

RE-FOUNDING CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: PASSAGES IN PRESENCE

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Abstract

Childhood represents the passage into and through constrained notions of spatio-temporal identity and normative constructions. The role of education is too frequently understood as the shaping of life and purpose in the service of democratic ideology. I propose another examination embracing historical anthropologies of education troubling normative constructions of childhood and education through deconstruction. Re-reading the philosophical foundations structuring primary education in the 21st Century opens the question of difference and social justice towards equitable purpose honouring the passage of childhood in presence beyond ascription. Drawing on foundational critiques of education in Derridean logos and Deleuzean inscription, I will interrogate our common conceptualisations of the philosophy of childhood education as a “space of transformation” where the self/subject escapes on “lines of flight” facilitating becoming. This is an enfolding of connectivity resisting prescription and *chrónos* unfolding on diverse planes of immanence. Childhood then is not the passage to adulthood through pedagogical engagement, but rather the opportunity to explore *epistemé* and connectivity in passage, in presence.

Re-thinking the paradigm of Childhood Education in Presence is an engagement with the other in difference at the nexus of human relations, teaching, and learning. I posit an-other paradigm arrives when we as educators begin to honour the subjectivity of the individual student-learner in presence. Oxford University as citadel of learning, marks the heart of education and offers a unique setting for our travels to other planes of understanding.¹ The possibility of a renewing education invites all educators/teachers to re-position themselves in subjectivity, in the inversion of subjectivity. I invite you to join me in a “thinking through thinking” experience whereby collaboratively we consider difference as the centre, or hub of a proposed “Aesthetic Presence” transforming educational endeavour and possibility. Our opportunity unfolds on Deleuzean (1987) “planes of immanence” affording diverse engagements between the self and other. Michael Peters (2004) expounds on Deleuze, postulating “the plane of immanence constitutes the absolute ground of philosophy—the prephilosophical’ or image of thought that casts a sieve over chaos” (219), in a new interpretation of the moment and event of the arrival.

Initially our journey begins in the promise of Derridean (1967, 2007) logos following Emmanuel Lévinas’ (1969) secular meta-ethics. My theoretical framework begins in post-structural arenas of thought that repositions the role of subjectivity in educational endeavour. Lévinas (1969, 2000) offers ethics as first philosophy whereby subjectivity, or the nature of my representation(s) of a self to other(s) is contested and becomes the question in the aporetic other; following another ethics con-scribing my obligation due (Critchley 1999, Wright 2013, 2014). In the arrival of the third (or other other)², the diachrony of the self and other is exposed as insufficient and requiring a response beyond ethics that would acknowledge the

¹ Oxford University founded in 1204 bears the mantle of academy par excellence with the strength of history and an enduring sense of community represented in the 38 colleges and six permanent private halls. For more information on the continuing mission of the institution, see <http://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/strategic-plan#>

² Lévinas’ (1969) seminal work, *Totality and Infinity* offers a deeper (read ethical) interpretation of both Heidegger’s (1996) and Kant’s (Wood 2002) respective inquiries on the metaphysical plane concerning the responsibility between *other[s]*. Later in *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, Emmanuel Lévinas (2000) directly links ethics and justice in the *other other*, or *third* (Wright 2014). The *other other* is the *other* to the *self and other* in relationship.

infinite of the other in fundamental otherness, alterity, or infinity (Lévinas 1969, 51) re-orienting the focal point of obligation, as ethical ground(ing) for an arriving paradigm of youth and childhood education. For Derrida, the invention of the other, is the question of subjectivity.

Subjectivity then, bound in the limit of logos is revealed in Derridean deconstruction (Trifonas 2000). Jacques Derrida introduced the performative notion of deconstruction as a way of reading through the semio-linguistic terrain of the archive and the narrative of the discourse on education adducing a passage through the subjectivity of the self in the presence of the other always, already present. Education of children and youth today re-presents the challenge of meeting across metaphysical chiasm, or divide (Wright 2014) as noted recently in the journal of *Studies in Philosophy and Education*. Joanna Haynes and Karin Murriss (2013), in a special issue of the journal on childhood education introduce the reader to a deeper examination of the Child as Educator stating “shifting the emphasis in thinking about education through the lenses of individualistic notions of subjectivity such as personal feeling, value and emotion, mobilises educative relationships where the teacher can educate ‘even’ when s/he is very young” (224).

Haynes and Murriss’ interpretation of subjectivity aligns well with that of the educational practice of Reggio Emilia, which I shall explore in the latter section of this article. Deconstruction affords possibility at the limit of human rationality, opening subjectivity in the chiasm of the onto-meta-theo-logical affording another plane for epistemological flight. Further, the logos of Derridean (2007) inscription reads “the other is indeed what is not inventable, and it is therefore the only invention in the world, the only invention of the world, our invention that invents us” (45, emphasis in original). Herein the us is the creation of the self, as and in relation to the fundamental other, “for the other is always another origin of the world and we are to be invented. And the being of the we, and being itself. Beyond being” (45, emphasis in original).

Thus I begin in the middle and at the end (ala Derrida) by way of introduction, a passage of inquiry wherein you and I, the reader, and writer, (and reader as writer) may consider the bondedness of childhood and education as performative engagement towards the affirmative goal to be ethically present with Other. Our collaborative inquiry will be the passage by and through the following probative questions:

1. What philosophical terrain best illuminates the education of the child/youth?
2. What concepts are imbricated, or bound within, in our rational constructions of childhood, youth, and education?
3. What telos, or end may arrive? Be expected?
4. Who may make this determination?

Indeed numerous other questions may arise and I strongly encourage each reader to note them and wrestle with their possibilities while considering their respective linkages to the key concepts under review in this article: childhood, education, and educational philosophy.

The landscape of education has changed substantively in recent decades with dramatic shifts in key socio-psychological concepts on the global terrain of thought in the waning modern era. Herein I offer a propitious excavation of *educare*,³ or childhood and youth education. As Farquhar and White (2014) acknowledge, early childhood education has been an important concern of “government economic and social policy...[assuming] an increasingly formative role in the way the child and family can be conceptualized in contemporary and future society” (822). With caution Farquhar and White remark the terrain stating “our concern is not with the known approaches per se—indeed, we would argue for their legitimate place within educational scholarship—rather, it is with the limitations of relying on one particular set of theories bound to one philosophical orientation to the exclusion of others” (823). Heeding these concerns, I proffer another reading of the philosophical groundings of early and primary education towards equitable purpose

³ Craft (1984) noted that there are two different Latin roots of the English word "education." They are "educare," which means to train or to mold, and "educere," meaning to lead out. While the two meanings are quite different, they are both represented in the word "education."

honouring the individual self/subject—the student/learner in classrooms today beyond the bounds of neo-liberal narratives.

Deconstructing educational paradigms

Education in the North American settings of Canada and the United States has been framed in many ways with particular foci (e.g. democratic citizenship or global citizenship education, multicultural education) during specific reformatory stages throughout the twentieth century. Primarily, public education serves democratic ideology as a process molding citizenship through constructivist approaches, to which I turn next. Interrogating the re-formatory constructions of educational paradigms in the North American settings, Woodrow and Press offer another lens through the Australian experience of educators and students reading constructivism as a reframing of educational endeavour (2007, 313). Citing an Australian early childhood campaign slogan: Early childhood Education—preparation for life, the authors adduce the “construction of children as in a state of becoming rather than being. Implicit in the notion of a child as becoming are ideas of the child as ‘not yet competent’, [or complete in self/subjectivity,] life as something that occurs later, and a denial of agency to children” (316). As previously argued by Trevor Norris (2011), the commercialisation through commoditisation of children/youth/students acts as a deliberate dismissal of the respective identity and subjectivity of the person (Woodrow and Press, 2007) as deficit, due to chronological limit.

Commoditisation of children and youth as students, while not a new concern for educators in the new millennium, surfaces a growing concern around the consumption of being (Giroux 2005, 2011) within instituted formal education systems. In the moment of consumption of students (re-member these are persons to which we as educators/teachers have a greater duty towards)⁴ as the other with approbation of polis, the individual self/subject is de/con-fined within utilitarian frame. At this juncture, our rational constructions of childhood, youth, and education come to the fore in contrast to the commercialisation of being, revealing foundational purpose in teaching and learning.

Re-reading the promise in the Other towards another understanding opens the question of difference and social justice as equitable purpose in education honouring the passage of childhood in presence (being there fully) beyond a/con-scription. Educators and teacher educators are well placed to address the search for deeper meaning and deontic, or moral purpose, in the immanent discourses weighing childhood, philosophy, and education (Carr 2005, Hansen 2006a, Pinar et.al. 1995, Wright 2014). However, the recognized facility with philosophical engagement(s) often falls far outside of the respective individual’s training, requiring a critical bridging of connecting discourses.

Reading foundations and difference

Two philosophical frameworks primarily comprise educational approach in the context under review: utilitarianism and constructivism. Merriam-Webster (2015) defines utilitarianism as “the belief that a morally good action is one that helps the greatest number of people” (n.p.). Utilitarianism is a doctrine of normative ethics in the history of philosophy that cannot be concerned with the individual self/subject.⁵

⁴ Moral responsibility for children and youth rests primarily in the learning environment of the classroom with the teacher. This responsibility to the other—the student, is illuminated by David Hansen (2011) of Columbia University in *The Teacher and the World: A study of cosmopolitanism as education*, and Nel Noddings’ (2010) *Moral Education in an Age of Globalization* among others.

⁵ Utilitarianism is based on the ethical proposition that everyone’s happiness is equally weighted as framed in metaphysical constraint. Classical utilitarianism as conceived in Bentham and Mill is best understood as a form of consequentialism, its common referent in education in the recent past. (For additional information see: *The History of Utilitarianism* (Driver 2014).)

Constructivism in metaethics, according to Bagnoli (2015) in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy is “the view that insofar as there are normative truths, for example, truths about what we ought to do, they are in some sense determined by an idealized process of rational deliberation, choice, or agreement” (n.p.).⁶ As guiding principles, both of these philosophical frameworks situate education purpose in ethics. Yet as recently argued and extensively reviewed,⁷ the limits and critiques of utilitarianism as framework for education bear further scrutiny; hence Judith Bessant (2014) deftly notes, a provocative image of freedom present in children and youth is not to be constrained, but understood as a process of phronesis, or practical wisdom in the teaching-learning arena (150). However, I posit the metaethical critique of utilitarianism compels another engagement beyond the axiomatic value of exclusion sublimating difference a priori. Ethical education for children and youth in the post-modern age unravels the cloak of institutional purpose fashioned in utilitarian throes. Fundamentally, honouring the alterity of the other is an act of justice (Wright 2014).

Individual	Period	Significance to early Education
Freidrich Froebel	1782-1852	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • father of early childhood education • invented kindergarten • conviction that young children learn through play
Sigmund Freud	1856-1939	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lead to define development and growth of psychoanalysis • psycho-social stages of growth • Oedipus complex
Maria Montessori	1870-1952	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning tasks should be made compatible with their level of competence • learning through the senses in environment that is rich in manipulative sensory materials, where children can move on their own and learn from/through their own activities
Rudolph Steiner	1861-1925	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pedagogical approach advocating practice that speaks to the child’s developing physical and spiritual self, as well as to the mind • insisted upon children creating their own curriculum materials that preceded the postmodern concept of learning as a constructive, creative activity
Erik Erickson	1902-1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developed and published a theory of human development that encompassed the whole life cycle • broke with Freud’s sexual theories of neurotic behavior and recognized the role of social factors in the determination of emotional distress
Jean Piaget	1896-1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • argued strongly that children move on to concrete operations as a consequence of maturation and of the experiences created by their own actions • active manipulation of objects in the environment enable the child to discover their multi-faceted character

⁶ Constructivism centres the role of education as engagement in normative ethics. However, as Bagnoli (2015) expounds, the idealism shaping the consideration of normative truths remains in the purview of metaethics, which I suggest constricts our consideration in their exploration with/in education. Consequently, our interest as scholars and educators is constrained within onto-meta-physics-logics as considered by Kant or Aristotle. (For further consideration of these matters see: *Plato’s Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Silverman 2014); Wood’s (2002) account of Kant’s *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*).

⁷ Critiques of utilitarianism have been based on both moral and philosophical claims since Jeremy Bentham’s promulgation of the systematic perspective in the 18th century. (For further readings on different critiques see: *The History of Utilitarianism* (Driver 2014); Mauro Simões’ (2013) analysis of Richard Hare’s preferential utilitarianism; *Taking stock of utilitarianism* (Crisp 2014).

Lev Vygotsky	1896-1934	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emphasized the importance of mediation in the learning and development of young children • emphasized the important role that society plays in shaping children's language and thought • Zone of Proximal Development
(above (Elkind, 1989, pp. 20-37))		
John Dewey	1869-1952	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pragmatic ethics in/towards education and childhood • joined pedagogical praxis and theory • linked democracy and education to lived experience of the student in curricula (Dewey, 1932)

Table 1: Progenitors of late Modern education in British, Canadian, and US contexts

Thinking with, engaging difference

The formative influence of these progenitors continues to infuse many of our understandings and principles guiding education decades later.⁸ A thinking with, other compels my apperception, introspection, reflection at depth, in conversation with these early individuals, critically engaging historical archaeologies, foundational roots, and contemporary applications. Thinking with the 'invented' other begins in the purposed acknowledgment of power and its implications in relationship(s). As educators, academics, teachers, and teacher educators, our responsibility to the other is paramount, obliging ethical consideration and understanding of educational role. Difference as an encompassing and shifting concept represents the connective tissue of positional relationality. I posit thinking with, is the possibility of transformative educare imag(in)ed in Aesthetic Presence, a thinking difference in Education, differently (Trifonas 2000). Difference as hub in an imagined Wheel of Aesthetic Presence in primary and secondary education serves as the passage between conceptual universes identified below, effecting essential linkages between each supportive spoke.

Aesthetic Presence as Wheel of Transformation

Aesthetic Presence repositions teaching and learning in a transitory era and is best captured in the metaphor of a wheel. With three primary spokes (Ethics, Educational Foundations, and Identity Construction (enfolding subjectivity)) and another three secondary spokes (Creativity, Moral Literacy, and Historical Archaeologies), the Wheel represents the re-framing of the educational frontiers for youth and childhood learning (see Figure 1 below). In the central portion of this article I shall illuminate the interconnectivity of each of these primary and secondary arenas that comprise the arriving paradigm in childhood and youth education. Following this remapping towards ethico-pedagogy, I envision promising trajectories of performative engagement.

⁸ The OECD's (2001) application of educational theory and its construction may be illustrated in documents produced in the last couple of decades impacting many discourses on children/youth education in the neoliberal age.

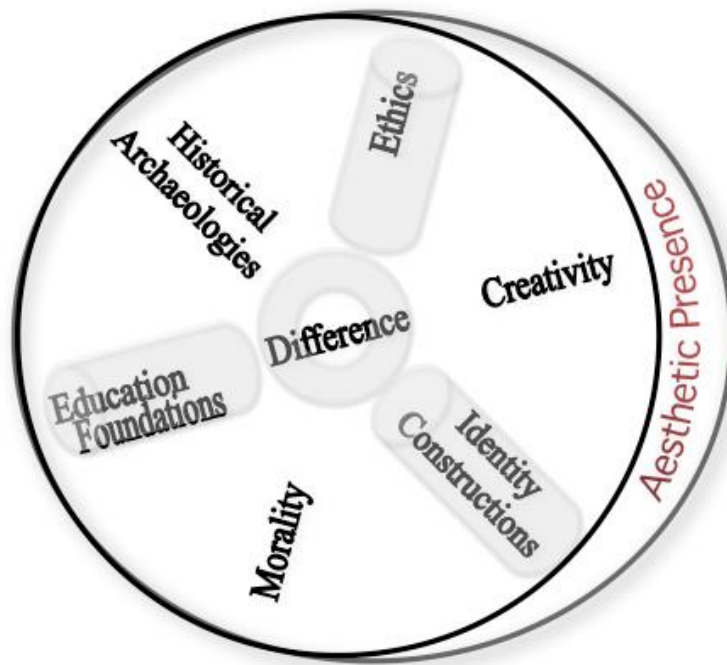


Figure 1: Wheel of Aesthetic Presence in Education

Ethics

Ethics and its performative enactment as ethico-pedagogy in teaching and learning arenas serves as one of the primary spokes in the Wheel of Presence that comprise aesthetic presence in the paradigm. John Dewey (1932), foremost US educationalist and thinker in the early twentieth century, interposed another philosophical understanding of children and education in ethical proposition: “the real moral question is what kind of self is being furthered and formed” (159). For Dewey, certain principles frame an ethico-pedagogy as the self is realized.⁹ Deweyan ethics in Bergman (2005) reflect the tension of subjectivity in the other, between others (and indeed in the self comprising an-other other).

Roger Bergman’s framing of Dewey’s Moral Psychology and Ethics helps to capture our understanding of the interwoven deontic obligation of educators today. The five principles trace crucial linkages between education, childhood, and philosophy as apposition:

1. The self is constituted, on the one hand, by its acts and habits, and on the other, by its social membership;
2. Habits may be routine, mechanistic, and closed to new experiences, or intelligent, artful, and open to revision;
3. Choice, the most characteristic activity of the self, both expresses the current self and shapes the future self;
4. The only moral “end” or “law” is growth of the self; the essential moral criterion is what sort of self is being furthered and formed;
5. Moral judgment requires that all selves (persons) be granted equal moral standing (the principle of impartiality, equity, fairness, or common good). (51)

⁹ David Hansen (2006b), a leading Deweyan scholar, provides a crucial linkage between education and the subject of subjectivity offers “a person becomes a self, a realized human being, through education” (185). Herein, the function of the education is premised on an ethic to care for the student/learner in a strong critique of instrumentalist notions of institution.

Moreover, our deontic responsibility to the Other, compels a rethinking in the relationship between the self and other (who is always, already present) (Lévinas 1969). The we, that is you and I, are always, already obligated—*ethicus obligatus*—to the other (Wright 2014) that arrives in an act of justice, in the moment (of arrival). Gert Biesta and Deborah Osberg (2007) re-present the educator’s responsibility to the learning community, claiming “when we take seriously the idea that knowledge is not a reflection of a static world but emerges from our engagement with the world...this provides us with a different way to understand the relationship between the world, ourselves and the knowledge of the world” (28). The we, that is you and I are repositioned in our respective subjectivities towards the other and collectively then the other, other. For children and youth, formal education becomes an arena of common engagement with/ in an ethical environment.

Identity Construction (enfolding subjectivity)

Identity construction, framed in socio-political force is tethered with the development of subjectivity. Earlier, reading the secular meta-ethics of Emmanuel Lévinas, the inversion of subjectivity becomes the moment and act shifting my obligation to the other and the Other. In this instant, social group membership/cohesion through as/con-scription effects embodiment of person. I posit in the moment, embodied persons are ontologically embedded in pre-existing relations through another subjectivity, where the self/subject is at risk within the realm of as/con-scription. However, in the space or immanent plane of difference, subjectivity untethered and re-leased in difference exceeds the constraint of social group cohesion in a balance with other, represented in the Wheel of Aesthetic Presence.

Democratic education for citizenship subsumes voice uncritically. Yet, ‘citizenship for children’ is highly contested¹⁰ and its expression is often limited to its most elementary features, such as a right to nationality. The right of younger children in particular to meaningfully participate and negotiate in the public domain is often contested, denied, rendered invisible, silenced. This invisibility and lack of recognition provides fertile conditions for the entrenching of privatised and corporatised childcare that positions the child or youth as object. Children’s voices are silenced through reliance upon the parent-provider transaction and remain silenced because habits of democracy are often not seen as relevant to the provision of the service. Still rethinking education’s role in the socialization of children and youth requires other perspectivity marked in Dr. Jim Cummins’ recent critique of heritage language learning and identity. Cummins states

identity emerges as a fundamental component of ...[learning and teaching]. A major reason why so many students from HL [heritage language] backgrounds choose not to pursue the learning of that language is that they internalize the (usually implicit) negative messages they receive in the school and wider society in relation to their plurilingualism. When schools treat the cultural knowledge and linguistic talents of plurilingual students with benign neglect, essentially asking student to leave this knowledge at the schoolhouse door, they are complicit with a wider societal discourse that views ‘literacy’ only as literacy in English (or French) and devalues other languages and forms of cultural knowledge. By contrast, when educators implement pedagogical approaches that explicitly affirm students’ plurilingualism as a cognitive and academic resource, they are sending a message of validation that is likely to motivate students to continue to develop their home language. (17)

¹⁰ Educare for socio-political understanding is embedded in the course of instruction, yet whose values and beliefs are promulgated? Whose are excluded or eschewed? The contestation of learning and its fundamental role in shaping the citizens of the future across and in different cultures and nations begins in the realm of power and its manifestation. Foucault (1980) and Popkewitz and Brennan (1997) offer keen insight into the socio-politico-historical perspectives on power in education for our consideration. Additionally, Evans, Ingram, Macdonald, and Weber (2009) provide another view of the question of citizenship education in the Canadian context. For further reading see *What kind of Citizen: Educating our children for the common good* by Joel Westheimer (2015).

Identity construction in the early years of formal education is too often the production of children and youth as persons to be directed, organized, restrained, and deficient. This production of the other has a damning effect of shunting the creativity and volition of arriving subjectivities in individuals, especially impressionable youth and children. Changing this narrative with the Wheel of Aesthetic Presence detracks the historical train of education as mere socialization and acculturation.

Educational Foundations

Education foundations serves as a third primary spoke in the wheel. Critically excavating the educational foundations of child and youth teaching and learning uncovers one's ideological constructions prescribing intent and interpretation of educational endeavour. Further, uncovering institutional ethos in primary education becomes a moral imperative on the immanent plane of difference wherein two beings are unconditionally respected in respective fundamental alterity whereon new meaning-making is cultivated. The late twentieth century brought another approach to education manifested in the continuing evolution of theory. Grace Craig and Marguerite Kermis (1995) applied Piaget's¹¹ theory of cognitive development to demark the developmental changes youth and children exhibit in their education cycles: a) children are active learners who construct their own theories about how the world operates; b) children are motivated to change their theories when pieces of information do not fit; c) children's interest in learning depends primarily on the intrinsic rewards gained from contact with the subject matter itself. Teachers' praise may be detrimental to optimal learning; d) teachers should show rather than tell children what to do; and e) children need to learn by doing, by actively exploring new ideas and relationships, and by solving problems in a realistic format (504). Applied learning theory as reframed in Craig and Kermis localizes enacting subjectivity in the learning environment for children through which the student may come to precognitive awareness of their own learning.

Creativity

Creativity as a secondary spoke in the Wheel of Aesthetic Presence in Education unleashes and re-releases possibility in teaching and learning realms. Unleashing or re-releasing creativity anew in educational arenas affords passage into other realms of perceptivity and apperception in aesthetic presence. Rethinking the process of creativity in our lives as educators, and more importantly in the lives of student/co-learners offers new openings towards received epistemological constraints¹² and pushes through occluded domains of thought and possibility as illustrated in the Reggio Emilia approach to primary education below. The question arises before each of us as educators, teachers, and scholars to invite new ideas that dispel theoretical mythologies and apparitions lingering in institutional settings (e.g. utilitarian policies shaping ministerial educational design, socio-political contestation as formative ethos for provincial or national schooling).

Our possibility as humanity arrives in the creative moment wherein we re-lease the bonds of normativity and socialization constraining choice, access, and the possible. In "Let Your Creativity Soar" recently in the journal *Scientific American*, three experts on creativity explore an immanent plane of learning remarking the terrain while indicating our path is often strewn with obstacles wherein "creativity is shutdown in most people by early socialization, leaving it to 'misfits,' ...[yet] everyone has roughly equal potential to express creativity, given the right skills." (DiChristina 2013, 98). As the cited experts John

¹¹ Jean Piaget's (1952) interest in the development of intelligence in children serves as an important development in learning theory under review in this article.

¹² A new aesthetic imaginary (Harris, 2014) becomes possible in education linking creativity and ethics in difference through renewing episteme.

Houtz, Julia Cameron, and Robert Epstein suggest, four competencies of creative expression: capturing, challenging, broadening, and surrounding are also present in many children and youth who are explorers in presence heralding novel thinking and open-ended problem solving through a variety of methods. Capturing, the first of four competencies, involves the “learning how to preserve one’s new ideas without judging them” (96). The second competency, Challenging, refers to the need to continually face and “tackle tough problems,” or giving ourselves as learners difficult problems to solve (96). And the third competency, Broadening, suggests a continual need to “expand one’s knowledge by learning interesting new things” (97). Surrounding, the final core competency of creative expression refers to the importance to “surround oneself with interesting people and things as you manage your physical and social environments” (97). Creativity courses through the bodies of engaged learners and is a strategic marker of resilience in children and youth whose difference or alterity is fundamentally respected and flourishes in well-cultivated learning environments.

Reframing education in aesthetic presence exceeds the limits and critiques of utilitarianism as extensively reviewed elsewhere. Hence Bessant (2014) suggests a provocative image of freedom as present in children and youth not to be constrained but a process of phronesis, or practical wisdom¹³ in the teaching-learning arena (150) affording creativity as envisioned above. The possibilities for post-Modern education are endless on arriving creative planes and most particularly so in the teaching and learning realms for children and youth. Facilitating creative learning begins in the imaginary planes whereon we as individual self/subjects encounter the difficult to think and think-through. As noted herein, the imagination and creative endeavour intersects past the boundaries of normativity and impossibility. Opportunity then abounds when we nurture possibility beyond our own onto-epistemological constraints.

Moral Literacy

As engaged educators, our performative responsibility compels a fundamental re-reading of the inscriptions and labels ascribed to the other—child, in promulgation of moral code. Moral education and moral literacy are betrothed in onto-meta-theo-physical logics.¹⁴ Our discovery is implicated in the roots of respective ontologies in moral coding and bears constant scrutiny with the other always, already present. Different pragmatic and utilitarian approaches to childhood and youth education may elide the “assemblage of characteristics to produce a determinate classification (of the youth or child) that performs in criminal prevention, schooling, and health education, with some variation on a theme of the categories in the... (US and UK) about who is left behind” (Popkewitz, Olsson, and Petersson 2006, 445).

Moral education is particularly fraught with the pitfalls of established foundations and is “inevitably shaped and constrained by how subjectivity is conceived” (Boyd 2004, 5). Again, Professor Dwight Boyd argues for a nuanced subjectivity as “a form of self-awareness and sense of agency that is constituted by the interaction of embodied persons and their interpretations of that interaction” (5). Boyd then identifies four characteristics threading subjectivity into the tapestry of being in the teaching and learning processes of education. Professor Boyd re-minds us as academics, scholars, and teachers that education in the liberal tradition necessitates reflective engagement in one’s own subjectivity and its formative nature. Boyd acknowledges the interweavings of individual in society suggesting profound implications for re-thinking educational endeavour, through the following:

¹³ Wivestad (2008) offers an excellent linkage between education and learning bearing on the question of difference and social justice in schooling today.

¹⁴ Derridean deconstruction opens logic bound in and bonding moral education and moral literacy as construction in early education. The possibility of re-thinking the logic of linking education and morality, or opening to humanity as *embracing humanitas* affords other perspectives (Wright 2014). Aesthetic presence compels deeper reading of the moral codes embedded in education in classrooms today across primary and secondary levels. Additionally, “Caring, empathy, and moral education” by Michael Slote (2009) for further consideration.

1. Ontological uniqueness. I submit that the heart of liberalism's legacy in moral education is the conception of individual embodied persons as ontologically unique centres of consciousness and experience....The uniqueness of individualized personal subjectivity is considered to be as firmly established, as ontologically sound and as equally uncontestable as these empirical facts.
2. Symmetrical positioning. A second characteristic of this perspective on subjectivity positions all instances symmetrically with all other.... recognition of difference is neutral.
3. Intentional rational agency. Third, individuals so positioned share the same kind of agentic potential...Differences in actual subject locations are, in the end, attributable to the choices of desired states made by individuals over time and the relative success in effecting them.
4. Capacity for transcendence. Finally, the horizons of possible change for this individualized agency are quite open, both internally and externally. Another way of saying this is that the capacity for transcendence results from the exercise of the muscles of rational choice and intentionality. (9-10)

These crucial linkages point to another essential linkage between the teacher/teacher educator that would critically examine the philosophical grounding of the field of teaching and learning through a dual lens of introspection and simultaneous outward focus. Further, an approach to moral literacy engaging ethico-philosophical learning begins in examination of one's own rationality, the passages between rationale(s), and implications for any learning endeavour.

Earlier in the twentieth century, Dewey illuminated the fundamental linkages between moral theor(y)ies and education espousing a renewing ontology and apperception that a

narrow and moralistic view of morals is responsible for the failure to recognize that all the aims and values which are desirable in education are themselves moral. Discipline, natural development, culture, social efficiency, are moral traits—marks of a person who is a worthy member of that society which it is the business of education to further Discipline, culture, social efficiency, personal refinement, improvement of character are but phases of the growth of capacity nobly to share in . . . a balanced experience. And education is not a mere means to such a life. Education is such a life. To maintain capacity for such education is the essence of morals. (Dewey 1916, 417, emphasis added)

Twenty-first century educators are obliged to measure the strength of these linkages in their respective instructional and learning environments affording new connections for their charges in a global world. Just as Dewey's moral contribution to educational foundations position him as one of the foremost thinkers concerning teaching and learning in the United States, other progenitors have enriched our thinking and approaches to early education.

Historical Archaeologies

Excavating historical archaeologies along educational foundations poses new lines of inquiry and possibility in difference, for it is in the promulgation of theory and construct leading to foundation and the subsequent act of founding educational purpose that life-course is framed in and through primary and secondary teaching and learning. The individual progenitors of late Modern education in the British, Canadian, and United States contexts cited herein brought unique perspectives to learning environments re-forming institutional learning and its effect in lives of student-learners. Each of the later progenitors would draw significance from earlier reformers to rethink the role of education and its possibilities. As educators, teachers, and teacher educators, our work and thinking are best informed through deep

excavation or pursuit of foundational understandings of those who have gone before in a tracing of historical narrativities toward a reasoning of reason together.

The moment of act as enactment, proposes a framework into which children and youth are molded, commonly subsuming other in subjectivity as conscription. As Elkind (1989) remarks, the terrain mapped in the name Vygotsky, “society plays (a key role) in shaping children’s language and thought” (37) as an act of mediation (35). Reading further, Lev Vygotsky’s (1978, 1997) zone of proximal development (ZPD) theory re-positions learning as a dialectical process aligned in his understanding and Marxist orientation.

His approach to education

leads the learner into higher psychological thinking and sets the scene for intervention as advancing knowledge.... In this location the developing child is led into a more sophisticated way of thinking in the world. Such thinking, when applied without consideration of creative processes that accompany thought, privileges the logos and supports the view that scientific knowledge is superior to other forms of knowing. Thus, a pedagogical orientation towards ontological forms of being surrenders to knowing as the central tenet of education. (Farquhar and White 2014, 825)

With this reading of Vygotsky, Farquhar and White highlight the instrumentalist position supporting ZPD and its approach to children and learning. However ZPD theory according to Dietz (2006) may be seen as more of a guiding hand as Vygotsky

maintains that one of the primary roles of early childhood practitioners is to assist children in moving to higher levels of thinking and experiencing in their development. To achieve this, practitioners encourage children to explore their interests and engage in activities that are slightly more difficult than children can master alone. Practitioners support children by exploring and role modeling strategies that help them in completing these challenging experiences, thereby encouraging them to gain the self-confidence to engage in the experience independently. (75)

In these readings of socio-psychological engagement, accretive learning processes and encounters are revealed in educational arenas as formative constructions previously by individual educationalists including Dewey, Piaget,¹⁵ Vygotsky, and poignantly captured nearly a century ago in Rudolph Steiner’s approach that would develop the physical and spiritual self of the child/youth, as well as to their mind. The Wheel of Aesthetic Presence then, reimagines the constitutive role of teacher as archaeologist becoming skilled in interpreting and understanding the foundational elements of teaching and learning to fashion a collaborative learning environment that supports the phenomenological and noumenological realms. A cautious and engaged excavation as journey through onto-meta-theo-logics implicates institution, rationality, and subjectivity as construction(s) in this reading of education.

Synthesis

Revisiting the probative questions towards the beginning of this essay allows each reader, and more importantly reader-as-writer, the opportunity to reflect on her/his journey into thinking thinking with the other, towards equitable purpose and ethico-pedagogy in teaching and learning today. Honouring the passage of childhood in presence beyond ascription confounds preconceived notions of learning that consume the student as other, in deficit. Each of these entangled lines of inquiry pose another rationality and the possibility of new commitments unfolding at the limit of our imagination(s). The enfolding of

¹⁵ Piaget’s socio-psychological analysis of early education elaborated in David Elkind’s (1981) interpretation provides keen insight into children, youth, and education in the rise of accountancy and commodification of learning institutions for consideration.

connectivity, resisting prescription and *chrónos* is the performative engagement of educators unfolding on diverse planes of immanence (Deleuze 1987, Kohan 2011). Recall, our prompts:

1. What philosophical terrain best illuminates the education of the child/youth?
2. What concepts are imbricated, or bound within, in our rational constructions of childhood, youth, and education?
3. What telos, or end may arrive? Be expected?
4. Who may make this determination?

New learning unfolds as reason and *epistémé* are unveiled beyond autotelic narratives sown in modern fields of educational conformity. Following new lines of flight create connection and possibility in our rational constructions of childhood, youth, and education. Our performative responsibility as educators begins again in immanence in the re-formation of role and ethical obligation to other, as telos. As teacher educators we may further illuminate new arenas of possibility where “teachers and student teachers are often missing opportunities to be educated because they do not re-cognise or ac-knowledge the ways of knowing, or they doubt the authority of children to have something unique and distinctive to offer in that particular setting” (Haynes and Murriss 2013, 226). The proposed transformation honouring aesthetic presence in primary and secondary education shifts the function of epistemology in teaching.

Aesthetic Presence as Wheel of Transformation in Education may be considered evident in the work of Reggio Emilia. Interrogating our common conceptualisations of the philosophy of childhood education as a “space of transformation” where the self/subject escapes on “lines of flight” facilitating be-coming is a passage through metaphysics in/to presence. David Booth, Professor Emeritus (2015) has demonstrated in a storied life as an educator of teachers that “curricula may not be the way children learn.” His claim reorients the instrumentalist approach frequently employed in formal education, however as evident in the following example, education can be more than design. Reggio Emilia re-presents teaching and learning as a process of inter-subjectivity and collaboration between student/learners, teachers, and parents where

one day, in a Reggio municipal nursery school, I was observing some 4-year old children and a teacher who were projecting shadows and making efforts to draw them. The concentration was absolute, but even more surprising was the freedom of exchange in expressing their imaginative ideas about what was making the shadows so odd, why they got smaller and swelled up or, as one child asked: ‘How does a shadow get to be upside down?’ Everyone was thinking out loud: ‘What do you mean by upside down?’ asked another child. Here we were not dealing with individual imaginations working separately...[but] ‘intersubjectivity,’ which means arriving at a mutual understanding of what the others have in mind. (Brunner 2012, xviii)

His example should not be seen as remarkable, yet it remains so. In *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia experience in transformation* the editors engage and speak in a langue of transformative learning stating “the Reggio teachers emphasize achievement in personal expression and reflection on one’s own patterns of thinking” (Edwards, Gandini, and Forman 2012, 7). Reggio is the affective reflection of learning in the eyes of the other, as particularly the young may realize the benefit of education

seen as a communal activity and as sharing a culture through joint exploration between children and adults who together open topics to speculation and discussion. The approach provides us with new ways to think about the nature of the child as learner, the role of the teacher, school organization and management, the design and use of physical environments, and curriculum planning that guides experiences of joint, open-ended discovery and problem solving. (7-8)

Lella Gandini (2012) acknowledges the positioning of the educator as engaged learning collaborator whereby continuous professional development is the motto of educators and teachers in Reggio Emilia.

Teachers must learn to interpret ongoing process rather than wait to evaluate results. In the same way, their role as educators must include understanding children as producers, not as consumers. They must learn to teach nothing to children except what they can learn by themselves. Furthermore, they must be aware of the perceptions the children form of the adults and their actions. To enter into relationships with the children that are simultaneously productive, amiable, and exciting, teachers must be aware of the risk in expressing judgments too quickly. They must enter the time frame of children, whose interests emerge only in the course of activity or negotiations arising from that activity. They must realize how listening to children is both necessary and expedient. (49)

In this paradigmatic shift in educational approach reflected above, the foundations of primary and secondary education are insubstantial and limit learning for the emerging generations in a globalized communities of difference. Ergo, another way, one of creativity in thinking and reason bodes well for human resilience. Dr. Kimberly Bizarre (2014) reminds us children's thinking is often itself the creative process. She argues literacy begins at birth with talking, singing, cuddling, and early experience with books, we have come to view the early years as a vital time for children to experience the power and pleasure of communication, language, and literacy. Internationally, the Reggio Emilia approach to early years education has highlighted the role of representation in children's symbolic expression and meaning-making including drawing, speaking, sculpting, movement, and emergent writing. (8)

We may further re-cognize childhood as event following Deleuzean geo-spatio-temporality and geo-philosophy (as a philosophy of the earth). Walter Kohan (2011) apprehends Deleuzean thinking, "here, thinking is not a matter of subject and object, but 'the relationship of territory and the earth', which creates the plane of immanence, which is where thinking takes place...[traversing] diverse planes of immanence. Human beings also simultaneously traverse different, opposed, parallel, intersecting spaces" (343). Consequently, a rethinking, thinking in philosophico-educare begins in the proposition of another reason, reasoned together. Affording children and youth the subjectivity of their being-nature is a subversion of the notion that "only adults, as fully developed people, can and should have the capacity to exercise substantive freedom and engage in practical reasoning" (Bessant 2014, 147). Such transformative perspective reframes educational enterprise and moral responsibility in *ethicus obligatus*. For when we invert the subjectivity of the self and other, our ethical obligation to the other precedes our arrival, it already exists before the self arrives.

The transformative Wheel of Aesthetic Presence in Education promotes a dual paradigmatic shift in primary and secondary formal education foundations and praxis. Our work as engaged educators, teachers, and teacher educators begins with acceptance of the invitation in the moment of re-thinking philosophical and epistemological constructions framing student/co-learners' apperception. We, as professionals are challenged to "come into presence" effecting ethico-pedagogy informed in *parrhesia*, or truth-telling. The interconnectivity of each of these primary and secondary arenas of teaching and learning comprises the arriving paradigm in childhood and youth education. Fundamentally, honouring the alterity of the other, is an act of justice.

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