit, not a force of nature, and that what is at stake in resurrecting a time of experience is the freedom to create, as well as, a deeper more meaningful connection to the world around us. The experience of duration is not about the limited existence of action on

objects, about the habit of performing actions on the world out there. Recall, for instance, that Levinas insists that living for the other means that one neither acts “on” the other, nor uses the other for one’s own purposes. Measuring time has the specific intent of using the world in such a way. Duration, as a connection to what we have not been able to see before and what has not yet been named, does not have any intent to act. Duration, like poetry, is an opening towards otherness with its richness and multiplicity.

I can now return to address two of McInerney’s (1991) attributes of time in order to draw out the distinctions between linear time and time as duration. Taking numbers 1 and 2 together, one sees that these descriptors are of a spatialized time<sup>22</sup>; in fact, 1 is the description of a temporal “location.” This establishes time as a component of space, and as such, it can be ‘coordinated’ with other locations in space. McInerney’s second condition for time adds that any entity occupies several of these locations in time and that all of these points are contiguous, meaning they cannot be separate from one another on the timeline. However, duration (an example of a moment in duration might be how long it takes me to make meaning of a book), cannot be represented; it cannot be placed on a line; it cannot be imagined in any discrete manner. To do so fundamentally changes the nature of duration, which means that one would no longer be speaking of duration at all. Elizabeth Grosz (2004), who has written extensively on Bergson and duration notes, “The living present, that which we concretely experience, has its own duration; it has no minimal units, no instants or length, except as those imposed retroactively through analysis” (p. 176).

Referring to numbers 3 and 4 on McInerney’s list, we see that these two set up the arbitrary measurement and divisibility of time. The measurement of time creates the repetition

---

<sup>22</sup> Note that McInerney’s use of the word “duration” in the descriptions of time does not refer to duration in Bergson’s sense. McInerney is using “duration” in the traditional sense, meaning the length of time something exists.

of sameness not present in duration. Duration is meant to be distinct from descriptions of the repetition of time, of understanding time as one instant of sameness followed by another instant of sameness. As Grosz (2004) explains, “When duration is divided, which fundamentally transforms its nature, it can be regarded as time, the scientific, measurable counterpart of space; but in itself, and not subordinated to the exigencies of practical and scientific action, it is indivisible, continuous, inscribed by movement, always a whole” (p. 183).

Duration is the real, lived experience of time, unable to be divided and measured, because there is no standard unit of measurement for experience. The concept of experience defies standardization. As Bergson points out, “Time could be enormously and even infinitely accelerated; nothing would be changed for the mathematician, for the physicist or for the astronomer. And yet the difference with regard to consciousness would be profound” (Bergson 1965, p. 13).

Because duration is a qualitative, immeasurable attribute of the world, and the experience of duration can last, according to clocks or calendars, as long as that quality must take to be experienced, this situates the past and the present differently from the way one understands them in traditional descriptions of time. In a linear presentation of time, the past is something that has occurred and is no longer occurring. Such a description requires one to make a spatial location of one moment and assert that another moment comes after it in spatial coordinates. Duration, however, requires a different understanding of how past and present function, of how and when they exist.

## PAST AND PRESENT

For Bergson, past and present actually co-exist with each other. Grosz (2004) describes Bergson’s past and present like this, “The past is that which no longer acts, and although it lives

a shadowy and fleeting existence, it still *is*, it is real” (p. 175, emphasis in original). And while Bergson insists that time is not a component of space, he acknowledges that talking about it or understanding it necessarily leads us to describe it in spatial terms. So, seemingly ironically (though it is not actually ironic; it is a result of the limits of our language and representational abilities), Bergson depicts the past as a cone. The further back in the past an event has occurred, the wider the cross-section of the cone where it is located. At the most “contracted” moment, the tip of the cone, the past intersects with the body to give birth to the present.

If we have in duration an understanding of time apart from measurement and discrete points of time, then what we understand as the “present” is going to mean something different from this moment here to which I am currently attending. The present is going to mean more than the tick of a second. “The present, then, is not an instant, a measurable and regulated moment; it is a dynamic concept that extends itself to include the fringes that touch both past and present. The length of the present varies according to the continuity that it assumes, the duration it occupies” (Grosz, 2004, p. 177).

Bergson says that the past is always co-existent with the present and that the past is never gone, never dead. Distinct from notions of the present slipping away into a receptacle called the past, in duration, the past is what is elongated, eventually giving birth to the present. The past contains infinite possibilities, and is infinitely creative. Bergson argues that the present is never able to exhaust all these possibilities and that these possibilities are real. These possibilities may become actual (they may actually manifest in our present), if we call them from the past and reactivate them in the present. That is, some of the possibilities existent in the past come to fruition in the present. But the past is always real and always with us and cannot exhaust all its possibilities. Virtuality is the possibility of infinite newness. As Grosz (2004) describes it: “The

virtual is the condition of being otherwise than what something is at this moment, its capacity for self-modification, elaboration, overcoming... The virtual is another name for the inherence of the past in the present, for the capacity to become other” ( p. 252). Understanding the role of infinite newness and possibility through time is fundamental to understanding otherness.

Virtuality, this ability to bring forth infinite possibilities from the past does not just represent, but *is* difference, it is otherness, it is what keeps the present from being but a repetition of the past. In the virtual, which is real, but not yet actual, the other exists. But, the virtuality of the past is never extinguished. The infinite virtual possibilities (meaning they are possible but are not yet actual) of the past continue to exist as possibilities of living in our present.

Grosz (2004) offers a succinct image of how, in Bergson’s theory of duration, the past operates to create the present:

Each moment carries the whole of the past. This is what is meant by the past in general: the past does not come after the present has ceased to be, nor does the present become, or somehow move into the past.<sup>23</sup> Rather, it is the past which is the condition of the present; it is only through its preexistence that the present can come to be. Bergson does not want to deny that succession takes place; of course, one present replaces another, but such real or actual succession can take place only because of a virtual coexistence of the past and the present, the virtual coexistence of all of the past with each moment of the present. ( p. 182)

As Grosz’s description suggests, the past is always present, though less accessible than the present. Still, and this is important, the past is what makes the present possible. And, what we traditionally conceive of as the past exists in reality with the present. They occupy the same experiential (not metric) space. The movement of time is only possible when meaning is created and something new and other appears. This understanding of the way time functions also has an impact on the way teachers and students approach historical works of literature. Below, I offer

---

<sup>23</sup> The traditional view of the past and present presents an interesting anomaly in the time line. In such a representation of time, the past is what occurs in the future, because the past occurs after the present comes into being, rather than before the present. In duration, the past indeed occurs before the present, making the present possible.

another example of duration, by way of literary studies, which illustrates the importance of understanding time as duration and its implications for otherness.

#### THINKING *OTHELLO* IN DURATION

It is not an unusual discussion in literary studies to wonder how one should read past works. Does one read them in the context of the present? Does one try to access the context of the past? And might one erase the otherness of the work, the difference of the past, by trying to understand it apart from its historical context? Thinking in duration, rather than in time, opens up different possibilities of responding to these questions. Below, I argue not that thinking in duration gives answers to these and related questions, but rather, that thinking in duration casts these questions in a different light. Ultimately, thinking through literature by means of duration does not provide ways to avoid erasing otherness or allow us to live in a decontextualized present, ignoring the past. Thinking through literature durationally, I propose, helps one think and act ethically.

To the same degree that one is concerned with obliterating otherness in the past, one must be concerned about doing so in the present. It is not a different kind of concern. The present cannot be theorized as sameness while the past is theorized as other, because each moment of the present is suffused with the entirety of the past. The concern, not unfounded or minimal, is that when we look to the past, we erase otherness by understanding the past in terms of the present. Take the case of Shakespeare's classic *Othello*, a piece of literature that has produced numerous and varying interpretations about the construction of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.<sup>24</sup> Boose (1994), for instance, argues that *Othello* should be read in the appropriate historical context, with the understanding that racial categories during Shakespeare's time were not fixed in the ways they are today. Neill (2005), on the other hand, uses *Othello* as a tool for

---

<sup>24</sup> See Adney (2010) for a review of the many ways in which *Othello* has been interpreted.



investigating the history of race theory via criticisms and performances of the work. Still another perspective on teaching *Othello* comes from O'Dair (2000) who, though she realizes the importance of historicizing race in the work, warns that doing so can result in “a kind of escapism when the racial issues are seen as too distant from the past” (deGravelles, February, 21, 2010, personal communication).

Writing on the difficulties involved in teaching *Othello*, deGravelles (2011) submits that the play should be taught with a focus on responsibility. The responsibility lies, she says, not in adhering to the text itself or its historical context, nor to the intentions of the author or any representation of the Bard. Instead, following Eppert's (2002) work on historical trauma, deGravelles deems the proper ethical relationship is one which is concerned with those who are “harmed in and by the text: historically and in the present, including, occasionally, our students” (p. 171). I agree that there is no impetus to privilege a relationship with the text or author over the lives of those who are in actuality harmed by the text, in the past or otherwise. Still, I argue that responsibility lies in thinking through *Othello* durationally, as it will not only allow those who have experienced trauma at the hands of the text to express that trauma, but will also allow *time* (and thus that which is other) to continue to express itself in ways that have not yet become apparent. By this, I mean that we can continue to situate *Othello* historically, we can continue to read it with the lens of racial conflicts that have occurred since the writing of the play, and we can (and should) attend to those who have experienced its traumatic repercussions. The moment of ethical action comes in realizing that none of these approaches is going to be complete, and that each time *Othello* is read, the responsibility is to welcome the otherness that comes from that reading.

Worries over whether to read *Othello* as an artifact from the past or as a commentary on the present dissolve when duration, rather than linear time, is taken into account. These and similar concerns are fundamentally about the nature and structure of time, how time works, and what happens when time passes. In duration, *Othello* is still part of the present; as such it can be read in various ways. Understanding that duration places the past with the present does not mean that we are free to mine the past in order to make any meaning of it we choose. Our ethical duty is to let the other call us forward, not to pick and choose what to bring forth. And while focusing on trauma generated by the work is important, my fear in hierarchizing responsibilities with the intention of tending to those who express their harm or whom we see as having been harmed, is that we begin to limit what is seen as valuable, or even traumatic. After all, someone will have to determine whether one's particular experience can be categorized as traumatic.

In the end, I agree with deGravelles's claim that though "reading and thinking about *Othello* as marking historical trauma is beginning a likely impossible, and many will argue misguided, project of denying [Shakespeare's] authority and decontextualizing the play as a representation with a history,...it is important work" (p. 171). Nevertheless, I would argue that there is much important work to be done in denying the authority of a metric time that has served to strip so much otherness and unexpectedness from experience. Recognizing duration as a reality maintains the possibility of acting ethically towards those who have been harmed, but also allows us to respond to the other which has been covered up by time. In this way, the ethics that appears when time is understood as duration affects what can be known. Taking two meanings of knowing, duration (1) allows us to know the past because the past exists now; but (2) it simultaneously limits the reach of our knowledge, because we can no longer claim to know, finally, the past in its infiniteness, and thus in its otherness.

## MICHEL SERRES

### BACKGROUND

Michel Serres's work marks one of the truly innovative approaches to understanding time differently. Like Levinas, he attributes much of the ability to re-conceive time to the work of Bergson, arguing that since Bergson's insights into the nature of time, the entire methodology of investigation has offered the ability to change and shift: "The system's 'matter' has changed 'phase,' at least since Bergson. It is more liquid than solid, more airlike than liquid, more informational than material" (Serres, 2004 p. 121). This flexible language regarding time points to Serres's tendency to reach "back" into history and extract lost, hidden, intentionally covered-up meanings that have been dispelled in favor of creating a single clear and linear path, portrayed as *the* history. In fact, Serres likens himself to Bergson, as both of them were largely rejected by their immediate academic peers. In *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time* (2004), Serres elaborates on his immense difficulty in finding an intellectual "home," because of his deep interest in both the humanities and the sciences.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, his concern for bringing the sciences and humanities together frames his approach to rethinking time. Serres explains that the modern world has cast aside the humanities, as they represent the past, that which is no longer generative and, in light of our infatuation with the sciences, that which is not capable of reason. Our insatiable appetite for Truth, knowledge, and science, has drawn a line in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, demarcating anything in the past as unreasonable. Serres (2004) reports that the traditional approach to understanding time as linear and metricized makes him think of "those ancient diagrams we laugh at today, which place the Earth at the center of everything...to satisfy our

---

<sup>25</sup> Serres holds "two Baccalauréat degrees, one in advanced mathematics, the other in philosophy; three undergraduate degrees, in mathematics, philosophy, and the Classics—Latin and Greek; two highly selective entrance examinations to two most prestigious schools, one in science, the other in literature; an Agregation in philosophy with a certificate in science" (Egéa-Kuehne, 2006, p. 9).

narcissism... This diagram allows us permanently...to be not only right, but to be righter than was ever possible before” (pp. 48-49). And, as Serres comments, “It can never be demonstrated whether this idea of time is true or false” (p. 48).

## SERRES AND METAPHORS OF TIME

While clearly influenced by Bergson’s freeing of time from space, Serres’s metaphors of time can offer a more accessible way to understand time stripped from its position on a line. Serres offers many different metaphors of time, all of which help elucidate historicism, science, and the humanities in new and unconventional ways. Denise Egéa-Kuehne (2006) offers a review of a number of them, pointing out that Serres’s ability to seemingly travel through time, making unexpected connections, allows him to argue for the place of wisdom in learning (p. 12).<sup>26</sup>

The links between Bergson’s and Serres’s understandings of time are strikingly visible. For both of them, whatever it is we call the past is not removed from us. It is not separate. For Bergson, again, the past is always present, though perhaps more difficult to access. Likewise, for Serres, there is nothing out-of-date about what we call the past. All that has happened has done so in our time. As Egéa-Kuehne (2006) says of Serres “Choosing to ignore ‘temporal distance,’ refusing to think time along some historicized linear time-line, Serres consequently considers all ‘genres, authors, books, myths,’ in the same time frame” (p. 11). She notes, too, that Serres, “sees any break in time as ‘a dogmatic exclusion’ where all that is non-‘contemporary’ is rejected into antiquity, or archaism” (p. 9). While Bergson’s depiction of time as a cone can be somewhat difficult to comprehend, Serres’s use of metaphors lends a degree of accessibility to rethinking time that Bergson’s work might not. Interestingly, too, Serres (2000), unlike Bergson,

---

<sup>26</sup> Egéa-Kuehne (1998) discusses Serres’s metaphors of the car, Arlequin turned Pierrot, the river, footsteps in the snow, flames, a folded handkerchief, and a father frozen in time.

has explicit interest in the other, stating that “There is no learning without exposure, often dangerous, to the other” (p. 8). Indeed, Levinas’s main criticism of Bergson, in spite of his debt to him in rethinking time, is that the one who experiences Bergson’s duration is one not in relation, one not called forth by the other, but a lone monad in the world.

Of his own work on time, Serres (2004) states, “The classical theory is that of the line, continuous or interrupted, while mine would be more chaotic. Time flows in an extraordinarily complex, unexpected, complicated way” (p. 58). Serres often remarks on the chaotic ways in which time “flows,” but it is important to note that Serres has pirated the typical reference to water and rivers in relation to time. Unlike Dewey’s vision of the river of time flowing forward into the future, which still suggests a linearity, Serres favors a more accurate description of the way rivers indeed flow when thinking of time. Apollinaire, the French poet, had written that time flows like the Seine, invoking the traditional image of time passing from the future into the past. Serres corrects this image, writing, “He hadn’t noticed the countercurrents or the turbulences. Yes, time flows like the Seine, if one observes it well” (p. 58). Serres goes farther, even, saying, “Time doesn’t flow; it percolates. This means precisely that it passes and it doesn’t pass. I’m very fond of the theory of percolation, which tells us things that are evident, concrete, decisive, and new about space and time” (p. 58). Moreover, when discussing the foundation of Rome, he tells of the clepsydra, the water clock. Before the Tiber River is filled with the wheat and grains and atoms that cause the eddies and whirlpools that remind Serres (1991) of how time indeed moves, pure water, is literally a “water thief;” it steals time.<sup>27</sup> “Let sand flow into the river, pour grains of wheat into this silt-laden water, and everything changes in the mixture. . . . All of time is transformed; it does not flow as it did before” (p. 266). In contrast, the clepsydra, the thief, “is

---

<sup>27</sup> See Critchley (2010) for the etymology of “clepsydra,” the philosophical significance of time and the clepsydra, and their importance in the life of a philosopher.

immobilized in the banks of sand to which the hourglass of wheat attaches” (p. 267). The clepsydra no longer works. The clock measuring constant, linear flow no longer works.

In *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time* (2004), interviewer Bruno Latour points out that many critics of Serres’s work, while noting it has an aesthetic quality and is interesting in its own right, have dismissed it as poetry because it moves quickly from one period of history to another with seemingly little in the area of connections or so-called evidence. Serres rebuffs him, saying, “What a sign of the times, when, to cruelly criticize a book, one says that it is only poetry! *Poetry* comes from the Greek, meaning ‘invention,’ ‘creation’ – so all is well, thank you” (p. 44). Zembylas (2002), an educational theorist who finds Serres’s work productive and insightful, too, writes favorably of the poetics of Serres’s work, waxing, “Serres uses scientific concepts throughout his work (e.g. chaos, noise, singularity) in both metaphorical and aesthetical manner. His poetic and metaphorical language is powerful in pointing out analogies and connections that are truly unpredictable by his reader” (p. 485).

Before moving on to the discussion of metaphors of time in Serres’s work, it is now possible to address numbers 5 and 6 on McInerney’s (1991) list of essential features of time. Numbers 5 and 6 address “earlier-later relations” and “past-present-future features” of time (p. 50). Serres’s work is particularly appropriate for challenging these notions due to his robust vision of time as chaotic. In number 5, the separation of past and present is made explicit as points of past and present are separated on a line with some events occurring earlier or later than other events. In Serres’s percolating and ruptured time, it is impossible to lay events out on a flat surface and measure the distance between them. I think it is worth noting here that while Serres uses different metaphors to help explain time, he argues that time actually functions in these various ways. He is not simply being “poetic” about time. For Serres, time *is* poetic in that it

has the ability to create. Further, earlier-later relations will be difficult to establish in a time in which all genres and ideas are “of the same time.”

Looking at number 6 brings up similar problems for Serres’s time. As with Bergson, past, present, and future do not hold the definitions or positions they do with traditional time. One could make a weak argument against the past-present-future features on ideological grounds by positing that we tend to denigrate whatever has occurred in the past as being out-of-date, and still maintain the structure of traditional measured time. In this case, one would need only to argue for an elevated status of the past, but there would be no need to adjust the description or features of time. But this would not satisfy the principal argument of Serres. He maintains that not only should we not deride the past as displaying less progress than the present, but also that there is no difference between them. He often points to Lucretius, the Roman poet and philosopher, to support this argument. Because science has “progressed” beyond mechanistic materialism, it has left Lucretius in the dust, so to speak. Serres (2004), on the other hand, makes the case that Lucretius is in fact our contemporary, because “Lucretius, *in his own time*, really was already thinking in terms of flux, turbulence, and chaos, and ...*through this*, he is part of our era, which is rethinking similar problems” (p. 47, emphasis in original). Moreover, bringing Levinas back into the fold, there is no future that already exists some distance away from our time, because the future is precisely that which cannot yet be fathomed. In Levinas’s (2000) words, “the future is what is not grasped ...The future is the other” (p. 229). It does not already exist, waiting to be dis-covered. The future does not exist out there, nor does it pass into the present and then to the past. The past brings about the present. The future is what cannot be known.

In trying to understand the connectivity between disciplines and competing versions of history, Serres employs a number of different metaphors for understanding time and how it functions. Egéa-Kuehne (2006) discusses several of those metaphors and explains how they contribute to a “New Landscape for Knowledge,” one that “proposes to break two barriers: one between past and present, and the other, relatively recently established, between disciplines” (p. 10). Here, I will discuss two of Serres’s metaphors in detail: the metaphor of the car, for which I give an extended example in the area of human genetics; and the metaphor of ichnography, born from Serres’s retelling of the foundation of Rome.

#### THE CONTEMPORANEITY OF THE CAR

Serres’s metaphor of the car illustrates that whatever time we live in is the result of a mixture of ideas and inventions from all eras. Remarking on the car, he offers:

Consider a late-model car. It is a disparate aggregate of scientific and technical solutions dating from different periods. One can date it component by component: this part was invented at the turn of the century, another, ten years ago, and Carnot’s cycle is almost two hundred years old. Not to mention that the wheel dates back to Neolithic times. (2004, p. 45)

The contemporaneity of the various parts of the car – so many parts from different eras existing at the same time in one object – represents one of the ways in which Serres argues time functions. The past still lives on here in the present, and all the parts that remain from the past allow for the present to come into being. Notice that the car metaphor is in line with duration’s treatment of past in present, as the present (car) is only possible because the past already exists (wheels and other various parts). Noting that linear time is “a confusion between time, and the measure of time,” Egéa-Kuehne writes that “the car represent[s] a non-metric variety of time” (p. 10).

Just as the car embodies a mixture of time in one durational moment, the human body can be viewed in a similar way. Of course, evolutionary theory suggests that our current physiology



and psychology have changed and adapted via mutations and environmental pressures from the past. But a look at endogenous retroviruses (EnRVs) in humans suggests that it is not simply change over (measured) time that carries out evolution. EnRVs suggest that our current form as humans relies heavily on organisms that were thought to be “out-of-date.” The presentation of this example from human genetics also supports an argument for the importance of embodied knowledge, of placing importance on the role of the body in understanding how time works through us and how bodies participate in consciousness. I remind the reader here that Bergson argued that the present comes into existence when the past contracts and meets the body.

An investigation into EnRVs reveals that the past from which we so often separate ourselves, is with us in a fundamental way, in our very genetic composition. “Endogenous retroviruses are retroviruses thought to be derived from ancient infections of germ cells in humans, mammals and other vertebrates....Most retroviruses (such as HIV-1) infect somatic cells, but some can also infect germline cells and once they have done so and have been transmitted to the next generation, they are termed endogenous” (Enserink, 2006, p. 4). Somatic cells are the cells of which most of the body is made. Germ cells are the sperm and egg cells, different from somatic cells because they contain the genetic information of only the man or the woman, and not the combined genetic information resulting from reproduction. Endogenous means originating from within, so once the germ cell is infected with the virus, the virus may be passed on to the offspring’s germ cells, meaning that the virus originates from within the offspring, that the offspring is not infected by an outside source. Until recently, most EnRVs were described as “just ancient fossils, having first integrated many of millions of years ago” (Enserink, 2006, p. 4).

Furthermore, these ancient retroviruses had been considered defective, in that they were thought to no longer be able to produce infectious virus particles. This impotence has been attributed to the “mutations accumulated over the millennia...render[ing] such viruses dysfunctional” (p. 4). In some sense, they were unable to communicate with the more recent combinations of the human genome. Most recently, however, a team of scientists in France, led by Thierry Heidmann, has been able to “awaken the ancestor of an entire family of HERVs [Human Endogenous Retroviruses]” (in Enserink, 2006, p. 4). To put this in the language of duration and otherness, EnRVs, part of our ancestral past thought to have been long extinct and no longer accessible, have been reawakened, revived.

There is even more to the story of retroviruses, though. Earlier work in the field of EnRVs conducted on sheep found that Endogenous sheep viruses “are abundantly expressed in the epithelia of the female genital tract” (Dunlap, et al., 2006, p. 14391). Moreover, it turns out that not only are these ancient retroviruses present in the human genome – in fact, they comprise approximately five to eight percent of the human genome (p. 14392) – but they may also play a crucial role in the preservation of human beings.

Evidence has recently accumulated, suggesting that endogenous retroviral gene expression may be involved in mediating the cell fusion observed in the placenta. Indeed, high expression of retroviruses is one of the characteristics of the human syncytiotrophoblast<sup>28</sup>. The observation of retroviral particles in the placenta, along with the presence of fused placental cells morphologically reminiscent of virally induced syncytia, led to the proposal that an ancient retroviral infection may have been a pivotal event in mammalian evolution (Frendo, et al., 2003, p. 3567). In short, the ancient retroviruses that were thought to be nothing but leftovers from the

---

<sup>28</sup> The trophoblast is the outer layer of the early part of a forming embryo; it goes on to form the placenta. The outermost part of the trophoblast is the syncytiotrophoblast, which embeds itself into the uterine wall so that the embryo can obtain nutrition from the mother.

past, anachronisms, are actually necessary for human embryos to attach to the uterine wall.

These ancient retroviruses are what allow the embryo to dissolve uterine cells, attach itself to the uterus, and ultimately gain nutrients from the mother's body. In the same way as a car would not function without the Neolithic wheel and humans could not continue without ancient retroviruses, time itself would not function without the enrichment of the past in the present. In each case, the origination of novelty comes about through the resurfacing of a never inert past.

Thus, one can see that the early insights provided by comparative physiology have begun to show their benefit in human research. That is, the "ancient fossils" in our genome, without which we thought we could do, are turning out to be indispensable in the ability to form and carry human beings to term in pregnancy. This could serve as a powerful reminder that those ideas we consider to be "out of date" are in fact elemental in our being able to continue. When it comes to our very physiological make-up, our bodies are part of, and experience, a time which includes ancient genetic information. It is not only that these retroviruses are present, part of our body-consciousness, but also that these ancient retroviruses are what help preserve our very humanity. As Grosz, (2004) states, "the new can be formed only through a kind of eruption or interruption of the present that does not come simply as a gift from the future but is a reworking of the past so that the present is different from itself, is open to an eruption" (p. 252). To speak of genetics in ways that solidify the present, the unchangeability of the present and the inability to get beyond what one already is, to get beyond identity, is problematic. Our genetic makeup reveals that our bodies are like cars, are like poetry, are like time. There is no past from which we can separate. Nothing is ever lost. That which we consider to be the past is really here in the present. The past is what makes the present possible. Further, this understanding of our selves as inseparable from what we thought was gone or inert, underscores the multiplicity of which we

are created. We are never just one thing here, in the present. We are time-indexes of creation, experiencing the past as the present, on our way to creating newness and understanding that otherness is here, and is yet to come. We are poetic. The realization that the past is not defunct, but endures, allows for the possibility of creating and recognizing otherness.

#### TIME AS ICHNOGRAPY

One of the metaphors for time that Serres uses has been largely overlooked, but it is one that speaks to the denseness and multiplicity that Serres sees in time; it is indicative of the productiveness and otherness that is found in time. In *Rome: The book of Foundations* (1991), Serres recounts the founding of Rome: it is doubly founded on death, first as Hercules murders Cacus, who stole his oxen; again founded on death when Romulus murdered his brother Remus. Through the telling of this foundation, Serres depicts time not as boustrophedon, but rather as ichnography (p. 16-37).

Boustrophedon is an ancient writing practice in which one line is written from left to right and the next is written from right to left, and so on. It comes from the Greek *bous* meaning ox and *strophe* meaning to twist or turn. The word itself is meant to indicate the movement of oxen plowing a field, back and forth in straight lines. Serres likens the oxen's tracks in the myth of Hercules to boustrophedon, drawing on the imagery of the oxen being led backwards by Cacus to the cave, thereby tricking Hercules into thinking the hoof prints were leading the oxen in the opposite direction. In this metaphor of time, lines are drawn, there is a simple back and forth, one, perhaps two stories are told by the hoof prints. But this back and forth, this linearity, tells only the smallest possible fraction of history. This is singularity. Boustrophedon tells us nothing of the other possibilities, of the other voices in history.

Serres prefers to understand time as ichnography. Ichnography is the art of drawing a ground plan for a building, for drawing the foundation, as it were. But Serres does not leave the oxen out of the foundation. When the calamity ensues, when Hercules, after hearing the bellows from the oxen, finds Cacus hiding in the cave with the stolen herd, the commotion causes the oxen to stampede, to run in all directions. The stampede creates the foundation for a new time. It represents the sheer multiplicity of story, perspective, possibility, otherness. We experience and understand time as linear because one line has been drawn. Multiplicity and otherness have been silenced. Time understood as utterly separate from a line, from a progression, is this maximally dense entity, allowing that which has yet to be named to appear. Time is the weaving in and out of multiplicity. It creates new connections, moves beyond what is already known. Time is not a line with the past behind us, the present here, at hand, and the future in front of us. Time is an entity through which we experience and create, in which we begin to see the other.

Speaking on the productiveness of ichnography as time, Serres (1991) wonders,

What if the sundial, the true ichnography, or the compass card in its place were not only passive but active – what if it were a rudder?...And if – hallelujah – we had the freedom to unship the rudder, to change course on the compass of legend; if we could rewrite another program and another time, going in a completely different direction, a renaissance? (p. 37)

Here, Serres praises the possibility of seeing time unhinged from a line that silences difference. For Serres, the prospect of establishing another time echoes Bergson's claim that in duration, freedom is found. Time as ichnography is the project of freedom, insofar as it means that one is no longer under the dictates of a time that restricts creation. Indeed, another time of experience and exposure to the other is a renaissance, the opportunity to be born again.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS: FLASHBACK

I want to explicitly rejoin the descriptions of poetry from the beginning of this Chapter with the notion of time. Here, I re-present the *Oxford's Companion to Philosophy's* (1995) definition with some minor adjustments to connect it to time:

Time at its best is an “all-in” maximally dense, simultaneous deployment of historic resources—experience and rhythm as well as sense, the bringing together of numerous strands of meaning, through metaphor and other figures, through ambiguities (often unresolved), controlled associations and resonances, allusions: all of these contributing to a well-integrated, unified effect.

Reworking the following quote from Lorde (2007), which I referenced in the beginning of this chapter – “Time is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought” – reveals the complex nature of time, as well as makes apparent the meaning of the present in Bergson’s theory of duration. As I have stated, the present in duration encompasses many points of linear time. A moment in duration is the time it takes for an event to occur, for an experience to happen. The future, which is unnamable, is what happens when we move from the present understanding of an idea into a new understanding that was not previously possible. When time moves, when time changes, otherness is allowed to flourish. Time, the changing of time, is what permits the other to present itself. Time, like poetry, is the medium through which the other is allowed to exist.

In the same way, when Ross’s (1990) quote on poetry is refashioned to speak on time, we see time as an entity that reaches beyond what we know. Time has nothing to do with a line or the ticking off of seconds; time is the thing which brings us to the other, to what we could not see before. “Time goes beyond, surpasses in order to apprehend more than that which is explicitly known and make it into meaningful form.”

This leads us back to Levinas, for whom time is the very relation with the other. Let us remember that time, the passage of time as duration, brings about what could not be known. If we were already able to know, it would have already occurred. This means that, particularly for Levinas, the future is the unknown. It is what is not graspable. This is an appropriate, even if seemingly simple, definition of the future. But the future is not a future on a line some distance from us. There is no line; there is no distance, because time is not a part of space. The future is not some point in what we call “later,” because time is simply how that which was unknown, unforeseeable, incomprehensible, comes into being. There is no flow forward or behind; there is no going from here to there in time. Time “happens” because newness is created, because there are allusions and revelations between things and events. Time is a relationship between.

Furthermore, we cannot control the passage of time; the passage is simply what occurs when otherness comes about. In fact, one could argue that the appearance of otherness is the demarcation of time as present. In *Time and the Other* (1987), Levinas suggests that the experience of the face of the other is in fact the present moving in on the future. He writes, “the encroachment of the present on the future is not the feat of the subject alone, but the intersubjective relationship” (p. 79). If we allow time to pass, say in a classroom, the passing means something new has appeared; something has been created. No time at all has moved when something has merely been repeated. The dawn of a new time will mean the creation of newness, and not the start of a new day brought on by a bell.

From this, we understand that time and poetry are precisely the movement beyond what is explicitly known, just as Ross stated above. Taking Levinas’s assertion that the future is what cannot be understood through knowledge and comparing it with poetry’s ability to see what cannot be known suggests two things. First, that which we call the future is rightfully that which

we cannot project from the present. All definitions, all predictions, all reasoning about what we call the future from our current moment are merely descriptions of an extrapolated present, meaning that predictions of the future are really projections of the present and do not move us beyond what we already know. The extrapolated present is still the present. Predictions of the future are made under the assumption that sameness dominates the structure of time, and that otherness, that which cannot be known or understood from the present, will not or does not exist.<sup>29</sup>

Second, recognizing the limits of knowledge means that there is something beyond knowledge. That which exists beyond knowledge is precisely the other. Time moves not according to the ticks of a clock, nor the steps on a line. Time is what allows the other to be recognized. Everything that exists within the realm of knowledge is the present. Bringing us back to both Bergson and Serres, the present is what we know. Bergson's duration acknowledges that the present is not a brief moment, but the extent to which it takes an event to occur. That may mean that it takes a millennium for a stable understanding of humanity to emerge, or a year for an understanding of a book to sink in. What happens when that understanding settles marks the end of a moment, of a particular present, and the beginning of something else that was not possible before.

One always runs the risk of reifying poetry, of taming and domesticating poetry by couching it in romantic or superficial terms, thereby stripping it of its creative origins. The risk, then, is also evident in arguing that time is poetry. One runs the risk of bringing poetry down to the level to which metricized time has already been banished. The possibility of newness and

---

<sup>29</sup> This provides an interesting way to join with some of the scientific arguments about the natures of prediction and epistemology, particularly as they are described in Karl Popper's (2007) works. Popper argued vehemently that prediction was not possible, or at least was epistemically flawed, based on the grounds that making predictions requires that one have faith in the continuity of time and existence, neither of which can be proven by scientific means.



creation, of meeting the other, rests in having the strength to elevate time to the originary function of poetry, to understand that time is creation of what has not been experienced before, of what cannot be repeated.

There are a number of ethical suggestions for education that come from a new understanding of time, of a time that cannot be measured, of a time that is understood as poetry. First, the rigid guidelines surrounding how time is spent and to what time may be dedicated in classrooms today have potentially damaging effects, particularly in regards to Serres's assertion that education occurs with exposure to the other. Rather than marking off units of time in which a student is expected to have learned something meaningful for a test, we might engage in learning that means something to the student. But this takes...time. Time in the sense that the duration of time extends beyond this measured moment. For instance, I frequently share with my students that it takes me a year to make any meaning of a book I have read. Understood in Bergson's terms, however, that calendar year is simply a moment of presence. It is the now. It is happening right now. Second, as both Bergson and Serres suggest, the past is alive with possibilities; this is a characteristic with which, given enough practice with, and exposure to, students can come to have a more meaningful relationship with the past as a source of inspiration and creativity. I admit, though, that given the present state of institutionalized education, I see little promise in this approach to time being adopted.

Regardless of the unlikelihood of schools' seeing time as poetry, time is not the measured entity that science has proposed. Our modern tendency is to want to measure all things, but this prevents otherness from appearing, because measurements aim to keep something equal in everything. Poetry, on the other hand, has as its purpose to bring about otherness. Time as poetry, experienced through the body, reiterates the multiplicity and otherness of the world and

of the self. I experience the present and the past, and am full of possibility, but only able to act on those possibilities by being summoned to see those possibilities by the other. The other, the as yet unnamed, is what is beyond knowledge. My relation to the other is time, the possibility of what cannot be known, what cannot be spoken about, because words only count the present.

## CHAPTER 4: SILENCE

Ethics *occurs* – to return positively to Socrates – across the hiatus of dialogue, not in the content of discourse, in the continuities or discontinuities of what is said, but in the demand for response.

(Cohen, 1985, p. 12)

The world of myth lies between the world of silence and the world of language.

(Picard, 1952, p. 78)

### A MYTH

*There are boundaries of solitude that exist, but they are not concrete. As part of a class called Practice/Theory I took during my Master's program in Architecture at the University of Texas, one of our professors takes his students camping at a primitive camping area in Fort Davis, TX, every year. The first time I went was the first time he had taken students. The camping sites are on top of a mountain, about a four-mile hike up. On the morning we were ending our camping expedition, our professor took another colleague and me to an outcropping of rocks facing the town. As we walked to it, we did not speak and this allowed the solemnity of the moment to present itself. We sat on the rocks and prepared breakfast in silence. Mountains were hidden by fog and we could see the fog rushing past us. We began to talk and it was good. We looked at the mountain below us and wondered if it were possible to hike down that way instead of using the trail. We returned to our campsite and found that our companions had packed and left, leaving the word "bye" spelled out in rocks where my tent had previously stood. We appreciated this very much. And then, it became clear that we were to go back to the breakfast site and hike down the side of the mountain – in part for the fun of attempting to beat our companions down, in part because of a silent agreement that it was a moral obligation. This was important. The three of us, alone, scouting possibilities and using the deer trails as our*

*clues. I fell once and cut my shin. Small burrs grabbed onto our shoelaces and rode down. We saw our companions reach their cars and drive off. We called out to them, but they did not hear us. We made it down, loaded our gear, and went to the Indian Lodge Hotel, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Depression. It sleeted briefly. We thought it was neat.*

*The next year, the entire class, including a number of tag-alongs and myself, made it down the breakfast side of the mountain. I remember thinking briefly that if everyone climbed down this way, it might take something away from what had happened the year before. It didn't.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The moment we say what silence is we reduce it to speech; we are merely *speaking of* silence.  
(Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004, p. 197, emphasis in original)

It seems that teachers have always been faced with the motherly chore of repetition. Lesson after lesson, year after year, student after student, the obligation to repeat what has already been said, what one has been told to say, fills the classroom and education itself with a noise that prevents both students and teachers from listening to each other, to the other. In this Chapter, I explore how silence, rather than speaking, can serve as an epistemology. Silence, with an ear toward the other, offers the possibility of knowing in ways that are different from an epistemology grounded in speech. In the framework of relational pedagogy, silence offers a way of relating to the other that allows the other to speak. It is important to discuss silence in the framework of relational pedagogy so that one does not mistake relational pedagogy with the over-simplified notion of “presence of people.” As Dauenhauer (1980) notes, “Phenomenally, then, silence shows itself as an act that cannot be performed in radical independence. Someone must indeed act for there to be silence. But he must act in concert with someone or something which is *fundamentally distinct from him*” (emphasis added, pp. 24-5).

## CONTEXTUALIZING SILENCE

But there is no reason, as will become plain shortly, to claim that deep silence can occur apart from any utterance whatsoever. On the contrary, deep silence . . . . can occur only if some utterance is associated with it.

(Dauenhauer, 1980, p.16)

## PHILOSOPHICAL TREATMENTS OF SILENCE

At least three major treatises on the phenomenon of silence have been produced in the last century. They offer legitimacy to the notion of silence as an epistemological stance, commenting on the complex ways in which silence and knowledge are entangled, offering ways of envisioning silence as a way of knowing that is fundamentally different from knowing through language. Alice Greene, in *The Philosophy of Silence* (1940), indicates that, “Silence as a source of knowledge looms large in history – knowledge of a nature different from, and higher than, that available through sense and its images. . . . [This] raises questions of an epistemological kind as to what is knowledge, its nature, its object, its extent and its validity” (p. 186). Much written about the practice of silence is written with reference to religious and mystic experiences and Greene comments extensively on the many religions which recognize silence as a valid form of knowing through relation to a higher being. She includes Quakers, Budhists, and Taoists, among others (see particularly, Chapter IX).

Max Picard, in *The World of Silence* (1952), wrote specifically about the relationship between silence and knowledge, particularly the state of that relationship in the context of modern thought and modern science. He explains that in past eras, silence enjoyed a special status, that “Silence was woven into the very texture of the whole approach to knowledge” (p. 63). As Picard sees it, silence has been overrun by speech and talking, to the extent that there is

no longer any difference between language and silence. Silence no longer exists as its own entity; rather, it has become “merely the word that has not yet been spoken” (p. 64).

In *Silence, the Phenomenon and its Ontological Significance* (1980), Bernard Dauenhauer delineates three kinds of deep silence, separate from other kinds of silence, which are circumscribed by discourse. These three kinds of deep silence are the silence of intimates, liturgical silence, and the silence of the to-be-said (pp. 16-17). He is careful to note that silence, even between intimates, who may be enemies, need not be comforting and peaceful; often we experience silence as painful and alienating. The silence to which much of the work in this Chapter points can be understood as similar to the silence of the to-be-said, which, as Dauenhauer describes it, is “that silence beyond all saying, the silence of the what-ought-to-be-said in which what-is-to-be-said is embedded” (p. 19). The silence of the to-be-said resists naming what is not yet known.

If, as Picard (1952) indicates, silence held a special relationship with knowledge in earlier times, it should be no surprise that there is a label for the fixation that recent Western culture has placed on language and speech. Logocentrism is the tendency to privilege reason and rationality over other forms of knowing.<sup>30</sup> It is associated with the production of speech, and in the context of our classrooms, reason and rationality are displayed and proven through the medium of language, either written or spoken.<sup>31</sup>

Jürgen Habermas (1995) argues that it is only when the self is refigured from a self working in isolation to a self in an “intersubjective relationship” that “the critique of the domineering thought of subject-centered reason emerge[s] in a *determinate* form – namely, as a

---

<sup>30</sup> *Logos* is Greek for speech as well as reason. The term *logocentrism* was introduced in Derrida’s (1998) *Of Grammatology*.

<sup>31</sup> Phonocentrism names the privileging of the spoken word over the written word, as spoken is more “immediate,” more “present,” while the written word has been described as derivative or removed from the actual referent.

critique of Western ‘logocentrism’” (p. 154, emphasis in original). This is to say that subject-centered reason, reason that issues from the notion of an autonomous individual, relies on the ability to produce and locate speech as coming from an individual. Speech and the particular sort of reason associated with it reinforce the ideal of separation. Speech separates me from the world out there by my ability to name it. Silence, and the sort of reason that may be associated with it, however, brings me into relation with the other and does not allow me to dominate it.

In essence, logocentrism is the death of silence, giving us silence as a metaphorical death. Moreover, in regards to modernism’s insistence that rationality is the hallmark of humanity, to be silent is to be dead, unable to fulfill the demand to produce speech and display one’s rationality. Reevaluated, silence can be a metaphorical re-birth, as it brings one into relation, calls me back into existence.

In fact, Levinas (1985) himself was quite concerned about the damage that language causes the other. He develops two terms to describe how language functions in relation to the other, the *saying* and the *said*. He writes, “the saying is the fact that before the face I do not simply remain there contemplating it, I respond to it. The saying is a way of greeting the Other, but to greet the Other is already to answer for him” (p. 88). The saying can be understood as a sort of fuzzy background that represents the relation with the other; it is how I respond to the other without recourse to language. It is before all language, because the use of language and knowledge of language will already have named and understood the other into some sort of knowledge. Language will already have thematized the other. The saying is how I respond to the other without words and knowledge. In this way, the saying is similar to silence, particularly as Picard and Dauenhauer have described it. Irvine (2005) describes Levinas’s treatment of the saying in this way: “For Levinas, what lies on the other side of silence is the call of the Other.

This call is fundamental: by calling into question the same, it precedes, makes possible, all other forms of questioning, and thus all forms of knowledge” (p. 10).

The said, however, always places one in the realm of language. The point will be made several times in this chapter, that we cannot do without language, and so, as Levinas (1981) points out, the saying must move into language: “this pre-original saying does move into a language, in which saying and said are correlative of one another, and the saying is subordinated to its theme” (p. 6). On its way to becoming language, the saying becomes subordinated to the said, to what can be expressed and known, because this subordination is the “price that manifestation demands” (p. 6). In order to understand and speak, in order to see and make sense, the saying must conform itself to the rules of the said. “In language qua said everything is conveyed before us, be it at the price of a betrayal” (p. 6). Language, as the said, is what makes the world “manifest” or understood, though this comes at the price of reducing the world to what is understandable. If we are to reconsider those aspects of humanity which we take for granted, in an effort to understand anew what relationality might mean, then silence as an ending must be reevaluated, especially concerning its treatment in education.

## SCHOOLS AND SILENCE

Silence in schools has been construed in many ways. For instance, Lewis (1993) and Miller (2005) write about silence as oppression, the ways minorities, particularly women, are silenced in academia, and the ways in which one can overcome silence. Jones (2004) speaks of silence as a deliberate and political act made by the other. That is, those in our classrooms, especially minorities, may elect not to speak under the very legitimate assumption that what they have to say will not count because it does not fit with the dominant discourse spoken in our classrooms and the curriculum. I use the phrase “the curriculum,” rather than “curricula”



deliberately here, as it denotes the totalizing aspects of today's standardization of education. Indeed, this totalization of what one must teach and of what one must learn is symptomatic of the exclusion of what has been determined not to count as knowledge. Ivan Illich (1992), employing silence as a mode of political resistance, also says silence does less harm than speaking when confronted with two artificially determined choices which one finds equally deplorable. There is also literature on silence as meditation and its relationship to education (Alerby, 2003; Hill, Herndon & Karpinska, 2006; Rockefeller, 2006; Stock, 2006). Marilyn Nelson (2006), for instance, uses meditation in her courses at the United States Military Academy at West Point in Creative Writing, teaching her cadets to listen to silence. Silence as oppression and resistance and the silence of mediation, while important issues to attend to and to develop, do not include silence as a genuine epistemological stance, one able to give birth to new (not "correct") knowledge and experience.

The largest body of work addressing silence and education falls into the study of reflection. Writing on it, Bollnow (1982) states, "The very pauses that occur in conversation are not empty but filled with reflection on what had been said on what remains to be said" (p. 45-46). I do not consider this an epistemological stance, but rather a means, because, while it is still very valuable, as Bollnow indicates, silence as reflection takes the position of a silence whose goal it is to produce. Reflection is concerned with what remains to be said. This should not detract from the importance of silence as an opportunity to reflect. If we, as educators, are at all concerned with the ability of students to make sense (or make meaningful sense) of the materials we present to them, we must necessarily give them time to reflect on it. As Alerby (2003) states, "To value silence as a significant part of reflective practice, as well as teaching and learning, means we need to make time and space for it" (p. 47).

For example, Dysth points out that, “writing is a much slower process than talking and by that fact the writer gets the opportunity to consider and reflect” (In Alerby, 2003, p. 46). A professor for whom I worked a number of years ago said that attending academic lectures in the United States is different from doing so in India. There, he said, one would not ask questions or critique a lecture immediately after the presentation, as is typical in the US. Rather, one would wait and write a letter to the presenter. Both the lapse of time, as well as the slower process of writing, allow one to develop a deeper understanding of what was presented. It also gives one the possibility to sidestep being drawn into debate, which as expressed below, serves to rehash already articulated thoughts and arguments. Allowing for time to reflect, even if momentarily, means that some consideration beyond the superficial might be given to an idea. As, Alerby (2003) says, “Pedagogy of silence means to value silence as a medium for reflection and recognize the meaning of silent expressions, that is a silent being or silent representation” (p. 47). Silent being and silent representation start to approach a silence that is different from the silence of reflection; they begin to acknowledge a silence that conveys meaning, a silence that in itself is meaningful.

To leave the firm foundations of language and depart for the unheard of ground of silence will undoubtedly cause unrest and discomfort in students and teachers. But this is the fertile territory of creating knowledge, not repeating facts. And if we need comfort before we cast off, before we separate from language, we can take with us Serres’s (1998) words, “Separation is sometimes a loving solution” (p. 105).

For Michel Serres, whose work informs the epistemological categories of silence in this Chapter, “there is no learning without exposure, often dangerous, to the other” (2000, p. 8). The other, who by definition is indefinable, must be represented by multiple things, none of which

can add up to the sum alterity of the other. One way to conceive of the other is through that which is other than language. To this end, this Chapter will explore the role of silence in education. Serres (1998) states that, “The verb *to educate* means indeed to lead elsewhere, out of doors, outside of this world: in fact, to cast off” (p. 114). The investigation into silence is an invitation to get outside of this world of language (as we now know it), however briefly and tentatively, to listen for what we have been missing. If we do not want to reduce knowledge to simple repetition, we cannot see the world as simply awaiting our translation of it into words. We cannot see the world as resource for words. We cannot see the world out there simply as things waiting to be spoken. If we do not know what they are, we cannot use our language to name them. They are beyond definition, beyond language, at least in the present. Silence offers a way of being in relation to the other that allows us to come to know more, not quantitatively more, but qualitatively more. More differently.

#### **SERRES AND FOUR ITERATIONS OF SILENCE**

Throughout this paper, I use Serres’s work to point to at least four different ways in which silence, as an epistemology – as a way of knowing – can be found in the classroom. These will certainly not exhaust the ways in which silence is found, used, or abused in education. It might help us, though, hear the things we have not heard before, and thereby prepare us to listen for what we have never expected.

First, we will discuss how language itself is used as a form of mastery over the other. This is somewhat different from silence as oppression. Rather than language as a way of excluding students’ (or teachers’) voices, language can be understood as a form of mastery over our everyday world, as a form of domination of other ways of thinking and knowing. In particular, Serres uses *debate* as a trope for the ways in which our language and conversation merely serve to repeat what has already been said, to the exclusion of creating new ideas (see the

First Conversation in *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*). In this light, the persistent use of language prevents us from hearing the new.

Second, we will examine what Serres refers to as the “fault line” of language (2004, p. 75). Often, we find ourselves at the mercy of language, unable to get beyond its apparent fixedness to express new and transformative knowledge. Some ideas may seem (perhaps may *be*) inarticulable through language. As a pedagogical means, it may be at this very limit of language that meaningful knowledge is being created. As such, it may be prudent to linger here on this fault line and teeter back and forth between what can be said and what is, as yet, inarticulable.

Following from this, we can investigate the role of silence as it pertains to Serres’s notion of invention. It makes a difference, at this point (at every point), whether we conceive of education as the mere ability to repeat what has been doled out to students, what the curriculum has packaged for them as sound bites, or we are indeed in the “business” of creating environments which foster the capacity to create. Of the tendency to count as repetition what can in earnest be called knowledge, Serres (2004) has, “scorn for slow mediocrity, anger at recopying and recitation, esteem only for invention” (p. 7).

Finally, after we have delved into the silence which is always present, but is for the most part unheard, we can emerge to listen to a language which has been transformed. This is not to say, as will be argued elsewhere in this paper, that the goal of silence is to produce more speech. This is not the goal. However, “Silence, as defined as the absence of speech/language, is not so complete that we are not in need of speech” (Li Li, 2004, p. 76). We still need speech. But, after recognizing that speech and language can change in their meanings, vis-à-vis silence, especially

when we “attend to the dynamic interconnections between them” (Li Li, 2004, p. 76), language can play a different role in education, a role other than that of mastery and domination.

## I. LANGUAGE AS MASTERY

As I stated in the Introduction above, modernism’s fascination with logocentrism requires a self separate from others who is capable of imposing names on the world. The production of speech and its attendant reason demonstrates a mastery over the world, over the other. Speech allows one to name the other according to one’s own experience, rather than letting the other remain beyond definition. Picard (1952) argues:

Man lives between the world of silence from which he comes and the world of the other silence to which he goes – the world of death...In the modern world language is far from both worlds of silence. It springs from noise and vanishes in noise. Silence today is no longer an autonomous world of its own; it is simply the place into which noise has not yet penetrated. (p. 25)

Picard laments that the world of silence has become dominated by speech waiting to erase it, waiting to turn silence into itself. He pines, “What has not yet been investigated, what is still hidden and mysterious, is no longer a phenomenon in itself but simply that which has not yet been investigated” (p. 64). This speaks precisely to the issue of relating to the other. Picard’s statement that, in the eyes of science, there exists only that which has not yet been investigated, implies that difference (a deeper kind of difference than superficial difference) has been eradicated. Science, modern thought, modern speech see the world out there as a series of objects and events to be subjected to a method. And all things are available to be subject to this method. If science does not see it, then it must not exist.

Along these lines, Zembylas and Michaelides (2004) say, “The problem with trying to verbalize the unspeakable is that, in the process, silence becomes assimilated to speech and loses the distinctive character that makes it mystical silence” (p. 202). That is, speaking the

unspeakable transforms it into debate, that which has already been said and is already known. Attempting to speak the unspeakable makes sense of the unspeakable in terms of what can already be spoken. If it is unspeakable, then it cannot maintain itself and its intentions in spoken words. The misguided effort to speak the unspeakable utterly transforms its meaning into something that is already known. It rehashes the known in the form of debate. This further demonstrates Serres's distaste for debate, as he says, it creates nothing new.

Karen MacKendrick finds that the lack of room for silence in our society is a symptom of our "fully confessional culture," making silence seem "odd or archaic" (in Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004, p. 195). In a culture where the only things which count are the things which can be measured, and we are insistent on being measured in order to discover that we "measure up" to something, keeping silent fails to speak to the question of competition. In a culture committed to knowing everything about everyone at all times, silence may serve as a powerful interloper.

In this vein, "Silence can have the purpose of self-protection. A person can use it to shut himself or herself off from the outside world or to protect someone or something they know" (Alerby, 2003, p. 44). This is not necessarily only when one wants to protect someone from the repercussions of having done something "wrong." Though this may be the case. It can also be when one wants to protect something from those who are not ready to hear it. This was my fear in the story related at the beginning of this Chapter. I was not certain that letting another group of students "in" on our secret route was a good idea. I was afraid the importance of the experience would suffer if others saw it and did not understand it, if they saw it and translated it into something other than it had been for us the first time.

Further, writing on Levinas's work, Zembylas and Michaelides (2004) state, "The fundamental concern of Western philosophy...is to make the Other an object of knowledge, something to be understood. In this way, strangeness is reduced to sameness, and alterity becomes controllable (since it is something knowable)" (p. 206). When we insist on using language, not only do we threaten the life of an idea whose birth may be premature, but we also place it in an arena that allows it to be controlled, assimilated. For example, the Scientific Revolution and the resulting ideas which sprang from it were indeed centered on the notion that everything in the universe could be known and that one would profit greatly from the absolute control of nature. The Scientific Revolution's greatest form of control was measurement, without which now we often feel that something is not "real." This is particularly true in the classroom. Without the ability to measure, how would we know if the learning is real?

Similarly, if one puts into language one's thoughts, those thoughts are then under the purview of others. Out of a fear of not knowing what students, indeed what teachers are doing, schools insist that all thought be translated into language. But, "it is through silence and ignorance (unknowability) that one stops laying claim to another's experience and begins to be receptive to the Other" (Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004, p. 207). When teachers begin to refuse turning students' experience and knowledge into their own knowledge, they can begin to hear what they have never heard before. This is literally and powerfully the case; it is also intuitively the case. When we constantly force another's words and ideas into our own frameworks, we absolutely fail to gain any insight into the other's experience.

In *Troubadour of Knowledge* (2000), Serres relates a tale of the beginning of the earth and its successive inhabitants who compete with one another for mastery over the Earth. The termite wins out, having killed and eaten all other creatures. The winner, "the termite has

nothing to eat except an identical termite” (p. 88). This is a fable posed to relate the danger of any one form of reason or body of knowledge taking over and exterminating all others.<sup>32</sup> For our purposes, knowing through spoken language is the form of reason which dominates education. Li Li (2004) notes that, “speech making continues to function as the cornerstone of teaching and learning” (p. 72). That is, our classrooms are phonocentric. When we have said everything there is to say, and thereby shown our mastery over the world by attempting to make it “known” to us, what will be left to say? Serres’s (2000) termite tale continues: “Those that survived remained because they renounced unique mastery, power and glory, the horrifying competition, when they were faced with the announcement of collective death that would immediately follow definitive victory” (p. 88). In the end, those who survived made a “mute decision” to “abandon forever the arrogance of their ancient destiny, the paranoid project of occupying the whole Earth for themselves alone” (p. 89). In our effort to defend ourselves against all that is other, we have used language as our weapon, making sure that the other, who cannot speak, never has a chance to be heard. Serres’s tale reminds us that a mission to name everything in a seemingly finite world will end one day with death, with nothing left to name. There are other possibilities of existence, however, ones that do not include the drive to name and to know.

The counterpart to using language as mastery is understanding that something is mastered by language, something is oppressed by language. As was stated in the introduction, “*Oppressed silence* is when one is forced into being silent for different reasons (abuse, ignorance, exercise of power) and where the ‘oppressed’ believes that he or she does not have a voice and/or would not be heard” (Alerby, 2003, p. 50, emphasis in original). Oppressed silence, however, “can also be

---

<sup>32</sup> One of Serres’s overarching themes throughout his works is to respect and cultivate interdisciplinarity, to let science and the Humanities inform each other, rather than have science dominate all of what is called reasonable. Also, see Egéa-Kuehne (2005) *The Humanities and Serres’s “New Organization of Knowledge.”*



when no time or space is given for reflection” (p. 50). In this light, we can see the constant filling up of silent space as a form of oppression. It is a way of preventing students from thinking. It is a way of dominating their thoughts by not allowing them time or space to think. This is a very powerful definition of oppressed silence, because it calls into question the very nature of what it is that teachers are “supposed” to do. We feel guilty or under-prepared if we cannot fill up an entire period with our own speech. It is, though, an extraordinarily pervasive and unseen form of mastery. It is tantamount to preventing our students from thinking. The insistence on using spoken language can be seen as an attempt to place our students’ thoughts before us so they can be measured and judged. It is a form of mastery, because when those ideas which are not ready to be spoken are placed in the light of language, we as educators make them fit into the logic of language.<sup>33</sup>

When language is used as a weapon or defense system, it serves to keep our selves separate from the other. Elsewhere, Serres relates our natural history of defenses: crustaceans and knights with their armors on the outside; later, humans with our hard skeleton on the inside. He offers “A third solution [which], more advanced in a whole new way lies in placing one’s defenses and security outside the body: in relations” (1998, p. 104). What this might mean, in terms of language, is that we can place our defenses, as a standardized curriculum, neither in an understanding of the world which is outside of us and completely open to our knowledge, nor in a fixed interior notion of language that says that individual reason alone will lead us to truth (for instance, Descartes’s project). Rather than keeping our defenses up – creating walls which

---

<sup>33</sup> Crosby (1997) notes a similar phenomenon occurring with music during the Renaissance. If today our tendency is to fix with language that which cannot be expressed, the trend during the Renaissance was to fixate visually “what was least visual and most fleeting, that is to say, music. You can see on a page several minutes of music at once...The Renaissance choice in music was to limit variation, to reduce improvisation” (p. 11). One can see that this reflects a type of mastery about which I have spoken. Once our thoughts have been subjected to the logic of language, they can be controlled. Once music has been subjected to the logic of the visual, it can also be controlled.

separate us from the world, using language to do this – we can place our security in relations. Having given up the project of mastery through language, language can be silenced so that we can be in relation with the other. This relational stance is what saves us, in that it allows us to give birth to new understandings only when we recognize that its meaning is meaningful when it is in the only context in which language and knowledge actually exist: outside of ourselves, in relation with others, in relation with the other.

To further draw out this notion of mastery, we can call on the work of Simone Weil (1997), whose thought has been very influential for Serres. She states that, “On no occasion has the slave a right to express anything if not that which may please the master” (p. 159). The slave can only say what the master wants to hear; more than that, the master would likely only hear what he wants to hear. This certainly applies to the voices of students whom we do not hear, those whose voices are silenced because of their differences in the world. But there is an other which is silenced, too. The absolute otherness of all that is the same. And what seems to be ultimately same in the classroom is language. This is not only about silencing the marginalized; it is about silencing the other – that which escapes the rational stronghold of language, that which is ultimately other-than, and hence, that which might be ultimately important. We can keep things in the shadow to protect them; this does not mean excluding them. In fact, keeping them from the light which supposedly sheds light on everything helps us prevent the other from becoming the same. Under such harsh and totalizing light, all difference is eradicated. The light becomes so bright that all which is reflected is more of the same light – blindness to the sounds of what refuses to step into the light only to limit or return that which is placed on it from the outside.<sup>34</sup> In the shadows, sound is fuzzy and different. You can make out some of the

---

<sup>34</sup> In this light, the saying “There is nothing new under the sun,” takes on new meaning, in that under the totalizing light of the sun, everything appears to be the same.

characteristics, but they seem to change depending on where you listen from, whether you squint your eyes, or cup your ear. One can never see all of it in the shadows. It is protected from totalization.

To return to the notion of debate, it is about exposing everything to the light, trying to define everything in an attempt to have control over it. It is about dominating and making a slave of everything around us. Letting the world say to us only what makes us happy. Letting our students say to us, in a language we have forced upon them, only what we want to hear, that which fits in with our limited and controlled sense of what is “supposed” to be true, right, correct. Serres (2004), though, reminds us that we do not have to expose everything to light and language: “to wrench something from the shadows often is to destroy it, while to place something in the shadows is often to protect it” (p. 147).

## II. THE EDGE OF LANGUAGE (the face of the other)

Dauenhauer (1980) provides a description of silence in which the one performing the silence *yields* to another:

In attributing to silence its third characteristic, namely, that silence involves a yielding, I am simply spelling out what is implicit in the acknowledgement that the performer of silence is not radically autonomous. This yielding is a yielding before some power which is beyond one’s control. It is a yielding which is experienced as motivated by finitude and awe. In performing silence, one acknowledges some center of significance of which he is not the source, a center to be wondered at, to be in awe of. (p.25)

The edge of language can be theorized as the face of the other. It is the moment when words and language fail, because one is in relation with that which is not nameable. One yields to a source of awe; to be without words is awesome.

The experience of language failing to communicate or sufficiently expressing what one wants to say has been addressed by many thinkers. It is unfortunate that many people have the opinion that when one is unable to express one’s thoughts “adequately,” the only label available

for them is that of not having a “command” of language.<sup>35</sup> If, as Serres alludes to, there is an edge of language, a line at which language ceases, there must be something on the other side of that line. If language does not encompass everything, there must be something else. Similarly, Turner says, “the apophatic [a knowledge of God] is what is achieved...when language *breaks down*. The apophatic is the recognition of how this ‘silence’ lies, as it were, all around the perimeter of language” (in Zembylas & Michaelides , 2004, p. 196-197, emphasis in original). Indeed, Alerby (2003) asserts, “silence becomes a language when the ordinary vocabulary is not enough, or when one favors silence above the spoken words” (p. 44). She continues: “Beyond our ordinary spoken or written words there is, according to Polanyi, a rich domain of the unspeakable that constantly beckons us” (p. 45). This could literally be the other beckoning us. It is an acknowledgement that language does not have the capability to express everything. It is not yet the master over everything. It cannot yet shed light on everything. If the unspeakable beckons us, maybe it is the other speaking to us. Alerby uses Polanyi’s<sup>36</sup> work, which refers to this silence as epistemological silence, suggesting “that we may have the knowledge, but it is not always accessible linguistically” (p. 45).

Silence in the classroom can be disconcerting. Educators and students alike feel the tension when a student has been called upon to provide the answer, only to sit there, silently, unable to produce that which is expected. Research in the area of “wait-time” has shown that, among other results, wait-time in the classroom increases the number of words in student responses as well as the number of unsolicited responses (Li Li, 2004, p. 73). Li Li astutely points out that this role of silence, as it is conducted in schools today, is to produce more speech. In no way does it acknowledge the legitimate use of silence as a way of knowing. Li Li states,

---

<sup>35</sup> For instance, my students have expressed this sentiment when I have asked them to discuss the word “ineffable.”

<sup>36</sup> Michael Polanyi was a 20<sup>th</sup> Century scientist who wrote on the limitations of the scientific method and argued that we believe more than we can prove and know more than we can say. See his *Personal Knowledge* (1958).

“it might be important for concerned educators to silently contemplate what has been left unsaid. The purpose of such contemplation does not aim at translating ‘silence’ into ‘speech.’ Rather, it raises our awareness of the limitations of speech and the need to explore varied forms of communication” (p. 75). Silence, though, may not be only a way to explore varied forms of communication; silence itself can be a form of communication. That is, if we listen for it.

If wait-time is about allowing enough time to generate the expressible, silence might be about allowing enough room for that which cannot yet be expressed in words. When we reach the edge of language, rather than assuming that there is no exploring left to do over this edge, it might be more beneficial to literally take a flying leap into the unknown. There is much to explore in the canyon across which words stream.

Another way to understand silence and its fuzzy edge with language is to realize that sometimes seemingly irrelevant words speak volumes about a particular issue. For instance, Serres (2004) notes that, “Every time [Plato] has something difficult to say, he abandons technical vocabulary and goes to myth” (p. 72). When the language typically employed to discuss something forecloses on meaning and new possibilities, we can jump to another language to help us express what the other does not account for. In this way, other languages, other stories, often fall on deaf ears. When students move to a language outside the acceptable domain in order to generate meaningful understanding, do we hear them? Do we take them to be silent on an issue, and therefore ignore the possibility of creation?

For Serres (2000), words as we insist on using them in their ordinary repetition, have been lulled to sleep, “waiting for the one who chooses as a career the task of waking them up, of defining his language right up to the fault line. There, he finds what his language does not include.... Driven to look, to touch, hear, or taste, obliged to wisdom and sagacity” (p. 73). Can

we, as teachers, face this task of helping students see what language does not include, and thereby help in their journey with wisdom, which includes experience other than naming the world, experience that is in relation with the world? Helping them know that because they have mastered language does not mean that they have or can master the world, that perhaps their task is not to master the world, that their task is to not master the world?

### III. SILENCE AND INVENTION

In silence, we can move quickly and are not weighted down with the physicality of speech or writing. Silence allows us to move swiftly. In contrast, when we as teachers impose on students the necessity of “showing their work,” or writing out their thoughts, we might be forcing them to slow down their thinking processes. In this vein, when we allow students to remain silent, we might be giving them the opportunity to engage in “learning that may arise from reflective practice, [which] needs to be given the chance to breathe and emerge” (Alerby, 2003, p. 46). Burdened by the presence of speech, education can become such drudgery, forbidding the space to breathe and emerge. This lack of light space and freedom to invent in the classroom might also be why we, as teachers, often experience students’ returning after the passing of several years to say that they have learned from us or that they see the world anew: because students need room to breathe and emerge (as if being born), without necessarily being forced to repeat what we have told them or to explain to us exactly how it is they came to understand a concept. Knowledge is not something which comes in sound bites and is repeatable or testable, and Picard (1952) states, “When language is no longer related to silence it loses its source of refreshment and renewal therefore something of its substance” (p. 26).

Language, as it is practiced in the classroom, serves to have students and teachers repeat. Even in our class discussions, the aim is typically to “keep the conversation going,” out loud.

We have certain expectations of what class discussions should sound like, of what knowledge will be exchanged. Even in those discussions in which we try to tackle difficult topics, we educators often hope that, through those discussions, students will arrive at what we see as “responsible” or “critical” conclusions. And surely this is a part of education. But this alone does not allow for creation. “Discussion conserves; invention requires rapid intuition and being as light as weightlessness” (Serres, 2004, p. 37). The lightness of silence - rather than the heavy waiting of silence, that is, waiting for the “right” answer as a means of control and domination, of enforcing the right answer – is an opportunity to shed the downward force of necessarily having to reproduce that which is already “known.” Sound waves, as a form of energy, must also, then, have the characteristics of matter ( $E=mc^2$ ). This matter must be moving at the speed of light squared before it can turn into weightless energy, unencumbered by the local effects of gravity. Too much sound weighs upon us too heavily.

Zembylas and Michaelides (2004) tell of St. John of the Cross who embraced silence because of its ability to protect thoughts and feelings which might be endangered when exposed to the heaviness of sound. “There is no way to catch in words the sublime things of God which happen in these souls. The appropriate language for the person receiving these favours is that he understand them, experience them within himself, enjoy them, and be silent” (St. John of the Cross, in Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004, p. 198). St. John continued, “The delicateness of delight felt in this contact is inexpressible. I would desire not to speak of it so as to avoid giving the impression that it is no more than I can describe” (p. 198). Though the words of St. John are clearly pronounced in a religious context, it points to the lightness of thought which can accompany silence. The weight of the words can crush the “delicateness of delight.” Further,

when we insist that students drudge through the heaviness of words and confession, we give the impression that all experiences are ultimately tamable by putting them into words.

And what about the lightness of rapid silence, or the rapidness of light silence? Perhaps this allows us to flit from place to place in a space which has not already been consumed by the noise of the always already determined answers and body of knowledge. There is a silence which lets the other speak, silently to us, in a realm not dictated by what we already know, by what has already been captured by language. Forcing students to toil through their every thought, aloud, so that we can monitor their mental processes means that we are inhibiting the intuition which can take place within them. This forcing slows down the creation of new knowledge, because it attempts to ensure along every step of the way that their thoughts follow the straight trail of reason. Silence, because it is not tied down by the heavy matter of sound, has the ability to move around quickly to places too high to reach when carrying the weight of sound. Silence allows for what has not yet been spoken, and is hence unreasonable (one cannot reason with it); it allows for invention. In contrast, the aim of discussion, of debate, is to illuminate what has already been expressed.

Serres (2004) recounts a story of the dis-discovery of the diagonal of a square with sides the length of one. Made by Greeks in the fifth century B.C. this dis-discovery revealed the legitimate existence of what was previously considered “absurd.” The diagonal of such a square is neither even nor odd, and as such, by the day’s standards, should not have been possible. He says:

It exists then, but it is ineffable. It was called inexpressible, irrational, other [...] great mathematics had just been born. It was born from the excluded third, from this impossible situation... to the absence of a middle between these two impossibilities of naming it.... Absurd [*absurde*] means deaf [*sourd*]: The hubbub that Genesis says precedes creation, does it not come from a silence? (p. 44)



This is silence from which creation is born. A silent buzzing in the head before the explosion of an entire universe. These universes are discounted as absurd, since they cannot yet be expressed. They are still on the other side of language. But the creation of entire universes is what is at stake here. Because they are not yet known, they cannot be created through language. Serres (2000) ponders, “one communicates there through means other than language: would this be one of the sites of another kind of knowledge?” (p.87).

Zembylas and Michaelides (2004) write, “Teachers can constantly and consciously seek ways to convey a sense of the inexpressible through systems of perceived absences and fertile silences” (p. 209). The use of silence can be fertile, that is, it can lead to the birth of new knowledge. The birth of new knowledge from silence is not birth from nothing, because silence must not be taken as nothing. It is something. This is the mistake of those who wish to remove silence from the classroom. To see silence as the expression of “nothing” removes the possibilities of students creating and inventing, giving birth to new knowledge.

Likewise, *The Comprehensive Signed English Dictionary* (1983) acknowledges that when deaf children are learning to sign, it is important to use all of the signs, matching each spoken word, even at risk of redundancy; this is a manually exhaustive task. The goal in doing this, however, is so that deaf children learn the grammatical structure and rules for English. As children become fluent in Standard English, it is no longer necessary to use all the signs, because, there is a shared understanding of what they are trying to express. This is another way of pointing to the fact that there is always deferred meaning and experience in our language. There is no way to fix meanings by using more and more words, hampering ourselves with more and more signs trying to point out the exact meaning of something that in fact cannot be captured (mastered) in words. This brings back the importance of silence and invention. We cannot

invent when we are so busy trying to pinpoint the meaning of something whose very nature defies fixing. “As the child grows older and displays a greater and surer command of English, you will become more concerned with simply communicating with him or her and less concerned with being a language model. Under these circumstances, you can delete some sign words as well as sign markers” (*Signed English Dictionary*, p. 7). To make the analogy explicit, once we have mastered language, we can begin to remove some of the words so that new meanings can emerge.

#### IV. LANGUAGE TRANSFORMED

Rather than indicating “an absence of voice [silence can] be more a lack of acceptable voice” (Giltlin, Siegel, & Boru, 1989, p. 239). While this has definite political implications, silence as a lack of acceptable voice might also indicate that the voice is such because another may not be able to understand what is being said. It may be a case in which what one says appears to have no bearing on what the other party is expecting to receive comment on. It is rather like asking a person what  $2 + 2$  is and receiving the answer (meaningful to the one responding) of “blue.” Similarly, the cultural critic Slavoj Žižek (2005) comments that the Greeks knew that language did not encapsulate everything. They knew that the words they were using did not bring to bear the experiences and emotions they were communicating. The words were not the ideas or emotions.

Finally, after we have waited and contemplated in silence, straining/restraining our voices from moving out into the brightest of lights, fearful that this light might erase our thoughts, we can at last emerge from that experience which has taught us new ways of listening and of being heard. This is not an experience that presents itself in most classrooms. Yet, through it, we can arrive at the site of another kind of knowledge. It is different from what we knew before:

“Language is transformed, becoming something that won’t be understood by anyone who hasn’t been there” (Serres, 1998, p. 102).

This is what shared experience contributes to the classroom. The language we speak to one another may not be understood by others, especially those who have not been in our community classroom with us, helping create the knowledge we have created: administrators and bureaucrats, to be sure, but also those students who have not been in this classroom, here, being a part of this birth of knowledge. The language we speak in this classroom with these students can be transformed through silence. And the words we use to communicate with one another, while they are found in everyone’s dictionary, are not the same words. Expressing just this, Serres (2000) writes, “All learning demands this voyage with the other toward alterity. During this passage, lots of things change” (p. 48).

A single word in isolation from all context has no meaning; and the words taken from a classroom and placed in the ears and mouths of others *mean* something else. They mean something other than they do in the communal use of a class which has created new meanings for them together, through experience.

This is not to say that there is no communication between groups, individuals, students, and teachers; rather, it is to suggest that experience is key, elemental, necessary to understanding that knowledge is created, not “out there” to be discovered. This transformation of language also speaks to questions about the curriculum, the standardized curriculum. Educators know already that all students do not take the same information from a classroom. Some listen; some do not; all make different meanings of lessons (this is easily seen when African- or Native-American students are asked to believe that white men discovered America and then all was good). If, despite one’s best efforts, the curriculum cannot be standardized (in that, even though the same

information is being transmitted, alternative meaning is being understood or created), why not let experience flow and let knowledge emerge, transformed? At least then it would be meaningful, in that the students will have made meaning on their own terms. Our words may be the same, but their meanings will be different.

Language transformed might mean, then, that we have the ability to recognize that the other is always excluded from our speech since it is inassimilable into speech. But, when we recognize the other and allow it to speak to us through silence, our language takes on different meanings. Zembylas and Michaelides (2004) say educators can “explore the value of silence as a pedagogical process of caring for one’s self and for the Other” (p. 202). They declare, “an educational philosophy of silence is a philosophy of otherness” (p. 204). As such, silence is “‘other’ in relation to rationality” (p. 206). Furthermore, Noddings (2004) links caring to the non-rational by saying, “While much of what goes on in caring is rational and carefully thought out, the basic relationship is not” (p. 48). At this point, we can see that both silence and caring have in common the sense of being other in the classroom, because they are not rational, or at least not founded on rationality. Not being rational does not mean that they do not have a place in the classroom, indeed it may be time to reclaim the space of the non-rational in education. But it points further to the important role of silence. Silence can be a form of caring... “our separation from speech can be a loving solution” (Serres, 1998, p. 105). It might allow us to listen to the other. And the silence, then will not force us to “understand into ourselves” (Noddings, p. 45) the other through the use of speech.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS: A MOMENT OF SILENCE**

And deep silence binds him who performs it to that which is other and not inferior to him, however this other is interpreted.  
(Dauenhauer, 1980, p. 25)

We have now been through four discussions on silence, and it might help at this point to return to my story of hiking from the beginning. Concerning language as a form of mastery, as my companions and myself set off for our outcropping of rocks, there was a sense of the importance of the experience of which we were about to be a part, and I think that attempting to express this in words would have been an attempt to master the experience before it happened. It would have been to pretend that we could know in advance through reifying the experience into language.

As we stood on the edge of the rocks, we realized (perhaps subconsciously, sub-vocally) that we might limit or place boundaries around the experience if we translated it into words. We had reached the edge of our ability to communicate this experience. And because we refused to subject it to the logic of language, we were able to invent, to create new understandings of architecture, and of our world. This is not the kind of knowledge which can be tested or anticipated, nor can it be rehashed. It is the creation of new knowledge. Here, language was transformed for us. As we shared the experience with one another, and then the following year, with a new group of explorers, the ways in which we could use language changed. We could use words and descriptions of the experience with one another, but others who had not been through what we had been through would not understand.

Embracing silence, ignorance, and unknowability offers hope as we attempt to become more compassionate... This kind of teaching is only possible in an educational context that does not define education as the acquisition of a body of knowledge but that instead values and cherishes wonder. (Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004, p. 208)

We see again that silence may be a form of caring in the classroom. It reiterates, as well, the problem that our main goal as teachers is not to have students acquire a “body of knowledge” (itself a problematic term, as doing so insists on the mastery of language and the ability to repeat,

but also to repeat a body – to transform knowledge into the object of desire, like a woman’s body).

Once silence transforms, is transformed, we cannot rest thinking that we have found “true” language. Our experiences with the other will continue to change the meaning of our language, in new and unpredictable ways. To engage in silence is not the death of language, it is the potential rebirth of language. Silence can “articulate other arrangements of meaning” (Wang, 2005, p. 102). I think we must at least consider some part of education to occur in those spaces where nothing is being said. Silence, in its interdependence with language, can be the moment when it means more that one does not say anything, and the other never knows that it was not said. “Wisdom also teaches us not to say anything, either verbally or through silence, when students are not ready to listen” (Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004, p. 208). When the student (or child) never knows that the teacher did not say something, because he or she was not ready to hear it: this is the burden of teaching or mothering. It is the sacrifice that comes with caring, with being silent. At this point, it is perhaps the teacher who needs to be schooled. Encumbered by speech, the teacher must repeat lessons over and over. The dominance of language in the curriculum ensures it. As educators though, silence need not foreclose the future; it might present an opportunity to cast off from the chains of language and pass into an other realm of knowledge. “And most often, neither the student nor the initiator know where this door is located, nor what to do with it” (Serres, 2000, p. 9). This not knowing, and not knowing how to say it, is the point from which we can create. In the end, silence is not death. Silence can be understood as the call into existence from the other. Silence here is not death at all; it is not the end of rationality; it is the permission to be called into existence. It is a rebirth.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

You do not know what life means when all the  
difficulties are removed!  
(Addams in Garrison, p. 58)

### RE-INTRODUCTION

Oddly, I think, I return to this quote by Jane Addams from the Introduction. I find it the most fitting way to try to begin a reassessment of life after life has been reconsidered through birth, time, and silence. Though Addams was not speaking of life in Levinasian terms, her words sound a strong cry for the need to understand life anew, for the desperation to participate in a world that has not already solved all the problems and lain out what can be known and what is simply not yet known. Indeed, a modernist project of knowing the entire world, one which declares that the entire world is knowable, might make life easier; but then, as Addams professes, one would not know what that life might *mean*. The emptiness that Addams experienced as a result of the obstacles she faced in relating to others can actually be understood as the emptiness found when one is prevented from responding to the other.

The modern scientific approach to life has been to totalize life, to rein in the world and place it under the category of “knowledge.” In knowing, we have been told, we will be able to control, anticipate, and understand the world. Knowledge is supposed to give us comfort, because it is that which remains the same. Knowledge is what Levinas argues is the totality toward which Western philosophy has been aimed all along. As Moran (2000) points out, “The entire project of Western science, the struggle for knowledge, for *episteme*, is then, for Levinas, an attempt at total control, at the enclosing of everything within a system” (p. 341). By reconsidering birth, time, and silence in relation to the other and by reimagining the self that was constructed as solitary through the traditional story of birth, time, and silence, we can see life as

an opening up toward that which cannot be known, rather than as a closing in on what must be known. In this concluding chapter, I begin by clarifying the relationship between ethics and knowledge, follow with a discussion joining the events of birth, time, and silence together, and close with some implications of an ethics of otherness for education in general.

## **ETHICS AND KNOWLEDGE**

I do not believe that epistemology is a bloodless abstraction; the way we know has powerful implications for the way we live. I argue that every epistemology tends to become an ethic [sic] and that every way of knowing tends to become a way of living.

(Palmer, 1993. *Change, Community, Conflict, and Ways of Knowing*)

All previous systems of ethics corresponded to the visions of knowledge that permeated the world at the time. In the late Modern period, after scientific thought was established in the culture, Immanuel Kant (1999) wrote about the Categorical Imperative in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, which essentially argued that there are laws of morality that govern the world and the mind, that these laws of good are knowable before we have experience in the world. He argued that there is a sameness to the fabric of reality through time and across experiences, and that we have access to that reality, that the laws of morality are intrinsically valid, and that we are all impelled to act right by them.

Dewey and Addams perceived that knowledge was generated in social relations and out of obligation to others in our environment. Their approaches to ethics were similar; their ethics did not establish “right” before being in relation, but instead saw ethical decisions as resulting from particular contexts. Still, for Dewey and Addams, the self existed before the other, and knowledge, even if generated from relations, was the foundation for existence. In all cases I have discussed, regardless of the self being described as either complete or in relation, knowledge served as the foundation or ontology for being, for who and *how* a person existed.



On this point, Levinas (2001) asserts, “The correlation between *knowledge*, understood as disinterested contemplation, and *being*, is, according to our philosophical tradition, the very site of intelligibility, the occurrence of meaning” (p. 76, emphasis in original). Levinas begins the essay *Ethics as a First Philosophy* with this statement about the West’s project of equivocating knowledge and existence or *being*. In this tradition, without knowledge, we would not exist. Because of this, he argues that *being* is and has been the first philosophy of the West. On knowledge, which has been conflated with being, he writes,

But in knowledge there also appears the notion of an intellectual activity or of a reasoning will – a way of doing something which consists precisely of thinking through knowing, of seizing something and making it one’s own, of reducing to presence and representing the difference of being, an activity which *appropriates* and *grasps* the otherness of the known. (2001, p. 76, emphasis in original)

In other words, the West’s tradition of positioning knowledge as the basis for being, means that knowing establishes the very essence of humanity, and that in knowing we erase what is other in the other by making it our own. This is the point at which we see clearly the link between knowledge and ethics, the relationship between what we know and how we live. Knowing is *reducing* the other into what can be known, and thereby is an unethical act of violence toward the very entity for which we are obliged to care.

While I have pointed out the correlation between past thinkers’ systems of ethics and representations of knowledge, the relationship between ethics and what we know is much more transparent in the works of Levinas, because he insists that our ethical relationship toward the other occurs before knowledge can ever take place. Unlike the Western tradition that asserts knowledge as the foundation for our being, Levinas insists on the primacy of the other, after which we can come to experience the other. In every instance, though, knowledge is an act of

violence against the other, because knowledge means one has settled on the meaning of something, which then necessarily means silencing otherness.

Levinas (2001) concludes his discussion on the links between ethics and knowledge saying, “Modernity will subsequently be distinguished by the attempt to develop... the identification of being *and* knowledge” (p. 77-78, emphasis in original). What is so vitally important about understanding the modern conflation of knowledge and being is that “Wisdom [as] first philosophy is reduced to self-consciousness. Identical and non-identical are identified. The labour of thought wins out over the otherness of things and men” (p. 78). We see in this quote, not only that knowledge and being are inextricably linked in Western philosophy, but also that knowledge, or here “wisdom,” when it serves as the first philosophy, determines what it means to be a self. That is, knowledge as ontology is reduced to being aware of *only* the self. What is my self and what is not my self become the same. The self becomes unitary and closed off, because there is nothing different from myself. Thinking and knowing, which translate the world into terms I can understand, become prized over what is other than what I can understand. All knowledge is bound together by intention and will, by dominating what is already known and what cannot be known. Knowledge has things as objects and intends to use those things in a particular way.

Moreover, Levinas informs us that knowledge has been taken to mean something that we think about, or act *upon*. In the Western philosophical tradition, meaning has been located as the ability to think about (that is categorize) something and to equate that with the right for me to exist. In this tradition, the ability to categorize and label gives me the right to exist. This is the violence of knowledge, which forever ties knowledge as ontology to an ontology of violence and power over the other.

Recalling the importance of being called into being by the other further helps elucidate the inseparability of ethics and knowledge. It also reinforces ethics as the first philosophy over knowledge or being, because it is with “the call” that I become aware of the other and this absolutely precedes any knowledge. Levinas (2001) says, “The Other becomes my neighbour precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question” (p. 83). The call from the other disturbs my complacency with my self, with what I thought I knew. In fact, Phillippe Nemo (1985), one of Levinas’s interviewers, writes, “Ethics is precisely ethics by disturbing the complacency of being” (p. 10). The other calls *me* into question. The call, in fact, destroys knowledge and places me first in an ethical relationship. On this point, Levinas (2001) writes: “The summons to responsibility destroys the formulas of generality by which my knowledge (*savoir*) or acquaintance (*connaissance*) of the other man re-presents him to me as my fellow man. In the face of the other man I am inescapably responsible and consequently the unique and chosen one” (p. 84). Here we see that being called by the other means that I cannot treat him or her by any of the general rules I have developed about humans, my neighbors, or the world. The call means I am brought into existence to care precisely for this unique other “on” whom I cannot use any of my knowledge, because the other is beyond knowing.

After realizing the relationship between knowledge and ethics, it bears elaborating on the role of violence in ontology. If responding to the other’s call without the pretense of knowledge is my ethical duty, then knowledge itself, as Levinas discusses, is unethical, and Levinas describes knowledge as violence toward, and power over, the other. On the capacity of reason for humans, Levinas (1980) writes, “The essence of reason consists not in securing for man a foundation and powers, but in calling him in question and in inviting him to justice” (p. 88).

Reason for Levinas is in no way properly identified as a faculty which should establish my being and power or rights. Reason is not the foundation on which I can build rights. Any foundation within the context of Levinas's ethics would be understood as further violence, and a foundation would be the covering up the unknown. Reason, then, is what disturbs my complacency with existence. It is what makes me understand that I am responsible for others, and that I am not simply a unified individual acting in the world. Reason, though, is not what allows me to name the world and limit otherness. It is not what gives me the right to know and exist. Of knowing, Levinas asserts (1980), "Ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power" (p. 46). To reiterate, this means that "knowing" something means that I have limited it to the categories I can understand and have asserted power over it. Equating knowing with my own existence is a philosophy in which I act over, and on, the rest of the world, identifying it for my needs. Situating knowledge as the original source of being, of subjectivity, then is first and foremost a political act that is an act of injustice. Inasmuch as ontology "does not call into question the same, [it is] a philosophy of injustice" (Levinas, 1980, p. 46).

This injustice, this violence and power over the other, is not simply an injustice toward an other, but toward all others, toward society in general, because we are never in the presence of only one other. As Levinas (1980) writes, "in the real world, there are many Others" (p. 121). Understanding one's self differently, not through ontology or being, is understanding the world differently. It is an ethical act of letting all others exist. Further drawing on the enmeshment of my self with others, Levinas says, that because of my reliance on the other, "I cannot disentangle myself from society with the Other" (p. 47), meaning that I am never outside of the other's call, and I am never apart from the many others. Justice is what happens when there is more than one other, when I am faced with many others in society.

Perhaps a more appropriate term for what we experience in the world would be *meaning*. To avoid further confusion, I will use *meaning* throughout the remainder of this chapter to refer to what it is we understand when we create novelty in the world through our relations with the other. Removing knowledge from the center of focus for education means displacing an autonomous self as the primary unit of existence, because knowledge is the territory of the individual. In the language of knowledge, there is a subject who “knows.” Meaning and meaning creation, however, is what happens when my self is heteronomous, is not closed off from otherness, but is governed by the other. Meaning making, what meaning I make of this life, is in the realm of my ethical relation with the other. Knowledge is dead, not able to expand or unfold into difference. Meaning is constantly shifting and generative, dependent on how I respond to the other, how I understand what it means to be born, to experience time, to be silent.

A relational understanding of the self, one in which the self is brought into existence by the other, can help establish a field in which ethics can occur, because it neither defines the individual as a fixed entity (as in modernism), nor erases the self altogether (as in postmodernism). Going back to Chapter 1, we see that through a new story of birth, time, and silence, it is more understandable to make claims that meaning happens in relations, that there is no way to reach an agreed upon bit of knowledge, because there is never a point of knowledge existing outside of a particular relationship. Ethics happens in relations and is not a matter of individual rights.

Ultimately, the issue of knowledge and ethics addresses the first research question I articulated in the Introduction: What is a self when the relation with the other forms the basis of my existence? Because knowledge was the foundation of the self in modernist terms, knowledge is what separates me from others and keeps me from seeing otherness. On the other hand, when

I understand that I exist because of the other's call to me, then I understand that my ethical actions are before knowledge, meaning that I am always partial and changing. As Peperzak, Critchley, and Bernasconi (1996) write, the face-to-face relationship with the other "is the most primordial datum in human experience" (p. 162). As the most primordial datum, the very first experience I have, my self is not identical and autonomous. It is never "itself." In the revelation of the relationship between ethics and knowledge, I see that while meaning is created in the relationship with the other, knowledge is always an unethical imposition of power over the other, who begs for my assistance in being heard.

Because there is no separation between ethics and knowledge, the story of life had to be retold in a way that places ethics before knowledge, meaning before being. The story of life had to be situated as one that allowed for multiplicity and my response to the other, and did not insist on individuality and knowing as the foundation of my existence.

### **CONNECTING BIRTH, TIME, AND SILENCE**

The second research question I wished to investigate in this work was what it means to be a self when birth, time, and silence are understood not as single events in the life of a person, but as re-theorized moments oriented toward the other. When the other calls me into existence, then birth, time, and silence are not events that happen to an individual in solitude, they are moments that happen *for* an other. Whereas birth traditionally brought a self into the world so that he or she might be able to grow autonomously into himself or herself, birth might be each moment the other comes to me, asking me to be responsible for him or her without pretending to know what he or she is or needs before I am called. Whereas time traditionally ticked off each second of sameness so that a self could control, predict, and gather more knowledge, time might be the very relationship with the other, the very way in which difference manifests itself, unable to be

measured. Whereas silence was traditionally the end of production, the death of the modern self, silence might be the way in which we let the other have his or her word. I argue that birth, time, and silence are not things that happen to me in my life, they are moments in which the other has the opportunity to exist without my deciding what the other must be.

What we find when birth, time, and silence are reevaluated is that each of them occurs precisely due to the other's call to me, because otherness already exists, and not because I know or exist first. We see that language transformed in Chapter 4 is the movement of time in Chapter 3, it is being reborn in Chapter 2. These are all moments when the other faces us and we respond to it without prejudice, without predetermination, without expectation at all of what the other means and asks of us. These moments of our lives are not points on a line telling a linear story of separation and autonomy; they are the ways in which we receive what is other than us, ways we are able to respond to the other in the other's terms. When language is transformed, it is the moment of meaning creation. When we have listened for the other, heard what the other is asking and are able to respond in a way that does not consume the other, we are able to respond in ways that we did not know were possible when we were busy using words to name everything around us. When we give birth or are reborn, we are a part of authentic creation, because we are not repeating what is expected and already determined. This ability to respond with newness, with what we did not name, is what happens when time moves. We are moved out of the present when newness arrives; things change, meanings change. There is no time on a line that moves forward. Time moves when we respond to the other. We are reborn each time we respond to the other, because we become new, we become fuller of otherness, of what was not possible before. In the end, birth, time, and silence are all part of the same process. They are not separate from one another. They are all moments of living for the other. Our lives are not being born, passing

time, and becoming silent, all alone, by ourselves. Our lives are movements for the other. The otherness that we get to glimpse, that we are invited to hear is how we experience creativity, how we live through creativity.

In this section, I bring together some of the ways in which birth, time, and silence, as they are not isolated events, overlap, and assert that a self who lives these events for the other is also one who experiences birth, time, and silence in radically different ways. Indeed, it should not go unnoticed that in a new understanding of these three moments, they would not maintain the same structure or linearity they would in traditional understandings. In addition to the reorientation of these moments toward the other, two reoccurring themes emerge: first, in combining birth and time, we discover the importance of the body in experiencing the world and the other, and second, in combining time and silence, we discover the fundamental relationship between measured time and the use of language. A number of other relationships between these three moments exists and should be expounded on. However, because the body and the presence of language are so ubiquitous in education and present unavoidable ethical dilemmas, I feel these two topics deserve further treatment here.<sup>37</sup>

## BIRTH AND TIME

In Chapter 2, we saw that, according to Nietzsche, the body is the site of meaning making, and that the body participates in understanding the world. Moreover, in Chapter 3, we found that the present comes into existence when the past meets the body and saw a concrete example of this in the presence of ENRVs in human genetic composition. In discussing birth and time together here, I want to suggest, as others have, not only that the body is integral to

---

<sup>37</sup> Other possibilities deserving further exploration include the ways in which birth and silence intersect, especially the creative possibilities of both; also, the limitations of language run throughout the themes, and present a particularly difficult obstacle to overcome. Levinas struggled with language throughout his work, in particular in *Otherwise than Being* (1996), and much further work needs to be done regarding this matter.



making meaning in the world (for instance, Kristeva, 1991; Springay & Freedman, 2009), but also that realizing the body's role in giving birth and experiencing time offers a different view of how we participate with the world.

In re-envisioning what birth might mean, I concluded that giving birth is a capacity attributable to all humans, that something other than me is what appears in birth, and that the birth of knowledge (now meaning) as other than what I am means that I am responsible for what I give birth to. I am responsible for the meaning I create with the other. I argue that Western philosophy has mischaracterized maieutics as a teaching practice and that Levinas has continued that misrepresentation. The traditional understanding of maieutics as “bringing me nothing but what is already in me” falls into the trap that is established by linear metric time. Here, I want to illuminate the intersection of birth and time through the body, and suggest that in their orientation toward the other, birth and time show the importance of the body in education.

First, recall that Levinas (1980) condemns the prospect of seeing teaching as maieutic, the teacher serving as midwife to help the student give birth to what is already existing in him or her, because as Levinas points out, this is “to receive nothing of the Other but what is in me” (p. 43). What I know already exists in me, is nothing but me. For Levinas (1980), “Teaching is not reducible to maieutics; it comes from the exterior and brings me more than I contain” (p. 51). For Levinas and a large part of Western philosophy, maieutics has seen the teacher as the one who helps the student give birth to what has existed in him or her all along. In this description, being educated does not entail exposure to the other; it is simply bringing out more of me.

Note, however, that Levinas's language surrounding the matter of what it means to be taught is in line with Nietzsche's vision of birth. Bringing me more than I contain suggests that I am overflowing with the other. “To approach the Other in conversation is to welcome his

expression, in which at each instant he overflows the idea a thought would carry from it. It is therefore to *receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity” (1980, p. 51, emphasis in original). Here we witness the overflowing about which Nietzsche has written in terms of pregnancy. To be open to the other is to be overflowing. The other is more than I can contain. I do not have the capacity for it. Indeed! This is the case in pregnancy. I cannot remain full forever. I must let the other be. I argue a maieutic understanding of education is appropriate, precisely because overcoming, overflowing, and openness to the other occur during birth. The very idea of infinity is present in the possibility of giving birth.

Literally, something must indeed come from outside the mother’s body in order for the fetus to appear. Notwithstanding one’s religious beliefs, every pregnancy has required something in addition to the woman’s body to create the fetus. The virgin birth is not possible. Even in the story of Eve, the hand of God had a role to play in her pregnancy; artificial insemination and test tube babies require more than what one person can bring. At any rate, even a barren midwife, as Socrates described himself, would realize that something came from outside the mother to make the pregnancy possible. This rather obvious remark about the production of life itself has a number of conceptual implications. Here, then I have suggested a different concept of birth. If, as both Socrates and Levinas discuss (though Socrates believes it is the actual state of affairs, while Levinas disagrees with it), education as maieutics allows me “to receive nothing of the Other but what is in me” (p. 43), then such an education prohibits me from letting otherness into the world. Seeing birth as a self-overcoming and as an openness to that which is not nameable, however, seems more appropriate and at least more accurate regarding the actual process of giving birth. As I stated in Chapter 2, giving birth means always giving

birth to something that is not me, something other than me. I assert that maieutics should be reclaimed as a viable teaching metaphor, because giving birth is always bringing something new into the world, bringing the other into the world. What is more, the notion of giving birth introduces ethics back into the meaning that is created in the classroom, because we must always be responsible for what we give birth to.

Interestingly, the problem with the Socratic or maieutic approach to teaching can be understood as one that involves time. To regard birth as the coming into the world of nothing more than what is in me is to make the mistake of believing that repetition is possible. As I stated in Chapter 3, repetition is not possible; it is only an abstraction. Seeing children as mere extensions of, repetitions of, the self is entirely problematic, and I have argued against this while arguing against the expression of pity. Pity is *wanting* the other to be like me, but it is also *expecting* the other to be like me in an anticipation of sameness, of repetition. Beginning by seeing the newborn as wholly other than myself changes the entire pedagogical approach from repetition to openness to what this other offers, as response to this other's demand. Furthermore, my openness to the other is what allows me to be more than a self as understood in modernist terms. My openness to the other is what makes me multiple, beyond knowing, beyond Socrates's dictate to "Know thyself."

In Chapter 3, I discussed Serres's metaphor of a car representing contemporaneity to locate the body as an index of time, further emphasizing Bergson's claim that the present is where the past meets the body. The presence of ENRVs marks our bodies as carriers of otherness and as participants in the infinite possibilities of the past. When birth and time are taken together in these ways, the self is multiple. There is no core to which one can point and

say “here I am.” Because the “I” is always shifting in its response to the other brought about by both time and birth.

The inability to know myself is taken a step further by including the body as part of what experiences meaning and the other. While modern notions of the self are replete with musings on rationality and the importance of the mind (recall for instance, Descartes’s *cogito* from Chapter 1), working towards an ethics of otherness implicates the body. Nietzsche describes the body as the locus of making meaning of the world, and for Bergson, the present comes into existence when the past meets with the body. The body is one of the ways in which we experience and make meaning in the world, and its physical presence in the world is where the experience of duration takes place. I experience time in my body. And time as duration is not homogenous.

What is more, my multiplicity finds itself because of the impossibility of reducing each moment into a unit of measured time. My experience and emotions are not reducible to the spatialized representation of time; hence, Bergson’s need to introduce duration as a means of exploring how we experience something called time.

Recall that for Bergson, novelty in the world is possible because the infinite possibilities of the past can never be exhausted. Furthermore, that past does not exist in some *distant* past, because time as duration is not a function of space. The past inhabits our present, awaiting our response to its call to be reinvigorated. Maieutics as the Greeks understood it, is repetition; repetition, though, is not possible. Seeing time as duration, and as the relation with the other, repudiates maieutics as giving birth to sameness, because there is no sameness or repetition in duration.

In the re-theorized story of birth and time, when I give birth to newness, the past, in its infiniteness, passes through me, moving time. The presence of something new, something other, means that time has moved and otherness has been born. Here we are responsible not only for the otherness that is born, but also, the entirety of the future.

## TIME AND SILENCE

By taking it [language] away from silence we have made language an orphan.  
(Picard, 1952, p. 27)

In Chapter 3, I elaborated on the creative possibilities of the past and rejected the notion of linear time. Interestingly, Levinas and a number of other theorists recognize language, as constituted by knowledge and its fixedness, as intertwined with linear time. For instance, Levinas remarks that “Knowledge is a re-presentation, a return to presence, and nothing may remain *other* in it” (2001, p. 76, emphasis in original). Knowledge is displayed and conveyed through language. The use of language to produce and communicate knowledge returns everything to the present. That is, language keeps everything here and now, which is the same. Here, I am treating language and knowledge as inseparable, because the one depends so much on the other. What Levinas is explaining in this quote is that knowledge, as I have explained above, keeps everything the same, and so prevents any movement in time. Knowledge merely re-presents what has already been done, said, and discovered.

Language, as we understand and use it in modernity, is a function of the way we understand time in modernity. In linear measured time, we have each moment as the present, as that which is given to us. The present is what we can know and hold. In fact, in French, the word for “now,” *maintenant*, means to hold or keep, revealing our thinking about the present as something that can be grasped and controlled. In this way, language, when we speak, sharing

what we know, puts a hold on things. We demonstrate our knowledge of things and we do it here, now. Understood thusly, language, rather than silence, really is death. It is the end of time, because it functions to keep (maintain) things the same. Language, with its fixedness and definitions keeps time from moving.

Ordered in time that is merely repetition, language is also mere repetition. Ordered by an understanding of time that is homogenous, language can exist only as that which repeats, or as what Serres has called debate. Recalling that in *Time and the Other* (1987), Levinas said that time itself is the relationship with the other (p. 39), a metricized time which denies the possibility of newness, then prohibits the possibility of language being anything other than what is already the same. Language appears only as repetition in repetitive time.

Silence, however, in its openness to the other, exists in a different time. Dauenhauer (1980) describes deep silence as the relationship between persons relating themselves to something other than an object, and thus as something that cannot be measured. Because there is no object to measure, or utterance to be said about it, there is no way to linearly organize silence as before, during, or after some other utterance. The other, not bound or thematized by time, resists being spoken about or named. Dauenhauer (1980) thus claims that, “There is...no reason to assume that the time structure of deep silence is fundamentally analogous to intervening silence [wait time] or fore-and-after silence. Rather, its time structure seems to be quite different” (p. 22).

Language, in its determinateness and display of knowledge, and its capturing of the present, prevents newness from appearing. Time and language, understood traditionally, work in conjunction with each other to keep and recognize sameness. Time as duration, which permits everything in its infiniteness, or time as ichnography, recording multiplicity, time as poetry, as

that which creates, functions with silence to be creative and to allow for novelty. In fact, Roy's (2005) work in duration reminds us that the imperative to use language to describe and define events freezes those events in time; it makes time stand still. Roy argues, "When we step back from the linguistic imperative, we perceive novelty in terms of endless potential and what's more, we are part of that novelty" (p. 10). Specifically in reference to memories, this quote points out the tendency to always describe our memories with the same words over and over. In Bergson's (1913) own words, "When we pay less attention to the fleeting feelings and instead rely on language to solidify the image, 'we confuse the feeling itself, which is in a perpetual state of becoming, with its permanent external object, and especially the word which expresses this object' thereby objectifying reality (p. 129). Instead of objectifying reality, when we refrain from using language to label our memories, those memories and our emotions about them change over time. It is the drive to use language that fixes memories and prevents novelty from appearing.

Relating the connections between time and language back to Levinas, we return to the terms "the saying" and "the said," which were introduced in Chapter 4. Critchley and Bernasconi (2002) write, "Crudely stated, the saying is the ethical and the said is ontological" (p. 17). If time is poetry, then the saying – that is, my approach to the unknowable other – is the meaning of poetry's characteristic of being "beyond knowing." Traditional understandings of time and language find that a time that measures and divides also controls the possibilities of language, in part because if the ontology of our being depends on knowing, then time and language are fully implicated in knowing. Time is measured and controlled in an effort to know and predict. Language as implicated in ontology, demonstrates knowing. Furthermore, as I described in Chapter 4, the West's logocentrism insists on speaking as part of our very being.

To take time and language as I have presented them in their respective chapters, time has the capability of moving us beyond what is factually given. I use silence in much the same way Levinas uses “the saying.” Critchley and Bernasconi (2002) write, “The saying is the non-thematizable ethical residue of language that escapes comprehension, interrupts ontology and is the very enactment of the movement from the same to the other” (p. 18). A first philosophy of ontology means that time must always be repetition, and language will only express what we know. Thus we find that time and language, without being movements toward the other, are nothing but moments of sameness defining being.

As long as we continue to insist on the metricized structure of time, we will continue to make an orphan of language, because it will forever be separate from the origin of what makes anything possible. Also, we will continue to do violence to the other by naming it and keeping it in time.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION**

If ontology, as discussed above regarding knowledge and ethics, is the act of establishing being, is an act of violence, then one of the immediate implications for a pedagogy concerned with an ethics of otherness is that such a pedagogy will be one based on peace, insofar as letting the other exist without definition is a peaceful act. This section describes not only the implications for a peaceful education, but also includes a brief discussion on the implications for creativity in education as it relates to peace.

By retelling the story of life, not as moments in an ontological story of being, but in a story in which ethics is the first philosophy, life is described in its responsibility toward the other. Because I have re-theorized birth, time, and silence not as moments of my being, but as moments of living for the other, life is no longer the violence of my existence before the other;



rather, life is the way in which I am in the world, peacefully. Again, my self exists first because of, and for, the other.

Others, notably Egéa-Kuehne (2008) and Dudiak (2008), have written on Levinas's contribution to peace and education. For instance, Dudiak writes,

But peace, insofar as there will be peace, must, according to Levinas, begin in me, in my being taught, in my responsibility for the other as other. Teaching peace means, therefore, first of all, being taught, learning, to be peaceful, knowing how to serve. A culture of peace requires, after this thought, that I be educated to respond to the needs of the other without my being capable of demanding a reciprocal degree of responsibility from the other who, as other, remains resistant to the categories I find in myself and applicable to myself, who as other remains the one I am called to serve. (p. 245)

I argue that within Dudiak's call for a culture of peace that instructs us to be responsible for the other, is the demand that we refigure our lives in such a way that we do not continue to tell the story of the autonomous individual. Our very categories for how we define our lives must be rethought. If living for the other cannot be done through an ontology which hierarchizes knowledge and being, living itself must be rethought, and done in such a way as to prevent the solidification of those categories. As soon as one can tell the story of life through immutable points on a line, a life that occurs in a rigid course of development, we have reverted to knowledge.

Taking all this into account, we see that a peaceful education is one in which little is decided in advance of the arrival of the other, because teaching is serving the other without definition of his or her needs. Learning itself finds its importance in learning to serve the other, and not in service to predetermined curricula, tests, lists of facts, or even specific benchmarks of development. In fact, Biesta (2008) argues for a "pedagogy of empty hands," one in which educators do not decide the needs of the other before the other has called out to us. He writes that a pedagogy of empty hands,

indicates that a concern for the uniqueness of children, of students, and of other “newcomers” requires that we give up, or at least hold back, all the “tricks of the trade,” all the wisdom of the world, all national curricula and educational strategies, all recipes for “what works,” in order to be able to approach newcomers without an agenda or preconception. (p. 208)

This lack of specific and objective methods and content in education is what makes it an education of peace. Because all students, indeed all subjects and contexts, are unique, forcing my being, my knowledge, my ontology on the other prohibits the other from existing without my categorical knowledge. Remember, insofar as the other is not knowable, any attempt I make to predict or determine the other is an act of violence. I refer back to one of the scholars on Bergson, Elizabeth Grosz (2004), who in writing about duration asserts that

any plan is, by definition, the attempt to foreclose certain options.... A plan implies the elimination of duration, the compression of the future into the present. Life itself, however, functions not through conformity to a plan, an ideal, or a law, but through processes of differentiation, whose “plan” or direction is only emergent, in the process of being developed. (p. 215)

What is taught and what is learned comes from what has already occurred, but without preconceptions of what we expect from the other. What is yet to be, the future, the infinity of the other cannot be contained in a curriculum. A plan or comprehensive curriculum cannot acknowledge or take responsibility for the alterity of otherness. All attempts to plan, to limit what can be done or displayed, necessarily foreclose on the possibility of meaning making.

Further, a pedagogy of peace that does not use a predetermined curriculum mirrors Levinas’s own approach to ethics. As Egéa-Kuehne (2008) points out, “when reading Levinas, one must be cautious not to look for easy solutions or precepts to be ‘applied.’...Levinas does not believe that philosophy should necessarily develop an easily implemented program” (p. 1). Because the other always approaches me with his or her infinity, there are no rules or guidelines I can use to respond to him or her. In this way, a “system” of ethics is not possible, because my

response, my ethical actions, will always be dependent on one particular other. Similarly, a pedagogy of peace which responds to the uniqueness of the other cannot be constructed in advance.

One further note on violence, the other, and education is due. Davis (1997), in summing up Levinas's non-violent approach to the other, writes: "[Levinas's] work is commanded by a simple but far-reaching question: what would it mean if, rather than responding to the threat of the Other with violence, we endeavored to accept our dispossession of the world, to listen to the voice of the Other rather than suppress it?" (p. 144). Davis, in following Levinas, insists that listening to the other demands a move away from categorization. He continues,

The silenced, suppressed or victimized Other might be defined, for example by race, gender, religion, class or position within an institutional hierarchy. [But] Levinas offers an ethics without rules, imperatives, maxims or clear objectives other than a passionate moral conviction that the Other should be heard. (p. 144)

I refer back to the discussion of *Othello* in Chapter 3. I did not argue that those harmed or otherwise oppressed by the text should not be heard or should not be the focus of teaching. Rather, in a peaceful move, one away from violence and toward the other, I argued that the other should not first be categorized as one to whom harm has been done. A pedagogy of peace in Levinasian terms means that my relationship with the other is never one in which I define or name the other in advance. My relationship with the other is bound by the other coming first to me in his or her infinity, in his or her being more than I can contain. By this right, by the other's right to exist and exist without my placing limits on it, the other cannot be categorized in a violent move to limit his or her infinity.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Though some critics have expressed concern over what the primacy of the face-to-face relation with the other means in the midst of society, of so many others, Levinas was concerned very much with the relationship between ethics and politics. Peperzak, Critchley, and Bernasconi (2008) note that Levinas "endeavors to build a bridge from ethics, conceived as the non-totalizable relation with the other human, to politics, understood as the relation with the third party, that is, to all the others that make up society" (p. 163). The arrival of the third party in the relation with

Peacefulness, the hospitality of welcoming the other without constraints, implies a new perspective on creativity in education, as well. Creativity is a difficult topic to address in education for at least two reasons. In the current school reform and testing-centered climate, there is often little room given to the possibility of creative work at all. And while this is problematic, the greater difficulty in discussing creativity in education or in other fields is that there is little consensus on what creativity actually means, how to foster it in students, and what the actual or practical benefit of encouraging creativity is, other than a generic appeal to individuality or the happiness of creating.

Stephen Davis (2006) writes about the role of creativity in a typical school setting and offers suggestions for how schools and school districts can encourage creativity in students and administration, including “a deep passion for an envisioned change” and “an unwavering sense of purpose” (p. 8). But he includes the following proviso:

Metaphorically, it's a good idea to color outside the lines, but not so far as to obscure the essence of the picture. At some point, playfulness and wild ideas must be made practical and aligned with the goals, mission and capacities of the school. Although creativity and innovation can't be prescribed, they can be cultivated by leaders who are astute enough to accurately assess the creative profile of their schools or districts and respond strategically. (p. 34-35)

In response to this, I argue that understanding creativity in the context of the other does not limit creativity in the ways that Davis does above, and moreover, that creativity as living for the other provides a specific ethical argument for the role of creativity in education, and indeed in life.

Sarah Louise Muhr (2010) writes about creativity and the other in the field of management theory. She contends that rather than seeing creativity as the introduction of something new that can be used and implemented by a group of people, creativity is better

---

the other is what Levinas calls justice. The reader is also directed to Egéa-Kuehne (2003) for a discussion of the two major “disruptions” which lead Levinas to his concept of justice (particularly, p. 113-114). The implications of the third party and of Levinas’s understanding of justice are currently beyond the scope of this Chapter.

understood as receptivity to the other. Her primary argument is that creativity is an ethical action, one in which we receive the other in his or her infinity and un-graspableness. This is a marked move away from creativity as it is often described, particularly in today's results oriented world, focused on student test scores and worker productivity (see several ongoing debates about the nature and role of creativity in the business world). Creativity can alternatively be understood as an ethical act, one that allows the unknowability of the other to be expressed in some way. This means that standard markers of creativity, being new and useful, or being of value to others, go by the wayside. Any intent of viewing the other as something useful has already limited the other's otherness, placing boundaries on what the other offers. Here, giving birth to otherness has profound implications for what teachers encourage when they encourage creativity. Our ethical responsibility to the other and our response to the other are, in fact, a moment of creativity, of experiencing the new. But, as I have pointed out in several places throughout this work, one can never anticipate what that novelty will look like, as doing so silences the other.

In general, accounts of creativity in the work place or in the school focus heavily on the usefulness of whatever new thing is developed. But, as Muhr (2010) describes the ethical moment of creativity, there is no intent on my part; there is no sense of needing to use the other to make something new to be bought, sold, or displayed. She insists, as I have tried to point out, that,

Levinasian creativity is not about gaining knowledge, using knowledge, and possessing knowledge. It is not about knowing oneself and externalizing a potential. Creativity precedes the being; it is beyond ontology. Profound creativity is a submission to a morality, a hearing of the call of the Other. (p.82)

Perhaps most importantly, and with what educators the world over will have to struggle, is the realization that the other, in his or her radical alterity, is always other and beyond our being able

to change him or her. We should not try, nor want, to change the other. Confronted with the face of the absolutely other, the most ethical response is one not grounded in fear. As Muhr writes, “a prerequisite to obtain the creation of something deeply novel is letting go of our inherent fear of difference” (p. 76). Creativity is the peace we find when we give up fighting what is different from ourselves and welcome the other. And in a very profound way, creativity, being open to what cannot be named, is what Nietzsche, Bergson, and Serres wrote about in various contexts.

For instance, for Nietzsche, giving birth is intensely about being open to otherness and the difference that is born from us and others. Recall what Nietzsche (1974) observed about creativity: “What is originality? To *see* something that has no name as yet and hence cannot be mentioned although it stares us all in the face. The way men usually are, it takes a name to make something visible for them” (p. 261, emphasis in original). Nietzsche recognized that our fear of what cannot be easily absorbed into existing knowledge is what prevents us from seeing novelty and difference. What is striking about this is that we react not even with disdain, which at least is an acknowledgement, but with blindness when confronted with something we do not already understand, with something that does not fit into our knowledge. Bergson’s re-theorization of time is about resisting seeing time as a system that maintains sameness and repetition, and rather understanding that time is about experience, and that there is no chance of creativity in an already ordered life. He understood that there is no way to enforce a sameness to time and the way we live time. So is the case with Serres and his scorn for debate. He detests the practice of regurgitation and repetition of speech. He insists that exposure to the other is the only means of being educated, and that all the back and forth between various schools of thought brings nothing new into the world, because these debates serve only to name and rename things that have

already been seen before. Birth, time, and silence are all ways in which we welcome difference, all ways in which we refuse to insist on the same. Creativity, living life creatively, this is what happens when we respond to the other in his or her inordinate difference.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The other is not opposed to me as a freedom other than, but similar to my own, and consequently hostile to my own. The Other is not another freedom as arbitrary as my own, in which case it would traverse the infinity that separates me from him and enter under the same concept. His alterity is manifested in a mastery that does not conquer, but teaches. Teaching is not a species of a genus called domination, a hegemony at work within a totality, but is the presence of infinity breaking the closed circle of totality (Levinas, 1980, p. 171).

What we risk when we do not allow the other to exist on his or her own terms is the death of creativity; we risk condemning ourselves to lives in which the only thing not known is simply the placement of pieces of a puzzle waiting to be filled in. The answers are just waiting; it is only a matter of time. A life lived for the other is one in which we can be constantly surprised by the newness that emerges from our fundamental relationship with the other. Above all, this relationship is not just an ethical duty, it is the foundation of our very selves, making our existence possible. All meaning comes from the response we have to what remains, in perpetuity, different from us.

When I return to the Introductory Chapter, I see that the students' visions of what it means to be human, particularly so in the more traditional descriptions, are all persistent in their inclusion of *being* as part of the human condition. To *be* human means to act on the world, to do in the world, to be separate from the world and others. Here, at the end, we see that in telling the story of the human life lived for the other, there is no place for my being or knowing in the world. My identity arises only out of my responsibility to others. In his most beautiful, and difficult work, *Otherwise than Being* (1997), Levinas writes, "I speak of responsibility as the

essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity. For I describe subjectivity in ethical terms. Ethics, here, does not supplement a preceding existential base; the very mode of the subjective is knotted in ethics understood as responsibility” (p. 95). For Levinas, the condition of being a subject, of being a self, is always already an ethical condition. There is no subjectivity outside ethics.

To know something is to foreclose on possibilities; it is to put an end to new meaning emerging. When we insist that students gain knowledge, we are creating a set of ethics in which knowledge comes before our ethical commitments. This creates a relation with the world in which we experience our selves as knowers, as beings who act on the world. When ethics comes before knowledge, a different relation is created and there is no duty to know, only a duty to offer the other what the other asks of us.

With ethics as a first philosophy, as the foundation of our existence in the world, we see that knowledge is not what makes us human; being separate from other beings and the world is not what creates our selves. Rather, when ethics is the foundation and exists prior to any knowledge about the world, we see that everything we understand about the world and others comes after, and because of, our relations with others. The call from the other is the first experience I have, before knowing anything at all, and all my perceptions and judgments begin with that initial relation. My relations with others allow new meanings to come into existence.

Part of the result of giving up knowledge in exchange for ethical meaning is the realization that life is not a story of autonomy, because there is no point at which I am autonomous. Autonomy is the domain of one who can separate in order to know things about the world. Instead of choosing knowledge, I welcome meaning brought about by the heteronomy of a life in which I am born, experience time, and am silent because of the other. It is not simply



my duty to, but my very subjectivity that must, let the other exist. I choose a life full of meaning in its most peaceful and creative sense. I know not.

## WORKS CITED

- Addams, J. (2009). *Jane Addams: Twenty years at Hull House*. Feather Trail Press.
- Adney, K. (2010). Shaping Shakespeare, reflecting history: Adaptations of Othello for children in 1990s Britain. *Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, 2 (1), 81-113.
- Alerby, E. (2003). The sounds of silence: Some remarks on the value of silence in the process of reflection in relation to teaching and learning. *Reflective Practice*, 4, 42-51.
- Alterman, R. (2007). Representation, interaction, and intersubjectivity. *Cognitive Science*, 31, 815-841.
- Bateson, G. (2002). *Mind and nature: A necessary unity*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Bacon, F. (1960). *The new organon*. New York, NY: Prentice Hall Publishing.
- Bergson, H. (1913). *Time and free will An essay on the immediate data of consciousness*. Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press.
- Bergson, H. (1965). *Duration and simultaneity*. (H. Dingle, Ed.). New York, NY: Blackwell Publishing Company.
- Bergson, H. (1996). *Matter and memory*. New York, NY: Zone Books.
- Bergson, H. (1998). *Creative evolution*. Charleston, SC: Nabu Press.
- Berman, M. (1981). *The reenchantment of the world*. Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Bertens, H. (1993). The postmodern weltanschauung and its relation to modernism: An introductory survey. In J. Natoli & L. Hutcheon (Eds.). *The postmodern reader* (pp. 25-70). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Biesta, G. (2008). Pedagogy with empty hands: Levinas, education, and the question of being human. In Egéa-Kuehne, D. (Ed.). *Levinas and education: At the intersection of faith and reason*. (pp. 198-210). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bingham, C. (2001). Nietzsche's rejection of education. *Educational Theory*, 51, 337-351.
- Bingham, C. & Sidorkin, A. (2004). *No education without relation*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Blenkinsop, S. (2005). Martin Buber: Educating for relationship. *Ethics, Place, and Environment*, 8 (3), 285-307.

- Blondel, E. (1991). *Nietzsche: The body and culture*. London, UK: The Athlone Press.
- Bollnow, O.F. (1982). On silence – Findings of philosophic-pedagogical anthropology. *Universitas*, 24, 41-47.
- Boose, L. E. (1994). The getting of a lawful race: Racial discourse in Early Modern England and the unrepresentable black woman. In M. Hendricks & P. Parker (Eds.). *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period* (pp. 35-54). New York: Routledge.
- Bowers, C.A. (1987). *Elements of a post-liberal theory of education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Bruns, G. (2002). *The concepts of art and poetry in Emmanuel Levinas's writing*. In S. Critchley & R. Bernasconi (Eds.). *The Cambridge companion to Levinas*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Buber, M. (1971). *I and Thou*. (W. Kaufman, Trans.). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Burgard, P.J. (1994). *Nietzsche and the feminine*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia.
- Caranfa, A. (2004). Silence as the foundation of learning. *Educational Theory*, 54, 211-230.
- Cixous, H. (1994). *The Hélène Cixous reader*. S. Sellers (Ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cohen, R. (1985). Introduction, In E. Levinas. *Ethics and Infinity*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- Cole, M. & Engeström, Y. (1993). A cultural historic approach to distributed cognition. In G. Salomon (Ed.), *Distributed Cognitions* (pp. 1-46). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- The Comprehensive Signed English Dictionary*. (1983). H. Borndtein, K.L. Saulnier, and L.B. Hamilton (Eds.), Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.
- Critchley, S. (2010, May 16). What is a philosopher? *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>
- Critchly, S. & Bernasconi, R. (Eds.). (2002). *The Cambridge companion to Levinas*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Crocco, M., Munro, P., & Weiler, K. (1999). *Pedagogies of Resistance: Women educator activists 1880-1960*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

- Crosby, A.W. (1997). *The measure of reality: Quantification and Western society, 1250-1600*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Dauenhauer, B. P. (1980). *Silence: The phenomenon and its ontological significance*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Davis, B. & Sumara, D. (1997). Cognition, complexity, and teacher education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 67, 105-125.
- Davis, C. (1997). *Levinas: An introduction*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd.
- Davis, S. (2006). Unleashing creativity in your schools. *Leadership*. 36 (2), 8-38.
- deGravelles, K. H. (2011). You be Othello: Interrogating identification in the classroom. *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*, 11(1), 153-175.
- Deleuze, G. (1990). *Bergsonian Duration*. New York, NY: Zone Books.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (2009). *Anti-oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. New York, NY: Penguin Classics.
- Derrida, J. (1993). *Aporias*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1998). *Of grammatology*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1978). *Writing and difference*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Descartes, R. (1993). *Meditations on first philosophy*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Dewey, J. (1997). *Democracy and education*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Dewey, J. (2010). *My Pedagogic creed*. Charleston, SC: Nabu Press.
- Dingle, H. (1965). Introduction, In H. Bergson. *Duration and Simultaneity*. New York, NY: Blackwell Publishing company
- Doll, W. (1993). *A post-modern perspective on curriculum*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Doll, W., M.J. Fleener, D. Trueit, & J. St. Julien. (2005). *Chaos, complexity, curriculum, and culture: A conversation*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

- Dudiak, J. (2008). Peace as being taught: The philosophical foundations of a culture of peace. In Egéa-Kuehne, D. (Ed.). *Levinas and education: At the intersection of faith and reason*. (pp. 242-252). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Dunlap, K. A., Palmarini, M., Varela, M., Burghardt, R.C., Hayashi, K., Farmer, J.L., & Spencer, T.E. (2006). Endogenous retroviruses regulate periimplantation placental growth and differentiation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *103*, 14390-14395
- Eagleton, T. (2008). *Literary theory: An introduction*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Egéa-Kuehne, D. (2003) Levinas's ethico-political order of human proximity: The quest for justice. In M.A. Peters, C. Lankshear, and M. Olssen (Eds.). *Futures of Critical Theory: Dreams of Difference*. (pp. 103-125). Lanham, Boulder, NY, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Egéa-Kuehne, D. (2006). The humanities and Serres's 'New Organization of Knowledge'. *International Journal of the Humanities Vol. 3*(3), 131-138.
- Egéa-Kuehne, D. (2008). *Levinas and education: At the intersection of faith and reason*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Enserink, M. (2006). Viral fossil brought back to life. *Science Now*, 2006, 4-4.
- Eppert, C. (2002). Entertaining history: (Un)heroic identification, apt pupils, and an ethical imagination. *New German Critique* 86, 71 – 101.
- Fokkema, D., & Bertens, H. (1986). *Approaching postmodernism*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Foucault, M. (1988). *The history of sexuality, vol. 3: The care of the self*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Fox-Keller, E. (2003). *Making sense of life: Explaining biological development with models, metaphors, and machines*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Frendo, J., Olivier, D., Cheynet, V., Blond, J., Bouton, O., Vidaud, M., Rabreau, M., Evain-Brion, D., & Mallet, F. (2003). Direct involvement of HERV-W Env glycoprotein in human trophoblast cell fusion and differentiation. *Molecular Cell Biology*, *23*, 3566-3574.
- Funk, R. & Kolln, M. (1998). Introduction. In E.W. Ludlow (Ed.), *Understanding English Grammar* (pp. 1-2). Needham, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

- Garrison, J. (1997). *Dewey and eros: Wisdom and desire in the art of teaching*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Gitlin, A., Siegel, M., & Boru, K. (1989). The politics of method: From leftist ethnography to educative research. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 2 (3), 237-253.
- Greene, A. (1940). *The philosophy of silence*. New York, NY: Richard R. Smith Publishers.
- Grosz, E. (2004). *The nick of time: Politics, evolution, and the untimely*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Grumet, M. (1988). *Bitter milk*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Guyer, P. & Wood, A. (1999). Introduction in E. Kant. *Critique of pure reason*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Habermas, J. (1995). Communicative versus subject-centered reason. In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *Rethinking the subject: An anthology of contemporary European social thought* (pp. 153-164). San Francisco, CA: Westview Press.
- Haraway, D. (1990). *Simians cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hayes, P. (2009). The ideology of relativity: The case of the clock paradox. *Social Epistemology*, 23 (1), 57-78.
- Heidegger, M. (1996). *Being and time*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Hicks, S. & Rosenberg, A. (2005). Nietzsche and disruptive wisdom. *Dialogue and Universalism*, 15 (5-6), 7-19.
- Hill, C., Herndon, A., Karpinski, Z. (2006). Contemplative practices: Educating for peace and tolerance. *Teachers College Record*, 108 (9), 1915-1935.
- Honderich, T. (Ed.). (1995). *The Oxford companion to philosophy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Illich, I. (1992). *In the mirror of the past: Lectures and addresses 1978-1990*. New York, NY: Marion Boyars Publishers.
- Irvine, C. (2005). The other side of silence: Levinas, medicine, and literature. *Literature and Medicine*, 24 (1), 8-18.
- James, W. (2006). *A pluralistic universe*. Charlottesville, NC: Bibliobazaar.

- Jensen, D. (2006) *Endgame Volume 1: The problem of civilization*. New York, NY: Seven Stories Press.
- Jones, A. (2004). Talking cure: The desire for dialogue. In M. Boler (Ed.). *Democratic dialogue in Education: Troubling speech, disturbing silence*. (pp. 57-68). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Kahn, R. (1995). *Bearing meaning: The language of birth*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Kant, E. (1999). *Critique of pure reason*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Kirk, G.S., Raven, J.E., Schofield, M. (1984). *The Presocratic philosophers: A critical history with a selection of texts*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kodelja, Z. (2008). Autonomy and heteronomy: Kant and Levinas. In D. Egéa-Kuehne (Ed.). *Levinas and education: At the intersection of faith and reason*. (pp. 186-197). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kristeva, J. (1991). *The Julia Kristeva Reader*. T. Moril (Ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers.
- Leffers, (1993). Pragmatists Jane Addams and John Dewey inform the ethic of care. *Hypatia*, 8 (2), 64-77.
- Lenot'ev, A.N. (1972). The problem of activity in psychology. *Soviet Psychology*, 9, 95-108.
- Lewis, M. G. (1993). *Without a word: Teaching beyond women's silence*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Levinas, E. (1980). *Totality and infinity*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing.
- Levinas, E. (1985). *Ethics and infinity*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Levinas, E. (1987). *Time and the Other*. R. Cohen (Ed.). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Levinas, E. (1997). *Otherwise than being*. C. Davis (Ed.). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd.
- Levinas, E. (2000). *God, death, and time*. (B. Bergo, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Levinas, E. (2001). *Levinas Reader*. S. Hand (Ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc.

- Li Li, H. (2004). Rethinking silencing silences. In M. Boler (Ed.). *Democratic dialogue in Education: Troubling speech, disturbing silence*. (pp. 69-88). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Lightman, A. (1993). *Einstein's dreams*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Llewelyn, J. (2000). *The HypoCritical imagination: Between Kant and Levinas*. New York: Routledge.
- Lorde, A. (2007). *Sister Outsider: Essays and speeches by Audre Lorde*. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press.
- Lyotard, J.F. (1993). *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Maieutic*. (1996). *Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*. Thomas Mautner (Ed.), (p. 333). New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Martin, J.R. (2011). *Education Reconsidered: Culture, encounter, and change*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- McAfee, N. (2000). *Habermas, Kristeva, and Citizenship*. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press.
- McInerney, P. (1991). *Time and Experience*. Philadelphia PN: Temple University Press.
- Menand, L. (2001). *Metaphysical club*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Miller, J. (2005). *Sounds of silence breaking: Women, autobiography, curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Moran, D. (2000). *Introduction to phenomenology*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mullin, A. (2002). *Reconceiving pregnancy and childcare: Ethics, experience, and reproductive labor*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Muhr, S. (2010). Ethical interruption and the creative process: A reflection on the new. *Culture and Organization*. 16 (1), 73-86.
- Neill, M. (2005). Othello and race. In P. Erickson & M. Hunt (Eds.). *Approaches to teaching Shakespeare's Othello* (pp. 37-52). New York: Modern Language Association of America.
- Nelson, M. (2006). The fruit of silence. *Teachers College Record*, 108 (9), 1733-1741.



- Nietzsche, F. (1967). *On the genealogy of morals*. (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Nietzsche, F. (1974). *The gay science: With a prelude in rhymes and an appendix of songs*. (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Nietzsche, F. (1989). *Beyond good and evil: Prelude to a philosophy of the future*. (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). New York, NY: Random House, Inc.
- Nietzsche, F. (1990). *Twilight of the idols/The Anti-Christ*. (R.J. Hollingdale, Trans.). New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Nietzsche, F. (1999). *The Anti-Christ*. (H.L. Mencken, Trans.). Tucson, AZ: See Sharp Press.
- Noddings, N. (2004). Caring. In *Contemporary curriculum discourses: Twenty years of JCT*. W. Pinar (Ed.), New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Nolan, P. W., Brown, B. & Crawford, P. (1998). Fruits without labour: The implications of Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas on the caring professions. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 28, 251-259.
- Norton, J.D. (1992). Philosophy of space and time. In M. Salmon (Ed.). *Introduction to the philosophy of science* (pp. 179-231). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- O'Dair, S. (2000). Teaching 'Othello' in the schoolhouse door: History, Hollywood, heroes. [Article]. *Massachusetts Review*, 41(2), 215-236.
- Oliver, K. (1995). *Womanizing Nietzsche: Philosophy's relation to the "feminine"*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Oliver, K., & Pearsall, M. (1998). *Feminist interpretations of Friedrich Nietzsche*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Paley, J. (2002). *Caring as a slave morality: Nietzschean themes in nursing ethics*. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 40, 25-35.
- Palmer, P. (1993, September). *Change, Community, Conflict, and Ways of Knowing*. Retrieved from <http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/events/afc99/articles/change.pdf>
- Pea, R. (1993). Practices of distributed intelligence and designs for education. In G. Salomon (Ed.), *Distributed cognitions* (pp. 47-87). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Peperzak, A., Critchley, S., & Bernasconi, R. (1996). *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic writings*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

- Picard, M. (1952). *The world of silence*. Chicago, IL: Eighth Day Press.
- Picart, C.J.S. (1999). *Resentment and the "feminine" in Nietzsche's politico-aesthetics*. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Pinar, W. (2004). *What is curriculum theory?*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Polanyi, M. (1958). *Personal knowledge*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Popper, K. (2007). *Open society and its enemies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Puolimatka, T. & Solasaari, U. (2006). Education for death. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. 38 (2), 201-213.
- Riley-Taylor, E. (2002). *Ecology, spirituality, and education*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Rockefeller, S. C. (2006). Meditation, social change, and undergraduate education. *Teachers College Record*, 108 (9), 1775-1786.
- Ross, S.L. (1990). Clients of transcendence: Louis I. Kahn and the homologous client-architect relationship. (Unpublished masters thesis). University of Texas, Austin.
- Roy, K. (2005). An untimely intuition: adding a Bergsonian dimension to experience and education. *Educational Theory*. 55 (4), 443-459.
- Schlesinger, G. (1980). *Aspects of time*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
- Seidler, V. (1994). *Recovering the self: morality and social theory*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Serres, M. (1991). *Rome: The book of foundations*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Serres, M. (1998). *The Natural contract*. E. MacArthur and W. Paulson (Trans.), Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Serres, M. (2000). *The Troubadour of knowledge*. (S.F. Glaser & W. Paulson, Trans.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Serres, M. (2004). *Conversations on science culture, and time*. (R. Lapidus, Trans.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Shapin, S. (1998). *The scientific revolution*. Chicago, IL: Illinois University Press.
- Shor, I. (1980). *Critical teaching and everyday life*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

- Shusterman, R. (2005). Mind-body problems. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. 52 (5), B5-B5.
- Slattery, P. & Rapp, D. (2002). *Ethics and the foundations of education: Teaching convictions in a postmodern world*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon Publishing.
- Springgay, S. & Freedman, D. (2009). M/othering a bodied curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 25 (2), 25-37.
- Stock, B. (2006, September). The Contemplative Life and the Teaching of Humanities. *Teachers College Record*, 1760-1764.
- Strhan, A. (2007). Bringing me more than I contain: Discourse, subjectivity and the scene of teaching in *Totality and Infinity*. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. 44 (1), 23-44.
- Strhan, A. (2009). The very subjection of the subject: Levinas, heteronomy and the philosophy of education. Proceedings from the annual conference of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain. Retrieved from [http://kent.academia.edu/AnnaStrhan/Papers/373666/The\\_very\\_subjection\\_of\\_the\\_subject\\_Levinas\\_heteronomy\\_and\\_the\\_philosophy\\_of\\_education](http://kent.academia.edu/AnnaStrhan/Papers/373666/The_very_subjection_of_the_subject_Levinas_heteronomy_and_the_philosophy_of_education)
- Taylor, A. (2005). *Žižek!* New York: Zietgeist Films.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Warren, R.P. (1998). *The collected poems of Robert Penn Warren*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press.
- Wang, H. (2004). *The call from the stranger on the journey home: Curriculum in a third space*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Wang, H. (2005). Aporias, responsibility, and the im/possibility of teaching multicultural education. *Educational Theory*, 55, 45-59.
- Weil, S. (1977). *The Simone Weil Reader*. George A. Panichas, (Ed.). New York, NY: David McKay Company, Inc.
- Zajonc, A. (2006). Love and knowledge: Recovering the heart of learning through contemplation. *Teachers College Record*. 108 (9), 1742-1759.
- Zembylas, M. (2002). Michel Serres: A troubadour for science, philosophy, and education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. 34 (4), 477-502.
- Zembylas, M. & Michaelides, P. (2004). The sound of silence in pedagogy. *Educational Theory*, 54, 193-210.

## **VITA**

Hillary Procknow was born in 1975 in Abilene, Texas. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from the University of Texas in 1997 and a Master of Science in architectural studies, also from the University of Texas, in 2002. She began the doctoral program in educational theory, policy, and practice at Louisiana State University in 2004. Hillary served as an instructor at LSU and also taught high school in Baton Rouge. She currently lives in Austin, Texas, with her husband, John, son, Truman, and daughter, Lennon.