

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

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Editorial

“...and in our hearts an ear for the word...”

Martin Heidegger, “The Thinker as Poet”

Perhaps because so much of our communication with students, through whatever mode, is individual-to-individual, we are more involved than colleagues at other institutions might be with language. At one of its cores, mentoring is about listening, about picking up clues to ideas, to values, to a life we are trying to meet. We listen for accents and styles, for the words a student chooses at a particular time, for common, idiosyncratic or telling phrases. And sometimes what we think we hear is someone’s basic discomfort with language itself and their terrible struggles to say what they really mean.

But there is our language too. Just as we try to attend to what our students say, or try to interpret why they are silent, another part of mentoring is a particular self-consciousness about our own speech. What words should I use? Will this make sense? How can I be clearer? How is this student framing his/her sense of teaching and learning based on the language I choose or that I quite unreflectively depend upon? When have I communicated my lingering desire to display my professorial status, but missed an opportunity for connection and understanding?

With few props on which to rely (the student is right here), the feeling of being completely embedded in language never goes away. Perhaps one of our abiding mentoring worries is not only what Gouldner referred to as our “epistemological anxiety” (i.e. what knowledge can I call upon? What is the intellectual ground upon which I can depend?), but a more basic anxiety of discourse itself (i.e. how can we talk? What is public and what is private communication?). Mentoring is thus about the authority of what we take to be true and important, and about the authority of the questions, the opinions — the very words themselves. Mentoring is about finding a way to make a common language with our students.

Early Tuesday morning, I was speaking with a new student about his experiences and his decision to complete a college degree. His life in America and before he came here has been rich and complex. Political engagement, prison, trying to gain skills that would help him survive in a new world, a family member’s medical problems, the desire to return home and make a difference. The man, probably my age, spoke in a muffled and hesitant voice perhaps, I thought, because English was not his first language, and certainly not his language of intimacy or debate. Still, I was moved by his descriptions and struck by his humility, especially in light of what I felt were the incredible challenges with which he was grappling. I was also somewhat intimidated. I did not know how we would connect, what studies he might take-up, how I could best respond to his questions about contemporary world politics, what — if anything at all — I could offer him, and how I could begin to help us create (a critical mentoring task) some context for dialogue. I heard his words and knew I had to understand and find some way in.

My phone rang. For some reason I took the call. Oddly, it was my son phoning from school. Was I OK? Had I known that two planes had just smashed into the World Trade Center? An accident? He had no idea. And again, was I OK? There was nothing from my office windows that face east. I told my student about the call and asked if he wanted to walk down Varick Street with me. Both towers were already on fire, a gaping black hole in the building closest to us. Black smoke pouring out. As we stared incredulously, we also continued to talk, stopping every few moments to gather ourselves or for

one of us to make a small point; and then we walked again.

I think we were both aware that this was an incredibly intimate situation amidst something completely enormous. In only 45 minutes since we had met, this new student had tried to help me understand where he had been, what he wanted to do, and how ESC could fit into his life. We had both been forced, by the impossibility of what we were seeing and by the raw confusion of what we were feeling, to search for appropriate words and to listen to each other with much more care and attention than we would most often offer to a cherished friend. We were trying to make sense of what had become our world, together. And sometimes, neither of us had any words at all.

We headed back to the office, a walk of about eight blocks. When we sat down at the table again, both of us knew that this would not be the time to deal with the many practical steps we would soon have to take: enrollment, a first plan of study, decisions about initial readings, and more details about degree planning so that this student could begin to make the process his own. These things, we knew, would come. But we did quietly acknowledge to each other that we had begun to talk, that we had been given privileged access to each other's lives, and that as mentor and student, we would proceed in some way. We also knew, from deep in our hearts, that searching for the words had taken us well beyond each other. We were trying to comprehend a completely changed world, but a world we now shared.

Alan Mandell

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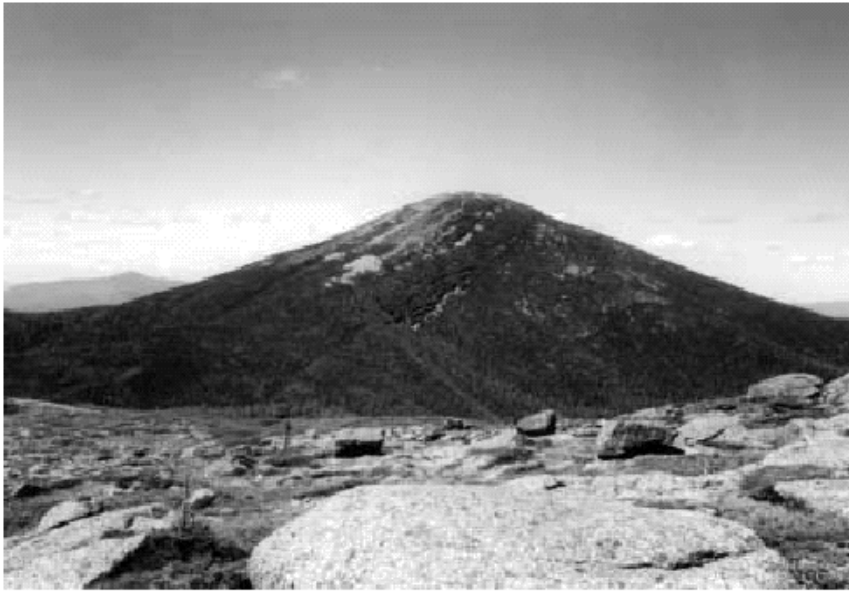
On Wilderness and People: A View from Mount Marcy **Wayne Ouderkirk, Northeast Center**

Note: Wayne Ouderkirk, the 2000 recipient of the Susan H. Turben Award for Excellence in Scholarship, delivered this talk at the All College Conference in March, 2001.

Introduction

Recently, philosophers and others have had a lot to say about the relationship between people and wilderness. The dominant theme in much of that continuing discussion is that humans and wild nature are not essentially separate, contrary to what used to be the prevailing view. In philosophical terms, this new theme claims that humans and wild nature are not ontologically distinct. Though I agree with that view, I have a caution to add: The recently perceived and defended connection between humans and wilderness does not imply, and ought not be interpreted as saying, that modern human civilization and wilderness are ecologically compatible. In other words, we modern humans should leave what little wilderness is left on our planet to its own devices. Keeping our distance in that way is not a tacit return to or acceptance of the traditional dualism between humans and nature, but rather an acknowledgment that our current human ways and numbers threaten to overwhelm our ecological and evolutionary home.

A brief review of formerly prevailing opinions about people and nature will help put the recent debates about wilderness in context. However, the ideas of some of the “unifiers” — for example, William Cronon, J. Baird Callicott — seem to indicate that, once we abandon the traditional dualism, wilderness, whether as concept or as policy or both, is no longer needed. I think that interpretation is shortsighted.



Mt. Marcy from Skylight Mt. (Whiteface Mt. in background)

Wayne Ouderkirk



Lake Tear of the Clouds

Wayne Ouderkirk

The Traditional View(s) (1)

Ideas die hard, and ideas that are part of humanity's understanding of itself die hardest. So before explaining the traditional views about wilderness, I need to note that they are all still very much with us in one way or another. The new understanding of wilderness (discussed below and which I partially support) is in direct conflict with some or all of these older ideas; there is no final account of wilderness. Rather, that concept has entered the arena of philosophically disputed issues.

At 5,344 feet, Mount Marcy is the highest peak in New York State. Comparatively, its elevation is not particularly notable; more than 40 other peaks in the Eastern U.S. are taller.(2) However, what it lacks in elevation, it gains in stature, for it is the symbolic centerpiece of the unique Adirondack Park, with its vast wilderness areas that are explicitly protected in the state's constitution. (By the way, for perspective, the Adirondack Park is larger than Yellowstone, Grand Canyon and Yosemite National Parks combined.(3) We can use the view from Marcy's summit, along with its recent history, to

illustrate four accounts of wilderness.

Looking in several directions from that summit (especially south and west), one sees only wilderness: peaks and valleys, lakes, ponds, streams, forest for as far as the eye can see. If some anthropologists and philosophers are correct, the original human concept of wild nature understood such a vista as part of our sacred home, the “Magna Mater,” the “Great Mother.”(4) While I know of no Native American worldviews that specifically regard what we call wilderness as Mother, they certainly regard it as both sacred and home. So although as far as we now can tell, no Native Americans made the heart of the Adirondacks their permanent residence (5) (probably because of the harsh winter climate), we have no reason to think that, prior to the European invasion, the indigenous peoples, Iroquois, Algonquin and others, did not regard the region as part of their homes. Thus, the indigenous description or interpretation of the vista from Marcy might well say (and now I admit that I am guessing) that here are places where, at least for half of the year, one can live; find food, water and fuel; and where one can communicate with the spirit world, just as one can do everywhere else. To see it as a source of sustenance is not, in this understanding of wilderness, to see it as mere resource for exploitation, but as the source of all things, including ourselves.

Some recent thinkers advocate that we return to such a view of the wild, (6) but that is unrealistic, for several reasons. First, though many contemporary people do indeed view nature as sacred, to advocate the wild-as-divine as our unifying understanding of wilderness would ignore the beliefs of huge numbers of people, both nonreligious and religious, and including some wilderness advocates, for whom the natural world is not identified with the divine. Second, this view is allegedly part of the self-understanding of hunter-gatherer peoples. A few such peoples still exist and should always retain their right to continue their cultures in what we now refer to as wild areas. Nevertheless, even if we added a sizable amount of farmland restored to wilderness to presently designated “wild zones,” they still could not possibly feed the current human population, magically transformed into huntergatherers, for the foreseeable future. A return to the Magna Mater is impossible for us.

To abbreviate history a bit (and hence to distort it!), the second influential concept of the wild was the opposite of the first. Through fundamental, sweeping changes in human culture, centered around the development of agriculture and the correlated increase in human population, we came to regard wilderness not as home but as our counterpoint — something against which we have to struggle. With the eventual ascendancy of Christianity in Europe, that struggle received religious interpretation and sanction as wilderness became defined as the home of the devil and of evil. (7) Given this understanding, it is easy to see that opposition to the wild would be good, and that eking out a human life would be a way to resist, perhaps to conquer, the devil. Though there are other attitudes towards nature in Christianity, variants of this idea certainly influenced early European colonists on this continent, many of whom saw it as their duty to conquer what they perceived not as sacred home but as Satan’s home. (8)

To return to Mount Marcy and look to the north and east, though the vista remains impressive, we can see human encroachments. Lake Placid Village and its surrounding area are partially visible, and the great cone-shaped Whiteface Mountain shows the alpine ski trails carved into its side to serve human recreation. To the north and east, a small part of the Champlain Valley is visible, including farms, orchards and buildings. Nothing could seem more wonderful to this second religious understanding of wilderness than these signs that people are pushing against nature — subduing it. As for the rest of the view; well, it is simply a challenge that remains for us. What some might regard as beautiful is merely the wild, chaotic realm of unfettered nature, awaiting the “saving hand” of the righteous human. If we look more closely, we might notice an old fire tower or two — on Mount Adams or Hurricane Mountain, for example. In this understanding of wilderness, the towers are not, as the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) calls them, “nonconforming structures” to be removed in order to restore the wilderness to its allegedly pristine state. Rather, they are footholds, affirming the possibility of human control.

One cannot see all of Marcy’s lower slopes from its summit, but several stream drainages are evident, including that of Feldspar Brook with its source, Lake Tear of the Clouds, the highest source of the Hudson River. Feldspar flows into a branch of the stunning Opalescent River, which in turn feeds the northernmost Hudson. Exploring those drainages and consulting Adirondack history, one will find some signs and symbols of yet another traditional concept of the wild. About three miles west of Marcy is “Flowed Land,” a small, humanmade lake. Just west of that is what looks like a dry creek bed that is actually a channel dug in 1854 by the McIntyre Iron and Steel Co. In combination, the lake and channel redirected all the water from the Opalescent River into another stream and thence to Henderson’s Iron furnaces at

Tahawus, five miles away. (9)

These human creations illustrate the third concept of the wild, called by many the Modernist concept. Because the term “wild” seems to connote something alive, its use might be inappropriate in this context, for the central strand of early Modernist thought to which we are linking says that nature is not alive; it is a dead machine, devoid of any moral or other meaning. It is thus something which we may exploit in any way we like. Whatever their positive legacies, thinkers like Descartes, Bacon and Hobbes also bequeathed us this mechanistic attitude towards nature. (10)

The effort to reroute the Opalescent, and the 19th and 20th century clear-cutting of the Adirondack forest are striking illustrations of the mechanistic attitude towards nature. Human desire and intention are paramount in this tradition, and nature is a mere stock of literally raw material upon which we are to impose our designs and improve it. Notice that this concept of wilderness is compatible with the previous view. And when given religious blessing, it becomes a nearly irresistible force. Needless to say, this concept has gotten us into some extreme environmental trouble, and we are beginning to abandon it.

For a Modernist, the view from Mount Marcy might represent many things. As in the previous concept of wilderness, the natural areas are challenges to human ingenuity. But the unregenerate Modernist would primarily see the area, as did the early miners and loggers, only as something with potential for development. Without the resourceful hand of human industry, the wilderness area is, then, a symbol of wasted opportunity. Any suggestion that there might be some non-use value here, or that here a set of vital processes, on infinitely varying scales, sets a moral limit to our actions is foreign to the Modernist.

Again simplifying history, we come to what many of us think of as a better approach to wilderness. It is perhaps the concept that many in this room assume when we think about wilderness, and it is enshrined in national and state policy. The United States Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness as “a place where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man [sic.], where man is a visitor and does not remain.” The NYSDEC’s 1999 High Peaks Wilderness Complex Unit Management Plan basically assumes the same definition. (11) Certainly this understanding is an improvement on the previous two concepts. It accords some respect to nature, recognizing that modern humans need to control their actions, that some natural areas should remain as close to their natural states as possible.

If we ascend Marcy yet again, the vista takes on new meaning, given this more contemporary idea of wilderness. The spectacular views are as they should be: The forest has re-grown, reclaiming the clear-cuts, obscuring the engineers’ tinkering. This is not our home. If anything, Lake Placid, with all its modern amenities, is our home. But neither is it our enemy, or the devil’s home, or a lifeless, inert resource. It is wilderness, an increasingly rare thing in the 21st century, something different from us which we are somehow morally obligated to respect. J. Baird Callicott calls this the “received” concept of wilderness, (12) and those who defend it have offered various justifications for that call for moral consideration.

Perhaps surprisingly, it is criticism of the “received” concept by some environmental thinkers that leads to my defense of wilderness. As I said earlier (and simplifying yet again!), I agree with the basic ontological conclusion — viz., that nature and humans are not ontologically separate — but not with the implications drawn from it.



View from summit of Mt. Marcy

Wayne Ouderirk

The Current Debate

What could possibly be wrong, from an environmentalist's perspective, with the idea of wilderness that has enabled us to preserve millions of acres of nature? When we examine it carefully, the "received" concept turns out to be problematic after all. Though Callicott, a philosopher, and William Cronon, a historian, have different emphases and overall outlooks, their critiques are sufficiently similar that, in the interest of time and space, I will abbreviate and treat them as one. (13) Among other problems, they say, the "received" concept is ethnocentric. It ignores the fact that what Euro-Americans call pristine wilderness was in fact home to millions of indigenous North Americans. So, for example, when a U.S. law says wilderness is a place where humans are only visitors, it continues the legacy of oppression against First Peoples, ignoring their claims to the land as well as their influence on it. (14)

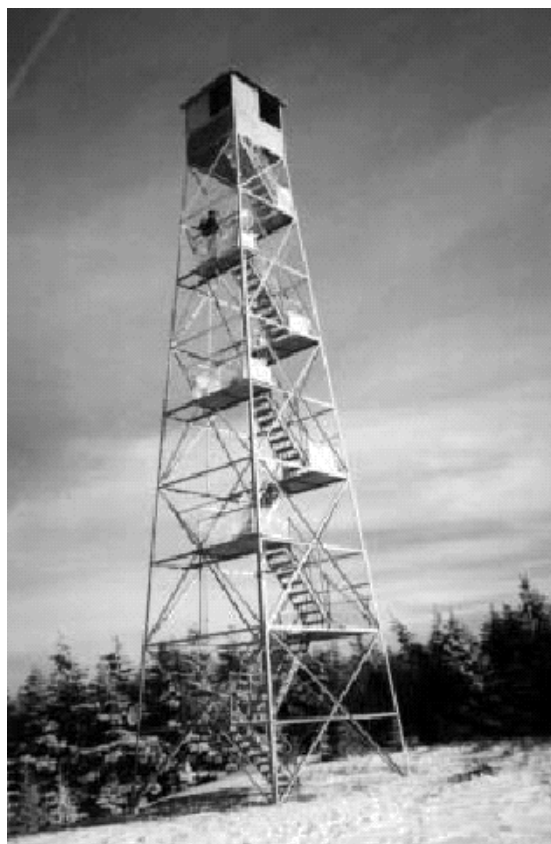
This problem is not only of historical interest; it is built into the "received" concept of wilderness. Now that we naively and arrogantly believe it appropriate to export our ideas, sometimes imposing them on the rest of the world, indigenous peoples have been excluded from newly created national parks because the parklands are supposed to be "wild." Designation of areas as national parks in India and Africa have resulted in expulsions or the prohibition of traditional indigenous uses of those areas. (15)

The underlying, crucial problem lies in a philosophical assumption embedded in the received concept of wilderness. Specifically, Cronon and Callicott point out, that concept assumes an ontological dualism between humans and nature. This dualism is kin to René Descartes's separation of mind and body. It says that we are one sort of thing and wilderness another, and the difference must be recognized and maintained. Recall the words of the Wilderness Act: "where earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man." In this understanding, "earth and its community of life" clearly is distinct from humans. To make matters worse, it was this same fundamental dualism of the Christian and the mechanistic views of wilderness that legitimated environmental destruction. With us on one side of the alleged ontological divide and nature on the other, and with the assumption of human superiority, wilderness was simply fair game. And now we have a concept that purports to be more benign yet still includes that same destructive dualism!

In very broad strokes, the counter view is that humans are not separate from nature but are a part of it. There is growing support for that conclusion. Callicott bases his arguments for it on evolution and ecology, the former demonstrating our biological origins in and connections to the rest of life on earth, the latter showing that we remain members of complex, integrated ecological communities. There are also other contemporary philosophical supports for the idea that we are part of nature, from the dominant materialistic theories in philosophy of mind, including Donald Davidson's anomalous monism, to Richard Rorty's pragmatist theory of knowledge as our species' adaptable response to our environment, to Daniel Dennett's defense of determinism. (16)

I mention these philosophical theories not to indicate that they defend a concept of wilderness. None of those mainstream philosophers explicitly discusses the environment in their published writings. Rather, they represent views about other philosophical questions that harmonize with the claim in environmental philosophy that humans are essentially tied to nature, not just in a practical sense, but in our very being.

But there's the rub: If we're part of nature, if there is no separation between humans and nature, then wilderness seems to be at best a human projection on the world. That is Cronon's conclusion. Certainly his social history of the concept of wilderness demonstrates clearly that the idea is not a neutral one, that it has had all sorts of value assumptions packed into it, not all of them desirable from our contemporary standpoint (sexist, classist, racist, reactionary). (17) His conclusion is that wilderness is merely a social construct and that all of us, especially environmentalists, need to get beyond it so we can attend to the important environmental and social issues closer to hand. Paradoxically, Cronon professes no antipathy for lands currently preserved as wilderness areas; in fact, he thinks we should continue to protect them. Thus, when Cronon looks out from Mount Marcy, he certainly sees something he wants to keep; but it is at the same time not something different from us with value independent of us. It is something we have created or invented, an artifact, an extension of us. Indeed, Cronon's critique of wilderness is the lead essay in a book he edited, *Uncommon Ground*, which has the revealing subtitle, *Towards Reinventing Nature*. (18)



Fire tower

Wayne Ouderkerk

It is fair to say that Cronon's view assimilates wilderness into culture. Callicott reverses the assimilation, arguing instead that culture is nature — as natural, he says, as the works of termites and beavers, other species that radically alter their environments. As I mentioned earlier, he bases this conclusion on evolutionary and ecological theory. Interestingly, and again paradoxically, Callicott, like Cronon, advocates keeping our currently preserved wilderness areas. He proposes to change their designation from wilderness to "biodiversity reserves," a name he thinks will automatically forestall any question whether the areas can be exploited for human commercial or industrial purposes. Along with that proposal, Callicott envisions a somewhat utopian — ecotopian — "sustainable development alternative" to wilderness preservation.

In this alternative vision, human settlements, with all their various activities, but with environmentally benign and appropriately scaled commercial, industrial and agricultural activities, co-exist within and around areas that we would currently refer to as wilderness. (19) Thus, given his naturalistic arguments, Callicott would have to say that the view from Mount Marcy reveals only various parts of nature. The spectacular mountain vistas, the village of Lake Placid, the Olympic ski jumps, the fire towers, the farmlands — all of it is equally “natural” to him.

While I share Callicott’s hope that we might someday live in an environmentally enlightened and benign society, I have to object to his and Cronon’s views. I find incoherent the notion, present in both their arguments, that there is something wrong with the idea of wilderness, but not with the areas preserved as such. A mere change of name cannot eliminate the incoherence. Here is the incoherence as clearly as I can state it: These two thinkers object to the dualism they find in the received concept of wilderness; yet they wish to keep, and urge respect for, wilderness areas. But those areas are identifiable only by their differences from the human-altered environment, differences that these two thinkers deny.

So I seem to be at an impasse. On the one hand, I agree with the ontological claim that dualism is false, that the world is one kind of thing and that humans are part of nature. On the other hand, I find problematic the proposals that we should jettison the idea of wilderness as something separate from us. Do I contradict myself, then, and advocate a return to a dualistic concept of wilderness? Unlike Walt Whitman, I cannot rest content with an apparent contradiction. What to do then?

An Alternative Proposal

When in doubt, take a hike! I return to Mount Marcy. I have already described the spectacular view. Let me stress that besides the vast wilderness areas visible from the summit, there is also the unmistakable, unambiguous view of a major resort town and other human presences. Here we already have part of Callicott’s vision, wilderness and culture side by side, each continuing according to its own processes. Indeed, in the Adirondacks, the two grade off into one another in accordance with the various patterns created in the land use plans and zoning regulations. The Adirondack Park is six million acres of land — as large as the entire state of New Hampshire — a mix of private and public lands, with the public lands designated forever wild by the state constitution. It is a grand preservationist experiment, not clearly and entirely envisioned as such by those who began it in the 19th century. (20) (There are other more recent and similar attempts: Arbruzzi National Park in Italy, named the Adirondack Park’s “sister” park, is apparently managed along similar lines, with the human and the non-human co-existing. Gros Morne National Park in Newfoundland, Canada, is a recently created relative as well, as is Bolivia’s Madidi National Park, begun at least with the idea of indigenous cultures’ continuing in their ways even while ecotourism intrudes. (21) Whether any of these experiments survives as initially designed, only time will tell; but they are promising models for the future, illustrating, I think, that dualism is not necessarily a part of the concept of wilderness.) But back to the argument. My objection to Callicott’s sustainable development proposal is twofold. First, on the practical level, a change of name will not provide any added protection for wilderness areas. Until respect for the non-human becomes much more widespread and is incorporated into our culture’s everyday decisions, neither designation as wilderness, nor as “wildlife refuge,” nor as “biodiversity reserve” will protect wild areas.

Second, on the conceptual level, Callicott is wrong to identify culture with nature. The view from Mount Marcy shows that clearly. If Callicott’s proposals prevail and we abandon the recognition of difference within the overall unity with nature, the human habitation represented by Lake Placid Village would not be only in the far off distance from the summit. Like the mining and logging operations of the 19th century, it would reach right into the High Peaks Wilderness, which would no longer be what it is. In other words, if we only emphasize the connections between humans and wild nature, we begin to undermine the most basic rationale for preserving any natural area. After all, if we are, in Callicott’s words, “completely natural,” what could be objectionable about any of our uses of nature, which, to follow his logic, must also be completely natural? There seems then to be little reason to restrain ourselves. We are just as “natural” as wilderness so our presence there, including our habitations and industry, makes no difference. The protection that Callicott wants for “biodiversity preserves,” or whatever we call wilderness areas, vanishes.

We get a similar result if we follow Cronon. If wilderness is a purely human construct, it carries with it no value of its own, only what we confer on it. We could easily change our minds, as many propose we should do in the case of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and as many continue to propose in the Adirondacks. So accounts that acknowledge, from whatever theoretical vantage point, only the connections or identity between humans and the nonhuman world

represent a real and substantial threat to the wild, even those, like Cronon's and Callicott's, that purport to be environmentally enlightened.

I propose instead that we continue to respect the wild because it is simultaneously something of which we are a part and which lives on in its own way, continuing the processes that spun us and uncounted other species out of its incredible complexity. It is also home to those other species, beings that have their own ways and need wilderness — a place without human domination — for their own basic needs. On the level of terminology, I can think of no better name than “wilderness” for such sections of our planet. It denotes clearly that those areas are places we humans choose not to inhabit, in which we do not use our evolved capacities for exploitation, where we consciously recognize that we have many companion species that need their own habitats to continue their own natural histories. That is, in wilderness we do not alter or destroy ecological processes to our own ends but recognize that there are many, many ends besides our own.

The term “wilderness” also carries the romantic connotations of a place where there are mysteries, adventure, excitement, challenge, danger; and I think that is also a good thing for us to keep. A world made only of our own artifacts would be, I think, impoverished. Where there is wilderness there is a richness in the form of the unknown, the uncontrolled, the chance for novelty, the unexpected, the possibility of discovery. Moreover, we can, and I believe are already, in the process of jettisoning the ethnocentric connotations of the term, as the earlier mention of “parks” similar to the Adirondack Park illustrates. The dualism embedded in the term has already begun to wither away and will continue to do so, aided in part by continued philosophical and other analyses. (22)

None of my support for the concept of wilderness retracts my rejection of dualism. Rather, it points out that even given our unity with nature, we must recognize that there are simultaneously important differences within that unity between us and the non-human. If we ignore those differences, we invite the homogenization of the world, a continuation of the mechanistic conquest of the non-human.

No doubt some of you are wondering where my view fits in the range of ontological theories, other than in the broad and unenlightening category of non-dualism. Is it a form of materialistic monism? Or perhaps a pluralism? Without wanting to be evasive, I can only say that I don't think that there is an exactly matching ontological category in Western philosophy. Materialistic monism claims that ultimately everything is the same kind of thing; the view I am proposing, though seeing and emphasizing connections and unity, resists the reduction of everything to one. Pluralism seems to me to have the opposite defect, namely, that it emphasizes the separations among kinds; that is, it sees differences without connections. I am attempting to follow ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood, who stresses that an adequate view must acknowledge both connections and differences. (23)

As a very tentative attempt to satisfy the request to situate such a view within Western philosophical traditions, I suggest an affinity between it and a portion of Aristotle's metaphysics, specifically his discussion of psychology. There, Aristotle points out that living things all have souls — the Greek word is *psyche*. Plants possess a nutritive soul, animals both a nutritive and sensitive soul, and humans a rational soul that includes the other two. (24) So Aristotle recognizes that there are important differences among the kinds of living things he knew about. But he also sees a continuity, a commonality, a *psyche*, present in all of them.

There are of course tremendous differences between an evolutionarily and ecologically informed theory and that of Aristotle, which did not allow for anything like evolution as we understand it and which was unabashedly hierarchical and anthropocentric. Indeed, he might well think absurd the idea that humans should restrain their power and set aside wilderness areas. And though as an astute biologist, he would no doubt appreciate the concept and processes of an ecosystem, his ethical theory leaves no room for direct moral duties towards non-human entities like species and ecosystems, duties that are a cornerstone of contemporary environmental ethics. (25)

But Aristotle's perception of continuity-with-difference, limited as it is, sets a precedent, I think, for the kind of theory Plumwood and I are advancing. Speaking for myself, I have never thought of Aristotle as either a materialist or a dualist. He clearly abandoned Plato's radical dualism, but he never accepted anything like the monistic, materialistic worldviews of many pre-Socratics. I stress that I offer this comparison only tentatively; it may ultimately fail; there may be better precedents that I am overlooking. And even if there proves to be no specific precedent in our traditions, I would still maintain that any acceptable ontological account must acknowledge the reality of both connection and difference without

reducing one to the other.

In that kind of account, wilderness is still wild, but it is not so much opposed as needed. And it is needed in many, many ways. I wanted to include here a discussion of reasons given for the preservation of wilderness, but I realized that even a brief account would take us well beyond the time we have. (26) So instead I will give a list of adverbs that can be used to modify the adjective “necessary” in the claim that wilderness is necessary. Wilderness is biologically or evolutionarily necessary; ecologically necessary; socially and psychologically necessary; religiously necessary; ethically necessary; metaphysically necessary; aesthetically necessary. These are all important, controversial claims; and I do not have the leisure tonight to explain or prove any of them. So there is still much, much more to say.

But for us modern humans, wilderness excursions must end, so we have to descend from our imaginative climb of Mount Marcy. As we do so, we can rejoice in the fact that it and other wilderness areas are there, that they are what they are, and that they form an integral, essential part of our world. Perhaps you will agree with me that still more of them are needed, not only by us but also by myriad other species and for still other reasons. Or perhaps you will disagree on the need for more wilderness and with all the arguments for it. In either case, you will have joined the discussions and dialectic of environmental philosophy, and I welcome your participation and contributions.

Thank you for your attention.

Endnotes

1 The following taxonomy of theories of wilderness is taken from Max Oelschlaeger’s *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). The presentation is my own.

2 There are at least 41 6,000-foot peaks in the Eastern U.S. For a listing, see www.americasroof.com/6000.shtml. In addition, there are four peaks in New Hampshire higher than Marcy but less than 6,000 feet. Mount Washington in New Hampshire is over 6,000 feet and is counted in the first total. Given the many 6,000-foot peaks in the Southern Appalachians, I would guess there are many 5,000-foot peaks there that are higher than Marcy, though I have been unable to find a listing of them.

3 Paul Schneider, *The Adirondacks: A History of America’s First Wilderness* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1997), p. xii.

4 See Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*, especially Chapter 1.

5 Philip Terrie, *Contested Terrain: A New History of Nature and People in the Adirondacks* (Syracuse, New York: The Adirondack Museum and Syracuse University Press, 1997), p. 1.

6 Oelschlaeger urges something like this when he calls upon us to become “posthistoric primitives” and to adopt a “new-old way of being.” See *The Idea of Wilderness*.

7 *The Idea of Wilderness*, Chapter 2.

8 See Chapter One, “Old World Roots of Opinion,” in Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

9 Barbara McMartin, *Discover the Adirondack High Peaks*, 2nd ed. (Canada Lake, New York: Lake View Press, 1998), p. 100.

10 For a similar assessment see Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990).

11 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, *High Peaks Wilderness Complex Management Plan: Wilderness Management for the High Peaks of the Adirondack Park*. (Albany, New York, 1999)

12 J. Baird Callicott, "The Wilderness Idea Revisited: The Sustainable Development Alternative," in *The Environmental Professional* 13 (1991): 235-47. Reprinted in J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson, Eds, *The Great New Wilderness Debate* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998). That anthology contains writings representing just about every perspective on wilderness.

13 Callicott, "The Wilderness Idea Revisited"; William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Towards Reinventing Nature* (New York: Norton, 1995)

14 For an account of the extent of Native American influence on the land, see William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983). Another example is that after Yosemite National Park was created, its white managers had to discover that the Native Americans who had lived in Yosemite Valley actively managed the vegetation there. See www.modbee.com/yosemite/.

15 Regarding India, see Deane Curtin, *Chinnagounder's Challenge: The Question of Ecological Citizenship* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999). For Africa, see Aaron Sachs, *Eco-Justice: Linking Human Rights and the Environment*, *Worldwatch Paper* 127 (Washington, D.C.:Worldwatch Institute, 1995).

16 Donald Davidson, "Psychology as Philosophy," in S. Brown, ed., *Philosophy of Psychology* (New York: Macmillan, 1974); Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Daniel Dennett, *Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984).

17 Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness."

18 See Note 13 for full citation.

19 The following essays by Callicott contain discussions of these ideas: "The Wilderness Idea Revisited"; "Should Wilderness Areas Become Biodiversity Reserves?" in Callicott and Nelson (1998); and "A Critique of and an Alternative to the Wilderness Idea" in *Wild Earth* 4 (1994) 54-59.

20 See Terrie (1997) and Schneider (1997). See also Alfred S. Forsyth and Norman J. Van Valkenburgh, *The Forest and the Law II* (Schenectady, New York: The Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks, 1996).

21 For some introductory information on Abruzzi, see www.pna.it/index.htm; for Gros Morne, see www.grosmorne.pch.gc.ca/default.htm; for Madidi, see Steve Kemper, "Madidi National Park," *National Geographic* 197 (March 2000).

22 A colleague, Elana Michelson, called my attention to some sexist connotations of some of the features of wilderness (I applaud here). She reminded me of Bacon's calls for "penetrating" nature to force "her" to reveal her "mysteries." I hope it is clear that my rationale for retaining the term wilderness is to recognize and respect its mysteries as real limits to our subjugation and control of nature.

23 Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993).

24 Aristotle, *De Anima*, especially Book II.

25 The environmental ethics literature is full of assertions and justifications of such duties. As one example, see Holmes Rolston, III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

26 For a compendium of such arguments see Michael P. Nelson, "An Amalgamation of Wilderness Preservation Arguments," in Callicott and Nelson (1998), pp. 154-198.



Crane Mt. Pond

Wayne Ouderkirk



*Saddleback and Basin Mts., Mt. Marcy in background (peeking up) and
Mts. Colden, Iroquois, Algonquin and Wright in center and right background*

Wayne Ouderkirk



Flowed Lands from Mt. Colden (Lake Colden on right)

Wayne Ouderkirk



Slide on Macomb Mt.

Wayne Ouderkirk

ALL ABOUT
MENTORING
A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 22, Fall 2001

A Need for Control?

Bob MacCameron, Niagara Frontier Center

Due largely to a recurring illness, I decided last year to retire from the College. Center Director Anne Bertholf graciously allowed me to speak for the faculty at the June 2000 Niagara Frontier graduation ceremony. I thus was able to say goodbye, publicly, to both students and colleagues.

This occasion, I said, prompted me to recall and celebrate both my love of history and my association with Empire State College students. I explained that I had been able to teach history at the College to deeply motivated, curious and hardworking students, who in the course of their personal development had come to reflect on their own lives and, indeed, the place of those lives in the larger context of our society. And so, in looking back on a most satisfying career, I wanted to recognize a handful of students who, over nearly a quarter of a century, had so enriched my own life. As unique as they were, they also represented my work with many other students.

I named them, and it is a pleasure to name them here too: Tom Maier, a Town of Amherst police captain, who helped me to think about issues of American foreign policy in ways different from a somewhat entrenched 1960's mindset; Robin Barovic, a law review student and now practicing attorney, who confirmed the odd yet compelling relationships found in historical study (in this case, ties between the Cherokee Indians and events of the Irish potato famine); Jerry Livingstone, a professional jazz musician, who allowed me to read his poignant oral histories of veterans of the Vietnam War; Midge Coates, a Ph.D. chemist, who merged science, in a sophisticated fashion, with the study of history; Harry Spector, a political consultant, who produced a keen analysis of the American political party system and its relation to the environmental movement; Betty Balcolm, a retired administrative assistant in SUNY Buffalo's Department of Political Science, who wrote a careful and lovingly crafted history of the Lancaster Opera House; and Jonathan Coe, a Niagara University reference librarian, to whom I am grateful for his enthusiasm for reading and thinking about history. I also thanked all my students who struggled, but persevered, in their study of history. They helped me to become a better historian and teacher.

I explained that those learning experiences, for both me and students, reflected a fundamental precept or operating principle of Empire State College: the relationship between mentor and student, developed over time, face to face, and forged out of mutual respect and academic inquiry.

I added that dramatic changes were occurring in education, many of them directly influenced by the new technologies of the computer-information revolution. Many of those changes were positive, if we understood that learning, and not mere economic calculations, must drive new modes of delivery. But what could not and must not be lost here was the essential and enduring relationship between mentor and student. For this, which had meant so much to me, constituted the College's very heart and soul.

A student who spoke for the graduates succeeded me at the podium. He talked about many enriching experiences at ESC, but he emphasized especially the fulfilling time he had studying through the Center for Distance Learning. Among other things, he said it was liberating not to have to meet a faculty member, face to face, to be able to receive comments on

academic material in ways not bound by time or place, and to find tutors who were so willing to help him become a better writer.

There was obviously a gap, or maybe a gulf, between my perception of what constituted the “heart and soul” of the College and the student’s very sincere assessment of his own learning experience. And I have thought about this discrepancy since. Initially, I assumed (rationalized?) that the student speaker was a good student, or he wouldn’t have been asked to speak, and that good students, potentially, can learn well through any educational mode the College offers. I remembered the ESC student who wrote about her distance learning experience several years ago in a New York Times Book Review “end piece.” If she was good enough to get published in The New York Times, she was obviously prepared to learn at a distance! Conversely, I thought poor or average students absolutely needed the physical interaction with a mentor or tutor to benefit most from their learning, and that even good students did best in a face-to-face setting.

Nearly a year later, I am calling into question these views. Separation from the College through retirement, and a fresh perspective, have allowed me to ask some hard questions that were perhaps too threatening to ask when I was still mentoring. Many of these questions have to do with my own personality and identity. I worked with a good number of students at the College at a distance, primarily through several CDL studies and through crosslocation mentoring, but I was never entirely comfortable doing so. On reflection, I think much of my discomfort was rooted in a need for control and perhaps even a need to retain some form of power.

By nature I am conservative and do not adapt to change easily. I also need to have a sense of being in control. I still walk into the bank, when open, and engage the teller rather than use the ATM machine. I drop mail off at the post office rather than put it in our mailbox to be picked up by the carrier. When working at a distance with students, I did not feel I was in complete control. I did not know what the student looked like; I could not read the student’s body language; I could not put the student’s paper between us and discuss points of content or writing; I could not cajole the student as easily into greater effort; I rarely engaged the student in conversation outside of our academic work; and, most importantly, I rarely created a personal bond with the student.

I now wonder if these reservations were the result of a failure to meet my own needs, including ego gratification, rather than the shortcomings of an academic process. The students I singled out in my graduation talk, in every case, became my friends. Years later, I remain in contact with them. Will the student speaker remain in contact with his CDL tutors in the same way? I tend not to think so. But I’m not sure that is important. By his own testimony, he received a wonderful education at a distance. The College met his academic goals, including being accepted to law school.

I think of a hypothetical situation: if I were to return now to mentoring (which I am not), would I engage more wholeheartedly in distance education, given my new perspective? Probably not. What my head now tells me would not be enough to overcome the force of who and what I am, or of my years. I am simply more comfortable living in the real village than the village of cyberspace. My sense is that the best mentors will be those who are flexible, secure and forward-looking, and, therefore, comfortable with living and working in both.

ALL ABOUT
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A Glimpse into Germany Today **James Shelland, Long Island Center**

As one who grew up in a time when mention of Germany aroused images of swastikas and shouts of “Heil Hitler,” my week in Berlin during this past September was a refreshing experience. I participated in a seminar titled Language and Media in Germany sponsored by the European Academy Berlin. Although intended for journalists from the western United States, I was able to attend because of my credentials as an academic. The seminar, although focused on the media, covered other aspects of German life today. I was particularly interested in finding out if democracy has become firmly established there. I am happy to report that after a week’s immersion in this seminar I can answer that question with a resounding “yes.” Germany is now a stable democracy with power alternating between its two major parties, the Social Democrats and Christian Democratic Union, which roughly correspond to the American Democratic and Republican parties respectively. The economy is healthy, although as in the United States there are a few who have been left out of the general prosperity. This condition was highlighted when we came across a demonstration on behalf of the homeless in the shadows of the Brandenburg Gate. An ironic note was added when we observed the police fraternizing with the demonstrators, a situation unimaginable in the Nazi or Communist eras.

Our group consisted of only six, all but myself journalists from California. We met with historians, members of the Reichstag, and representatives of the media and minority groups. Lively question and answer periods followed each session.

The introductory session consisted of a talk by Professor Manfred Gortemaker of the University of Potsdam titled, “Thoughts on Reunification: A Resumé After the First Decade.” This was a timely topic, considering that Berliners were celebrating during that week the tenth anniversary of the unification of East and West Germany. Professor Gortemaker made a number of interesting points. The main impulse for unification, he said, came not from the West, but from events in Eastern Europe, such as unrest in the Soviet bloc and the coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev. West Germany did not push unification because it feared the Soviet Union would regard it as provocative. Another factor that aided unification was the integration of West Germany with Western Europe, a process that had been going on since the formation of the European Defense Community and the Common Market. This meant, for example, that France no longer feared a united Germany. Furthermore, as Professor Gortemaker went on to say, this unification was not associated with nationalism as was that of 1871, and, therefore, appeared less threatening to Germany’s neighbors.

Unification has not come without a cost. Much capital had to be transferred from the West to the East, putting significant strains on the economy of the former. Also, as a result of decades of Socialist rule, there has been a lack of the entrepreneurial spirit in the former Soviet satellite. Fortunately, according to Professor Gortemaker, there are signs that this is changing. He did note the rise of a very nationalistic movement directed against immigrants. He attributed the attitude of these individuals to the loss of two authorities, the state and the family, thereby making it more difficult for them to cope with changes.

Professor Georg Ruhrmann of Frederick Schiller University talked on “Minorities and Their Representation in the German Media.” The minorities are mainly the immigrants who have come in large numbers from Turkey and other

Eastern European countries seeking work. Minorities appear in the mass media when there are clashes between them and right-wing groups. It has been the tendency of the media, he said, to present stories regarding minorities in a negative and sensational light, thereby exaggerating problems regarding them. Reporting tended to be focused on current happenings, ignoring the cultural context in which they occurred. Such an emphasis, he claimed, treats the immigrant in terms of danger to the society. To avoid this kind of treatment, he said, the media need to treat the immigrant more as an individual and with less sensationalism.

The visit to the Jewish community of Berlin was very poignant. We met with the public relations person of the community, Ms. Elia Klappeck, a most friendly and outgoing young lady. Asked why she chose to remain in Germany, she replied that she had very strong ties with the old Jewish tradition in Germany. She pointed out that there are 80,000 members of the Jewish community in Germany. She implied there are probably an unknown number of Jews in the country outside the community. Did she have friends among Germans? Yes, she said, and some of them admitted they had members of their families who had been Nazis. Most of the people of Germany today were born after the Nazi era. There is probably conflict in many due to the fact they had parents or grandparents who were Nazis. Two reporters for a German radio station who interviewed one of our seminar participants both revealed they had a grandparent who had been a Nazi. Ms. Klappeck's comments on the proposed Holocaust Memorial were interesting. She said she was against it because it made one feel too much a victim. German society, she added, has faced up to its guilt more than any other country. The memorial, by the way, has been a very controversial topic. When completed it will be a massive structure that will occupy a huge space right near the Brandenburg Gate. It is understandable why people would object to so prominent a reminder of a horrible past. There has been a compromise proposal, favored by the mayor of Berlin, for a museum. As far as reminders of the Nazi past go, it is evident that the present generation of Germans want to bury it. Hitler's bunker where he is reported to have committed suicide with his companion Eva Braun is not marked in any way. Inevitably the subject of the "skinheads," those youths who espouse Nazi-like ideas, came up in the meeting with the Jewish spokesperson. According to Ms. Klappeck, these youths are frustrated individuals who cannot adapt to change, such as the influx of foreigners, a view expressed elsewhere at the seminar. She also noted that Germans have difficulty accepting other cultures.

One of the highlights of the week was the day spent in Bautzen and Dresden. Bautzen, a small city not far from the border with Czechia, has been the home of a small minority group known as Sorbians. Of Slavic background, they have tried to maintain a certain cultural identity. We met with representatives of the Sorbian radio station, which provides programs in the Serbian language. As with small cultural groups elsewhere, it is becoming increasingly difficult, it was pointed out, to maintain this identity. Economic changes and intermarriage have broken down the traditional isolation. German nationalism has also been a factor. During the Nazi era, efforts to express a cultural identity were suppressed. As far as German nationalism goes today, according to our speaker, Germany seemed to be bending over backwards to avoid any expressions of German superiority. He provided this interesting tidbit of information about the origin of the German national anthem during Nazi times, "Deutschland über Alles": it originally meant the joining together of many small states into one nation, but was corrupted by the Nazis to mean Germany over the world.

The visit to Dresden, in a way, made me think of what a visit to Hiroshima would be like, raising the nagging question, was all this bombing necessary? Allied bombing during World War II destroyed the residential portion of the city. Fortunately, the beautiful Rococo style cathedral and palace still stand. Here we met with a representative of the governor's office of the state of Saxony, one of the states in the German Federal Republic. Her talk, "Cross-border Cooperation with Czechia and Poland Against the Background of EU Enlargement," stressed the significance of the numerous agreements for economic cooperation among the regions and countries of Mittel Europa. The European Union with all its regulations for cross-border trade underscored how far Europe has gone in economic integration. It is expected, this representative of the governor's office pointed out, that Poland and other Eastern European countries will eventually become members of the Union.

In another session on the media Professor Stephen Russ-Mohl discussed "Journalism and Mass Media in Germany." The German media, he said, had a tradition of partisanship, but it is countered by a desire to avoid alienating too many readers. As for coverage of American politics goes, only presidential elections receive intense coverage. Privacy has traditionally been respected, but as in American journalism, this is changing. In broadcasting there are both public and private sectors. American public broadcasting stations would probably appreciate the German methods of financing such outlets. Users pay a fee for access. Newspapers contain less advertising than in the United States, but their relative cost is more. The

former East German Communist papers have survived institutionally with party members continuing to write. Presumably, they now have to be more objective.

We visited a Berlin radio station that sought to reach out to immigrants. In a session called “Information in 18 Languages” we were told of the many programs broadcast in the language of the so-called “guest workers.” Again it was pointed out that the integration of foreigners into German society has its difficulties because multi-culturalism is not in the German mind.

A few final observations on our week in the German capital are in order. The polished stone marker particularly impressed me where the Nazis staged their infamous “bonfire of the books.” As one looked down onto the marker, one saw rows of empty bookshelves. One also saw one’s own reflection in the mirror-like surface. It was possible to view oneself as victim, perpetrator or indifferent bystander. It is said that when Professor Albert Einstein witnessed this grotesque sight from nearby Humboldt University he made up his mind to leave Germany. Around the city evidence remains that Berlin was a battleground in World War II. One can see bullet holes in the columns of the Brandenburg Gate and the Natural History Museum made when the Russians approached the city. A particularly moving sight was that of a statue of a woman holding a child standing alone in a large empty temple-like structure, which originally honored, I believe, German soldiers who had died in the first World War. It now represents all the victims of war and tyranny. In a meeting with some Germans who had lived in the Communist East, we learned something of what life was like before the Wall came down. Germans living in the East were not allowed to travel to the West. One young lady described to me her experiences participating in protest demonstrations at the Wall despite threats of arrest. East Germans thought of ingenious schemes to escape. One method was to dig connecting tunnels from the basements of houses on either side of the Wall. Through what must have been a word-of-mouth communications network, people were informed where to go to access the tunnel. We visited house # 55 where in the backyard we were shown the entrance to the tunnel. Authorities eventually found the entrance and closed it off with a concrete slab.

Certainly, a week is not enough to enable one to render a definitive judgment on the state of any society. But I can say with assurance, and I speak for my fellow participants in this intensive seminar on German history, politics and media, that the experience has greatly enhanced my insight into Germany today. Democratic institutions thrive and integration into the rest of Europe is well advanced.

ALL ABOUT
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Critical Mentoring — Part 2
Why We Do What We Do
Alan Hunt, Metropolitan Center

My previous article (All About Mentoring #21) laid a foundation for a philosophical underpinning of mentoring. The underpinning was based on critical theory, particularly the work of Jürgen Habermas. According to Habermas, truth is found through learning and learning occurs within a community of communication mediated by an ideal speech situation. My last article ended with a promise to explore the ideal speech situation. This exploration is a prelude to understanding reasonable speech situations that, in turn, will lead us to a robust philosophical framework for mentoring. This framework may also provide another means whereby we can more fully evaluate what we do. One of the oddities in writing ethics is that it is like Columbus “discovering” America. It was there eons before Columbus; it has remained there eons after Columbus; and when he arrived a vigorous people populated it. Authors who write about ethics describe the commonplace, which people do intuitively. They discover existing actions, existing thoughts and existing systems of being. Such is this writing. Much of mentor ethics only confirms what we know to be intuitively right. Like Lewis and Clark, I can only hope to map what exists and make the terrain easier for others to traverse.

Critical theory prescribes guidelines for discourses that ensure knowledge is generated and becomes truth. The force of the unforced argument prevails when discourse happens within the context of an ideal speech situation. Discourse is the principle engine of learning. That learning occurs within a community where varying validity claims are hypothesized and through critical discourse one claim gains precedence over others. The dominant validity claim then becomes temporarily accepted as knowledge, and as a result, learning has occurred within that community. Implicit in critical discourse is criticism — a rationalization process, yielding legitimated knowledge. Habermas [1] describes the dual function of criticism as follows:

In virtue of their criticizability, rational expressions also admit of improvement; we can correct failed attempts if we can successfully identify our mistakes. The concept of *grounding* is interwoven with that of *learning*. Argumentation plays an important role in the learning process as well. Thus we call a person rational who, in the cognitive-instrumental sphere, expresses reasonable opinions and acts efficiently; but this rationality remains accidental if it is not coupled with the ability to learn from mistakes, from the refutation of hypotheses and from the failure of interventions.

This learning component of discourse is integral to the development of knowledge and it is essential to understanding the role of a learning community. Habermas argues that communities of communication, within which learning occurs, are formed by the recognition of and adherence to certain rules of discourse. In the first instance, discourse itself must avoid performative contradiction.¹ Benhabib [2] has stated:

All modern consent theories of legitimacy face a paradox: by making consent the sole basis of legitimacy or normative validity, such theorists also run the risk that the consent principle can be consensually violated.... In the context of the theory of communicative ethics, this traditional difficulty takes the following form: in order to avoid the undesirable consequence that participants in a discourse may adopt principles which would contradict the very

principles of discourse itself, it becomes necessary to define theoretically the rules of discursive argumentation. (page 303)

Benhabib states these rules as:

1. Every agent capable of speech and action can participate in discourses.²
- 2a. Everyone may problematize any assertion
- 2b. Everyone may introduce every assertion into a discourse
- 2c. Everyone may express his attitudes, wishes and needs³
3. No one may be prevented from enjoying her above outlined rights in virtue of constraints that may dominate within or without discourses.⁴

These rules lead to the coincident conditions⁵ of discourse — reciprocity and symmetry. A Kantian echo

¹ A performative contradiction involves using the ethical norms to argue that these specific ethical norms are not applicable. Benhabib provides guidance in this matter; “Whereas the earlier justification strategy sought to establish a deductive relation between conditions of argumentative speech and the norms of a communicative ethic, it is now argued that a subject who engages in argumentation presupposes a certain ethical norm which he or she can only deny at the risk of a performative self-contradiction.” (294/295)

² This rule determines the potential participants in argumentation as the exceptionless inclusion of all humans capable of speech and action.

³ This rule guarantees the symmetrical distribution among all participants of chances to utilize speech acts.

⁴ This rule restates the reciprocity condition among participants that their rights as specified under 2 are fully respected.

⁵ There are conditions that must be met prior to discourse being entered into. Geuss provides us with a substantive discussion of how a people come to realize their real interests by throwing off the cloak of ideological delusion. His two prescriptives, Perfect Knowledge and Optimal Conditions, are prerequisites to a dialogic process. Within an educational setting these two preconditions require that participants have a reasonable knowledge of the history and background to the validity claim they are criticizing and that the discussion be free of coercion. This last condition is less obvious and of more interest than the first. Any form of “marking” and evaluation are coercive in nature, if not in practice. The idea of evaluation could coerce students into “group” think whereby legitimate criticism is stifled at the expense of providing the mentor with what the student thinks the mentor wants as compared to genuine criticism.

(of autonomy) and an affinity for John Rawls’ work (the original position) are embedded in these conditions for the ideal speech situation. Thus, what is essential in the development of a learning community is to ensure that the rules or maxims of the ideal speech situations are enabled and that the methodology of knowledge generation is followed. The enablement is witness to wholesomeness in that community as not just mentorstudent discourse is guided but all discourse is guided. These conditions enable learning and civility.

Reciprocity provides for an equality of participation by all affected parties. Benhabib [2] defines how Habermas sees this condition operating:

all must have equal chances as actors to express their wishes, feelings and intentions; and... the speakers must act as if in contexts of action there is an equal distribution of chances “to order and resist orders, to promise and to refuse, to be accountable for one’s conduct and to demand accountability from others.” Let me call the latter two the “reciprocity condition.” (page 285)

Care must be taken in defining “all” for the purposes of reciprocity and the coherence of the learning community. The members of the learning community are part of the “all” and are entitled to participate in the discourse. There is no method of exclusion. Yet, in practice there is an exclusion based on competency. Speakers with limited linguistic ability or yet to be developed cognitive capacity may not be able to provide a listener with sufficient information so that the listener can place himself or herself in the role of the speaker. This speaker in turn may not have the ability to assume the context of another speaker, again negating discourse. Exclusions based on competency require remedial actions. Diagnosis and remediation must be used to negate exclusion and make the dialogic a true community experience, with no observers, only participants.

A necessary companion to reciprocity is symmetry. Symmetry provides an equitable basis to exchange views and to participate in discourse. Participants must provide an equal contribution to the consensus and understand the rationale of that consensus. Benhabib [2] again provides insight into Habermas' definition of this condition:

each participant must have an equal chance to initiate and to continue communication; second, each must have an equal chance to make assertions, recommendations and explanations, and to challenge justifications. Together we can call these the "symmetry condition." (page 285)

The process of learning occurs within a community of communication where freedom and justice prevail and change is mediated through discourse. Discourse is the applied methodology of knowledge formation and knowledge at all levels is, of itself, a virtue. Benhabib contends:

There is indeed a relation between the idea of a true consensus and that of a voluntary, sincere agreement between parties, unaffected by force, coercion and manipulation. This leads Habermas to claim that truth, interpreted as the attainment of rational consensus, involves the norms of freedom (the right to concede to the force of the better argument alone) and justice (the reciprocal and symmetrical distribution of rights among participants.) (pages 285 and 286)

Adult education is about a lot more than education, or the accumulation of rote truths. It is to a large extent about ridding ourselves of insidiously imposed constraints or coercion. Emancipation is a legitimate goal of education and should be a planned or at least a hoped for outcome. Emancipation is the re-appropriation by participants of the forces (of individualization and self) that they have wittingly or unwittingly delegated beyond themselves. It is a realm of being within which participants reaffirm in their everyday actions, and their unique individual nature as a part of a common humanity.

Full emancipation is a Utopian concept, and provides a marker with which we can direct and measure social progress. A lack of emancipation inhibits a community of communication's and an individual's ability to undertake normative discourse and form normative knowledge. Without knowing yourself and without knowing yourself in the context of a community of communication, a normative discourse cannot lead to rational knowledge. The ability to examine what we ought to do is based on a sure and uncoerced knowledge of what I want to do. Kant's categorical imperative, Rawls' original position and The Frankfurt School's Utopia all seem to converge on this point. To quote Geuss[3]

although we do not live in that Utopia, we may be free enough to recognize how we might act to abolish some of the coercion from which we suffer and move closer to optimal conditions of freedom and knowledge. The task of critical theory is to show us which way to move. (page 54)

Surely, one of the tasks of the mentor is to help students move closer to freedom, justice and knowledge. A part of the emancipation process is the development of the cognitive and linguistic capacity to transmit the essence of a particular self throughout the community of communication. A successful application of critical theory in mentoring requires that participants be involved in a more general application of critical theory that will result in human beings capable of expressing their own needs and wants and of balancing those off against the needs and wants of others. This more general type of learning determines the method of discourse and the questions that can be dealt with by that discourse. When properly structured, rational normative discourse will result in a normative consensus or truth. This truth will form the minimum necessary overlapping consensus producing the maximum of support for the consensus. In other words, when seen over a community of communication, the sum of concessions is inversely related to the quantity of support given to any normative knowledge formed by discourse.

The intertwining of discourse and learning inevitably ties critical theory to mentoring. The context of truth and its realization is education. This education must be initiated by an ideal speech situation generated within a community of communication and be mediated by principles or rules of discourse. The structure of our mentor-student relations and interpersonal behavior within our study groups and across the College should all reflect and be tempered by these rules of discourse. They are not an empty theorization but a distillation of what we as people have struggled to learn so as to fulfill our social contract and co-exist to the betterment of our selves and others. The learning and practice of these principles exceeds good pedagogy and reflects civilization at its best. The willful negation of these principles lessens us as mentors

and people.

Habermas has been over-interpreted as prescribing a Utopian world where only ideal speech utterances happen within ideal communities of communication — discourse ethics rule. This would be a world of intellectual gridlock, where only discourse occurs and nothing is ever settled. In a realistic interpretation of discourse ethics by Chambers [4] the Utopian is replaced by the realistic and the practical. Chambers provides us with easier steps but nonetheless steps towards a Utopia. These easier steps to a practical and reasonable pedagogy will be the focus of my next article.

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ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

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Giving Life A Second Time **Vera Buglione, Metropolitan Center**

Serious illness, like great wealth, is one of those things that we know exists out there somewhere, but which has very little connection to everyday life for most of us. This is not because we are unaware of its presence. We read about AIDS destroying huge chunks of the population of Southern Africa. We read moving autobiographies by cancer survivors. We shiver as we visualize the victims of the dreaded ebola virus and silently thank our lucky stars that we are not one of them.

I grew up in a third world city where tiny malnourished four-year-olds with bloated stomachs and strange red hair, deliberately mutilated limbs and sores all over their bodies, were a familiar part of the landscape, as familiar as the vendors and hustlers jostling for space on the teeming sidewalks, and the flies buzzing over steaming piles of garbage and open sewers full of scum and cholera. But I was from a comfortably middle class family. And class in India insulates you from the maladies of the poor as securely as the walls of a fortress protect you from an invading army.

We had a family doctor who came to the house whenever any of us was taken ill. When medicines were prescribed, they were either made up in his “dispensary” by his Goan Catholic nurse (known to everyone as “D’Souza” — if she had a first name, nobody knew what it was) or the servant was dispatched by bicycle to Bandra Medical Stores for the prescription to be filled by our local pharmacist. I have no idea what was inside any of those pills and powders in their little brown paper envelopes, but they seemed to work like magic. We were all cheerfully, almost obscenely healthy except for my uncle who, though he had perfect teeth, suffered from a “delicate” stomach. Not so my brother and I. We managed to consume vast quantities of “street food” — pani puri, bhel puri, (combinations of rice krispies, raw onions, coriander leaves, green chillies and hot chutney eaten with little soft or crisp ‘puris’), raw mangoes and guavas with hot chilly pepper sprinkled on top, sugar cane juice, seekh boti (marinated, skewered goat meat cubes grilled over charcoal) and all manner of other delicious but forbidden stuff, cooked and presented with great flair on old, dirty scraps of newspaper by the bhaiyas (food vendors) on the beaches and streets of Bombay without any apparent ill effect. We often taunted our uncle for his “sissy” habit of insisting that every raw fruit or vegetable he ate had to be washed in some antiseptic solution that looked like purple water (I later discovered it was potassium permanganate).

Whether my robust constitution was the result of good genes, a well-balanced diet, educated adults who made sure I was given all the right childhood vaccinations and inoculations or some combination of all these, it ensured one thing. Like Prince Siddhartha before he became Gautama the Buddha, all through my youth I knew nothing of real sickness or death. They were what happened to other people. Elderly relatives infrequently visited and dimly viewed as they lay propped up against pillows behind yellowing mosquito nets, the sickly heroines of Italian operas like La Boheme and La Traviata (peculiarly also part of the educated Indian’s cultural repertoire) and “the poor” who were all around, yet “invisible.”

After I left India and lived successively in Trinidad, England and Nigeria for various lengths of time before settling in the United States, this obliviousness continued through changing economic circumstances, two marriages and three children with one dramatic exception: the birth of each of my children. I continued to remain careless and slothful about my own health habits but never once took my children’s well being for granted. When they were infants I lived in terror of sudden crib death. If one of them caught a bad cold and woke up in the middle of the night coughing and making those rasping,

phlegmy, struggling-for-breath sounds, I would frantically rip through the pages of my tattered Dr. Spock and look for the section that told you just what to do. When one of my sons stubbed his toe on a piece of broken glass, I was convinced he would bleed to death before I could get him to the pediatrician's office. During a visit home to India, my daughter fell ill and was doubled over in our hotel room in Khajuraho with severe gastrointestinal pain. I prayed all night for God to transfer her suffering to me, as I had once read in my high school history book, the Mughal Emperor Humayun had done when his son Akbar was similarly ill. (Whether it was divine intervention aided by the Cipro tablets I had prudently brought with me through hearing Drs. Yaffe and Ruden prescribe them countless times for patients back in the U.S., or not, I will never know. But the next day she was miraculously cured and happily went off to look at temple carvings with her father while I, delirious with relief, stayed behind realizing my wish had come true — I had come down with a very mild case of the same symptoms!)

I bargain with God all the time. Make it go away and I promise to atone for some recent sin. Make it go away and I will never again fail to acknowledge your existence. Alas, once the immediate crisis is over, I tend to lapse back into my old heedless ways. Despite all my good intentions to, if not offer up sacrifices of slaughtered goats and chickens, at least be more God-fearing by reciting my daily prayers, I carry on as if the secular and sacred are two totally separate domains. God can be put back up on the shelf or in the attic together with the seasonal holiday decorations unless of course I suddenly happen to need Him/Her in between.

About 18 months ago my older son was diagnosed with a serious health problem. After nine very frightening days when he was in the hospital, my family and I learned for the first time what it was like to live under the constant shadow of fear of the unknown. What was the long-term prognosis? Even if his symptoms could be controlled through a combination of the knowledge and skill of the very dedicated physician under whose care we had entrusted him, and the dizzying array of drugs that had rapidly become a daily part of his routine, would they be able to prevent the inevitable deterioration of two of his most vital organs? What about that elusive thing known as "quality of life?" Would he be able to savor the hard-earned fruits of success at almost reaching the end of the very prestigious academic program preparing him for his dream career as film critic and historian? Would there ever come a day when I didn't see that exhausted look come over his face after even the mildest exertion, like going up and down subway stairs? Would he ever recover the lean and muscular physique of his highschool years when he was captain of his school track team? What was there in the cards for marriage? Children?

These and other similar questions and fears huddled together in a corner of my mind like some giant sleeping beast that you scurry around on tiptoe in the hope that if you don't disturb it, it might never wake up.

Then, of course, came the day I had long dreaded. As was our custom about once a month, my son and I met for dinner at a favorite diner on Second Avenue. We talked animatedly about different subjects — his schoolwork, my job, family news, movies we had both seen etc. Just as we had finished the meal and ordered coffee, I gradually realized that he seemed somewhat distracted and had been twisting around uncomfortably in his seat for quite a while as I chattered on about his sister away at college in New Orleans and his cousin's latest scheme for launching a new business. It was then that he suddenly blurted out that lab results following his last two visits to the doctor had not been so good. The doctor had told him it was time to start thinking about dialysis or kidney transplant.

I felt as if a huge boulder had been aimed and struck right at the center of my stomach. A strange whirring sound rang in my ears and I can remember the rest of the conversation only in fragments. As he later walked me to my bus stop, one thought had already risen above all the others — God, please let it be me who turns out to be the compatible donor.

Even though I had hardly grasped the full implications of my son's words, I knew immediately and instinctively that a new kidney was the only option that was seriously under consideration. The doctor had mentioned my younger son (his only full sibling) and myself as his best hopes. His father, having survived two heart attacks, was out of the question: it seemed crystal clear to me that as long as I passed all the necessary medical tests for being a match, the choice had already been made. Unless I was definitively ruled out, I did not want to even hear of subjecting any of my other children to what promised to be the fairly grueling ordeal ahead. Not that I am an especially brave person or relish the idea of physical pain. I do not. But even less do I want to pace outside an operating room pondering the outcome of two of my children simultaneously under anesthesia.

As for my notion of dialysis — probably wildly inaccurate — I have always imagined it as something that takes place in one of those medieval torture chambers with the patient strapped to a pallet hooked up to some gargantuan contraption sucking away all the blood/poison from the patient's body after which he emerges pale and wraith-like, a victim of one of Count Dracula's lustier drinking sprees. Even if not quite that, it has to be an almost intolerable intrusion in a young person's life or, for that matter, in the life of a person of any age. Similarly, even though I know the majority of organs for transplant come from cadavers, I also found out that night that if an organ could be "harvested" (what an odd word) from a living donor, it was significantly preferable from the point of view of the recipient.

"Organ," "cadaver," "donor," "transplant," — all these words with their slightly grisly connotations that strike up images associated with graveyards and old horror movies like Dracula, The Mummy and Frankenstein now slip off my tongue as easily as saying "Coffee with half-and-half and two sugars, and one egg and cheese on a roll" to the guy in the coffee shop where I stop each morning for breakfast. I can say "nephrectomy" without stumbling over the separate syllables and can probably do the patter about its superiority over all other current therapies for patients with chronic kidney failure as well or better than any renal transplant coordinator in the country.

The past few weeks have gone by as if in a dream. On March 23 my son and I went for our first appointment to the Transplant Center of the hospital where the surgery will take place, provided I turn out to be a suitable donor. Much of the day was spent sitting around in waiting rooms as we waited our turn to be seen by the various members of the transplant team. When it did get to our turn we were treated like royalty. People could not have been kinder or nicer — the transplant coordinator who turns out to be a kidney donor herself and who showed me her very pretty purple scar, the surgeon who will operate on my son, the social worker who explained how the astronomical financial costs would be handled, the young man who registered us for the first set of blood tests, the two women who finally did the blood drawing filling up about 15 vials with my son's blood and eight with mine (who knew they needed so many!)

The coordinator told us that as soon as the analysis was complete and the results sent up to her she would call me at home. The protocol is that only the donor is informed of the result so that if he (in which "she" is always understood) decides he does not want to go through with it, he can still pull out gracefully at that point by announcing that there was a positive cross-match which obviates the need for further work-up. (Only if donor and recipient are blood group compatible and cross-match negative, does the evaluation proceed to the next level.)

Around 4:30 in the evening, after having spent five and a half hours in the hospital, we were able to leave. My son and I parted at the subway as our trains took us home in opposite directions. Probably a good thing. Though we had laughed and joked throughout the day, we each needed to retreat into our own thoughts. There was both so much and so little to say. I promised to call as soon as I got the news. I read about the "Oscar" contenders on the way home in the train and bus and wondered why I hadn't gone to see Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon before this. When I got home, I went straight to bed. I did not expect to get called until the next morning.

She called back at 11:30 that night. The only thing I heard was "Congratulations, you're compatible!" I did not call anyone until the next day. I did not dream that night.

My son and I have begun this joint, almost surreal journey almost exactly 30 years to the day that we were first tethered together at the moment of his conception. He is the patient. I now have to learn to be one. Since I work in a doctor's office, I know exactly what I must do in order to be "a model patient." I must take responsibility.

I start the process of making appointments for all the many tests I will have to undergo. I am determined not to give anyone any trouble either by not filling out all my paperwork accurately, or not following 'prep' instructions for the various procedures. I have started to take vitamin and mineral supplements, a habit I scoffed at for years as nothing but another example of the "American" proneness to excess in everything. I have sworn off all the junk food that I regularly consumed with such passion only one short month ago — McDonald's french fries, chocolate frosted Dunkin' Donuts, frozen Jamaican patties.... ah, such a lovely list. I have become very finicky about what I eat for breakfast and lunch on workdays and spend twice as much time hunting down only "healthy" foods, which cost twice as much money. I alternate between wanting to talk obsessively and compulsively with my family and friends about what is ahead, and longing to be left alone with Martin Buber's I and Thou, a text I have not picked up since the early 1970s when everyone of my

generation was reading it along with the Tibetan Book of the Dead and The Communist Manifesto.

I know how much I want to do this. But I am almost sick with fear. Fear of the terrible pain that Pat, the transplant coordinator, has warned me to expect after the surgery. Fear that it might be in vain. I often feel on the verge of tears. And then I see the sun streaming through the skylight on a glorious Saturday morning, making the soft, black fur of my Rottweiler Sophie's ears gleam like watered silk; I bury my head in her impossibly fat neck and I am full of hope. It will all turn out O.K. My son is going to be fine. I am going to be fine. I now think of God every day.

There are many unexpected insights one receives into the nature of health and illness and the specific culture of hospitals, when one views them entirely from the patient's vantage point. (I should add that it greatly facilitates the acquisition of such wisdom to have several hours a day in which to do absolutely nothing except lie on one's back staring up at the ceiling counting the hours till one's next Percocet). Forthwith some nuggets that might be helpful to both providers of health care and current and future patients:

#1: A Poem About Waiting

I have come to know this hospital well.
It is not in a distinguished part of town
Nothing much but fast food stores,
Shops with cheap, shiny clothes,
A few street vendors selling plastic toys and vinyl wallets
And, of all things
Giant bras.
Do the Valkyrie shop here?

When I enter the doors
I stride purposefully down the long corridors
Barely a glance at the signs on either side.
Their colored arrows pointing you to different "zones"
Silver for X-ray is the one I know best
I cannot remember the pictures on the walls
Some vaguely impressionist landscapes
A TV that keeps running the same programs over and over
Happy people smiling through cancer and diabetes and broken bones
Are they cured?
What are they saying?

We slouch into our favorite chairs
I like the one next to the wall
Because I can fall asleep waiting
It does not matter what time you come in
You will wait, and wait,
And wait.
Agitation and upper Eastside hysteria
About pressing other engagements
And the importance of one's presence elsewhere by 3 o'clock
Elicit neither sympathy nor interest.
In this room the clerk is king
Or queen

Oh, we have all tried the usual tricks,
Eagerly looking up every time the door swings open
Trying to make bright, eye contact
Smiling desperately

At the brawny fellow in scrubs
Hoping against hope
That flirting with him will get us out of here
Before we become as old as the shrunken skeleton
In the wheelchair
In his corduroy bedroom slippers,
A bored nurse's aide standing impassively behind
Holding a bag,
Pink bunnies on the outside
(Diapers, towels for wiping drool?)
Perhaps he was once an astrophysicist,
Or translated Dostoyevsky into Chinese,
Or maybe he gave great inspiring speeches from the pulpit
Where he was once revered like the Pope-
Until he turned into this wrinkled two-year old

Ah, my turn now
The sexy girl with clouds of black curly hair
Cascading down her back
And the long slitted tight skirt
Calls me to the desk to state my purpose.
I meekly answer and stare
Fascinated by the perfect bow shape of her glossy Chanel red lips
As they bid me return to my seat and wait
Another hour
Finally,
I jump up to follow a little bald man
Through the gates of the Forbidden City
Pathetic in my need to please
And prove I have the lungs of a 15-year-old.
I put on the gown with the three armholes,
Scrunch into the machine,
Hold my breath.
He takes the pictures.
It all takes about ten minutes
He says "Good luck"
And then I can leave.
I am exhausted
From four hours of doing nothing
But wait.

#2: The Colonoscopy

I have worked for a gastroenterologist for 15 years but I never had The Procedure. Then, when I proceeded with the work-up necessary to prove I could be a kidney donor, I was told I had to have one. But I could not somehow get used to the idea of my boss and people I work with face-to-face every day, looking up my ass. They said I had to do it in the hospital anyway. Thank Heaven. My prep sheet was duly faxed over.

Why does it tell you "You can drink all the liquids you like" after you drink the first glass of Fleet Phospho soda? Do they seriously believe that unlimited quantities of Oxo cube broth, lemonade, apple juice, ginger ale, lime Jell-O, etc. (you're not allowed red or purple liquids) with no solid food, somehow constitute a special treat that you are oh so lucky to be allowed? Why not just tell the simple truth? All this drinking will make you feel like a bloated elephant and you will NEVER, EVER want to touch lime Jell-O again in your whole life.

And then, there are those endless trips to the bathroom. I am convinced the true French genius lies not in its over rated (in

my opinion) cuisine. It is in its invention of the bidet. I would gladly have parted with my liver or one of my lungs to have had one of those as I rushed frantically between living room and bathroom, kitchen and bathroom, bedroom and bathroom about 2,000 times in 24 hours.

The day of The Procedure. My anguish continues. Since I could not get a ride to the hospital, it took me two hours by bus and subway to get there. Our commuter bus service, probably the most notoriously unreliable in the country during non-rush hour time, got me to the George Washington bridge about an hour late. Although there was nothing left of my insides to expel any longer, my body was out of control. I cowered in one corner of the subway car, feeling a little like Ben Hur's mother and sister in the Valley of the Lepers. By the time I crawled into the G.I. section of the hospital I was reduced to a wild-eyed, sweating hysteric. Temperature outside was 96 degrees Fahrenheit. The receptionist whose office I wandered into by mistake, was on the phone, and gave me an icy stare when I started furiously gesticulating to ask where the nearest bathroom was. She sternly admonished me to wait. Couldn't I see she was on the phone? I wanted to kill her. I think she thought I was a particularly annoying insect.

When I was finally wheeled in for the procedure itself, it seemed to take about three seconds. I remember a brief conversation with a sympathetic nurse who told me she hated the prep as much as I did when she had a colonoscopy some years ago. Then a handsome doctor, who wasted little time in idle chit chat, showed up. Something was pushed down my throat (oh yes, they threw in a gastroscopy as a bonus since I was getting my rear end examined anyway). All of a sudden I was looking at some weird blobs in hideous shades of crimson on the TV screen in front of me. At first I thought this was some well-meaning but ill-timed effort to educate me in the subtleties of modern art. Then realized I was looking at the inside of my esophagus. I mercifully passed out. When I came to, I was in another room altogether, looking at my younger son Jyotin, sitting on a stool next to the bed writing some notes on a yellow pad. He had come to take me home. I can't remember what I spoke about, but he swears I repeated an entire speech five minutes after I made it. I guess it wasn't that interesting. Because it wasn't what he was scribbling on his yellow pad.

It's nice to have a son who wears a suit and tie to work and writes important things on yellow pads. Especially, when it gives him enough clout to take his mother home in a chauffeur-driven Lincoln Continental. The boy has a real job. Almost makes up for having to go through with a colonoscopy.

Tips for the uninitiated:

In preparing for a colonoscopy

1. Keep a very large tube of Vaseline or any good diaper rash ointment by your side at all times;
2. Consider adding a bidet the next time you decide to remodel your bathroom. You will never regret it;
3. Cultivate the friendship of people who own cars they can put at your disposal in the middle of the day if you live more than ten minutes away from the hospital or doctor's office where you are going to have The Procedure.

#3: The Night Before and The Morning Of

D-Day is almost here. Rahul and I have been admitted. All pre-testing is finally over and we go out for a last lunch to the Irish pub across the street. I order shrimp creole and he orders Chinese (?) goulash. Both are valiant attempts to be what they say they are, but obviously cooking is not at the top of the list of the many wondrous accomplishments to which the Irish can justly lay claim. We go back to our rooms and admire the view from his. Mine looks out at the hospital's parking garage. (After the operation this changes. I get a room with a lovely view. Perhaps this is a reward that comes with my new, temporary but very agreeable status as "heroine?")

Somehow the evening goes by. The night nurse assigned to me is a lovely, warm woman from Antigua. She tells me that she has always liked the night shift because it gave her time to take care of her two daughters when they were young. Now one is in medical school and the other is training to be an investment banker. They don't need her to pack lunch boxes or supervise homework any more, but she's used to these working hours and has opted to keep them even when offered a day shift. I don't know why these details about her life move me so much. But they do. Her touch is gentle when she attaches the IV to my arm. In the morning she helps me on with the white support stockings and some sort of leggings that stimulate circulation and prevent you from getting blood clots during and after the surgery. She tells me that they want me on the operating floor at 7:30 a.m. and assures me "We'll be ready." I feel as if I'm going to my execution. I suppress the

urge to cling to her neck and weep.

A young Mexican guy wheels me down to the waiting area where patients are brought just before being taken into the operation theater. I wave “goodbye” and “good luck” to my son as we whiz past his room. When we get to the waiting area I am a quivering jelly of terror mumbling the Avestan prayers of my childhood over and over again. The Mexican guy seems to understand and gives me a comforting smile before he leaves. Across from me is an elderly woman also apparently waiting to go in for an operation. A young man, her son, comes in and asks to stay with her before she goes in. There is no objection and I watch fascinated as he murmurs to her soothingly and strokes her brow. What a good boy, I think. I am getting nauseatingly sentimental. The anesthesiologist comes over and introduces herself. I pay no attention to what she is telling me. Ditto the three young residents assigned to follow me through my stay in the hospital. The mother and son have hypnotized me.

It is time. I am now wheeled into the operation theater. “Theater” is a good word. Nothing could be more dramatic than this room with the fearsome overhead lights and all these people standing around in their green scrubs and shower caps talking over and around me as if I’m a slab of meat. They don’t mean to be unkind. First, it is not an inaccurate description of how I must look and feel in this room all trussed up like a turkey, and where the temperature is at least 10 below zero. And second, it is wholly unreasonable to expect they would want to include me in their conversation and hear my take on why the anesthesiologist’s daughter woke up complaining about a pain in her knee at 5 o’clock that morning. My teeth are chattering and I can’t stop shaking. This is my last memory of life with both kidneys intact.

#4: Pain

I never knew there were so many different varieties of it. There’s the kind that takes over your entire body and every tiny movement is exquisite agony. Then it gradually narrows down to the area of the incision and the skin surrounding it. I keep trying to think of metaphors to describe this to my residents who are very conscientious as they make their daily rounds and tell me how I’m progressing and what I will feel as the days go on. But I keep wondering, as I gaze at their fresh young faces, how they can really know what I feel. Is my pain the same as the pain of the patient who occupied this bed last week? What do they teach them about pain in the textbooks? Do they tell them that sometimes your insides feel as if they’re being pulled by dozens of tiny hooks with strings attached to them? Or at others, as if somebody went over your skin with sandpaper? And then there are the mornings you wake up and one part of your back feels like there must be a dent in it from the stone you were sleeping on all night. Or when you have the misfortune to cough or laugh too hard at a joke someone is telling you “to cheer you up” and you think, “Ah, now they will truly be able to write my epitaph as: Here lies Vera who lived a reasonably contented life and died laughing.”

The worst part of it is that for everyone else except you the patient, pain is a dull subject. Riveting as you may find it to concentrate on how accurately you can describe all its little nuances, your audience will not be similarly riveted. All too soon you will catch them stifling yawns of dismay when they politely ask, “How are you feeling?” and realize you are not going to say “fine.” My honest advice is: save this stuff for the support group. That’s what it’s there for.

The great, amazing news is that it is over and that my son Rahul and I are both alive to tell the tale. I am still in awe of the fact that one of my kidneys has been removed and successfully transplanted into his body. Despite whatever quibbles we have about specific medical practices and procedures encountered during these extraordinary past ten weeks, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that we were most fortunate to have been able to avail ourselves of what is surely one of Western medicine’s most triumphant achievements at least in the last century — the ability to transplant healthy organs from living donors into the bodies of recipients whose own organs are unable to serve them any longer. I cannot begin to express my gratitude to Pat, the transplant coordinator, who was always accessible and never got impatient no matter what hour of the day or night you called with a question, and the brilliant team of doctors and surgeons who made it possible for my son to get a renewed lease on life, and who gave me the gift of being the instrument through which it came about.

#5: Convalescence

My daughter has made the bed up for me in her room. The ceiling glows at night with scattered stars and the signs of the Zodiac pasted on it by her father so long ago. Most of the time in this room I don’t wear my glasses. Actually I am going to remember this entire period of my life as one where I hardly ever wore my glasses. I cannot get away from the

strangely blank, yet malevolent stare of Arnold Schwarzenegger as The Terminator, a poster given to her many years ago when she had a crush on him. She no longer does, but no one has the energy to take it down.

I spend a lot of time sleeping between painkillers. I was looking forward immensely to the three weeks following the operation so I could read the many books piled up by my bedside table; watch all the movies I had missed when they first came out on the VCR; catch up in some way with family and friends whom I never seemed to be able to enjoy in a leisurely way because there were always chores to do, classes to prepare and papers to grade on weekends and days off. As for reading, because it hurts my back too much to sit in any one position too long, I rediscover the pleasures of the short story. I did not realize Herman Melville could be so funny, nor did I know Katherine Anne Porter writes so well that it hurts. I have no interest in movies or music. The only show I want to see is a sitcom "Seventh Heaven" on which my daughter has got me hooked. The reruns are on every Monday night and its about this perfect family that we all wish we lived in. Right now, Mary, the oldest daughter, is being a real bitch and breaking everyone's heart.

I go for a walk around the neighborhood every evening. I discover for the first time in seven years that although this is just another ordinary suburban block like many others throughout America, every house has some little thing about it that gives it personality. In one front yard, a blue wooden Tyrannosaurus Rex stands under a tree. Another one has what looks like a small Roman garden with a crumbling stone wall on one side. No one ever sits in it but I always expect some lovely creature in a one-shouldered dress and sandals will come out any minute with an earthenware pitcher of wine for the menfolk. I rarely see the people who live in these houses except for someone occasionally mowing a lawn or taking the garbage cans out on the street. But I smell trees, listen to the different birdcalls and feel how neglected my education was because I never learned any botany or zoology and can barely name a single flower in the gardens I pass every day.

Two days ago I saw an amazing thing. A turtle was making its way very, very slowly down the block. I saw it as I was leaving for my walk and, by the time I returned about a half-hour later, it had moved two feet. The next day it had managed to get off the sidewalk and edge its way into some wild grass and bushes, still only about another foot away from where it had been the previous evening. By now I am beginning to think our fates are linked. I spend a long time looking at its unmoving, mournful head. I do not know if it is dying. I wonder if it would offend its dignity if I were to tickle it under the chin with some grass so at least I could tell if it moved that it was still alive. I finally do it, and it moves. It looks like some strange, sad priest at prayer.

Today, I can hardly wait to look for my friend. Sure enough, there he is (notice, I have now endowed him with gender), but just his tail is sticking out. I can't bear it. If he is lost, I have to help him find his way home. Fortunately, one of the neighbors, a large tattooed man with a red beard, is outside working on his trailer. I tell him about my friend's plight. He agrees to walk down with me to see him. He picks him up by the tail and announces that this is a snapping turtle who appears to have lost all desire to snap. However, the creature shows he still has some fight left in him. After he's picked up he tries to bite my neighbor's leg. My neighbor doesn't seem particularly upset by this ingratitude. We walk down to the creek and he puts the turtle down in the water. The turtle swims away. I am so happy. He got another lease on life too.

I spend a lot of time thinking about how generous and kind and thoughtful so many people have been before, during and since the operation. Not just family and close friends who have taken such good care of us, cooked and cleaned, phoned and worried, visited and prayed, and checked up on us both constantly. Also, my Yaffe/Ruden family of both staff and patients who sent so many good wishes, loving messages and prayers. And how can I forget my colleagues and students at Empire State College and Touro College for the same?

Thank you for the beautiful flowers, the fruit, the home-made pizzas, the good luck charms and stuffed dolls, the Swiss chocolates, the cakes, the candies, the aromatic candles, the pretty nightgown and blouse, the homemade soups, the books, the vitamins, the creams and soaps, the lovely cards, phone calls and e-mail messages. I cherish every single one of them.

Thank you for your prayers. God must have beendeafened on May 30, 2001.

And thank you above all for the heart that came with these offerings. Rahul and I have no choice but to get well.

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From Kolb to Collaboration: Reflecting on Experience

Adele Anderson, Genesee Valley Center

Over the past few years that I have been with ESC, certain old books have had a continuing relevance. I believe part of the reason is that some mentoring problems keep recurring. An example is David Kolb's classic *Experiential Learning* (1984). Eclipsed somewhat by the recent emphasis on other cognitive learning theories, Kolb's model is still cited in literature that I follow on ethnography, service learning, study abroad and other outside-the-classroom approaches.

This meta-model, as Atkinson and Murrell (1988) call it, seemed general enough to bring into a discussion of how we evaluate individual students' prior learning, long an area of frustration for me. In hopes of better understanding how Credit by Evaluation (CBE's) recognizes learning through life experience, I made Kolb's model the centerpiece of a discussion at Genesee Valley Center's 2001 Festival of Ideas. Reflecting on the results of this exercise led me to grasp the problem at a new level. My desire was not to test the model but rather to seek a systemic approach to identifying and evaluating prior learning — something I now realize will require a broader, even cross-functional, collaboration to improve.

I had suggested to two of our small breakout groups at the festival that they brainstorm examples of how Kolb's model (Figure 1) might manifest in the evidence for individual Credit by Evaluation. It was a thought exercise only; we did not use actual case materials. The groups immediately came up with many examples for the Concrete Experience and Reflection phases of learning. However, when it came to Abstract Conceptualization and Active Experimentation, examples thinned out dramatically. One or two participants said, "People have different learning styles." A few others speculated that only advanced-level studies achieve the last two segments of Kolb's cycle. Others said that different people learn in a different order, or don't include all phases of the cycle in their learning.

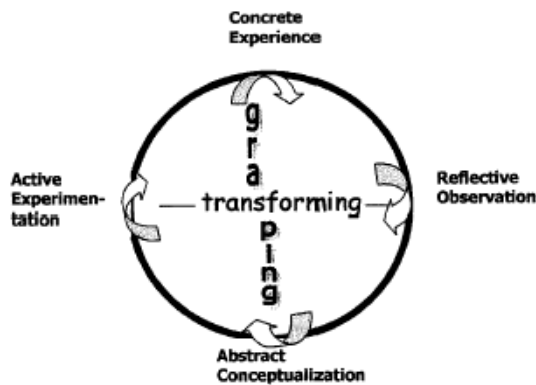


Figure 1. An interpretation of Kolb's model of experiential learning (simplified from 1984, p. 42)

It is widely recognized that abstraction from experience is difficult even when guided; at the same time, I was not ready to throw out Kolb. Other things might explain those gaps. First, in emphasizing individualized evaluation we might neglect attention to other learning examples that our students regularly use. Abstraction cannot be the exclusive province of third and fourth year students; in fact, in introductory statistics classrooms, abstract conceptualization is often the first thing presented. "Experiments" occur when students try solving the problems. That this may not be the best order of presentation for everyone is suggested by some newer texts that emulate concrete experience up front "for people who hate statistics," or "through playing cards." But abstraction and experimentation are very much present in those versions, too.

As for different learning styles and different ordering, Kolb empirically examines how comprehension and apprehension — the prehension or "grasping" poles of the model in the figure — work in dialectic with the transforming dimensions. He demonstrates how preferences for certain tensions within this model are associated with the particular learning styles typical of different occupational groups. At the same time, Kolb posits learning as "the central process of human adaptation to . . . environment . . . a holistic concept " (1984, p.31). The result of a full cycle of interaction with the environment should be a new level of understanding, or the creation of knowledge — a kind of spiraling forward of the person-environment adaptive interaction. Holism, in short, implies the whole model. People begin in different places or prefer a particular phase, but the model predicts that they do experience the entire cycle in the creation of knowledge.

It is not an easy task to identify evidence of such cycles across subject areas; indeed, some of the most convincing examples come from traditionally non-liberal or professional fields. Schön's (1987) cases of reflective practice — still some of the most compelling I've read — feature architectural design, music performance and clinical counseling. Abstract conceptualization does, one hopes, go on when students read and discuss the theories in texts we assign, and when they write papers about them. However, we may not think readily of these examples because, although we rely heavily on them, they seem to yield little in the way of concrete experience.

A lot of experimenting and problem-solving material appears in CLEP tests and computer programs students have designed, but these examples may not readily occur to us in an exercise. In their chapter "Assessment processes and outcomes: Building a folio" (in Jackson and Caffarella 1994), Barnett and Lee suggest using artifacts and attestations as evidence for learning, such as recorded performances, publications, job evaluations, licenses, computer programs and — yes — test scores (p. 58).

As an anthropologist (and not a learning theorist, as should be pretty obvious), I speculate that many of us center mentors often forget conventional exams and technical materials even though they offer some of the best abstraction and experimentation examples. The reason? They don't typify the one-to-one, liberal study that I associate with mentoring in

my corner of the ESC organizational culture. Yet ESC is just one among thousands of institutions that now offer to evaluate potential credit for prior non-collegiate experience. The rest of the academic world recognizes and values all these kinds of evidence, and the workable reality for adult learners usually includes a mix.

However, no individual mentor, much less a 15 minute breakout group, can expect to compile or remember all possible types of evidence of students' experiential learning. This, I now realize, is one of the frustrations that originally provoked me to turn to Kolb. ESC, a pioneer of individualized approaches, still has very little in the way of systematic and easily accessed information resources to help mentors advise students preparing CBE's. There are few guidelines for evaluating individual prior learning that offer a transparent process or a means of internal assurance of academic quality.

Traditionally, the resolution of prior learning evaluations at ESC has depended on case-by-case judgments by individual mentors. Although we generate written reports, the vast majority of reports I have written or seen do not reveal much in the way of underlying assumptions and principles. Even after center quality reviews and College-wide area of study portfolio reviews, this part of our process remains pretty opaque.

Furthermore, despite the workshops we offer, expectations for a student's description of prior learning are not all that clear to students: Hazy distinctions between introductory and advanced level, uncertainty as to whether a student's two-year work experience amounts to one year of experience repeated twice, and students not "knowing what they know," or how to convey it in writing, might be addressed by better developed college-wide guidelines.

It is expecting too much of an individually based model such as Kolb's to solve these kinds of issues, but we surely do need help — a more comprehensive and systemic process to guide and inform mentors and students about the forms and range of options for evaluated credit. The need is for easily accessed information as well as for more conceptual guidelines. Most important for faculty would be quality benchmarks to use in making evaluation decisions. Both students and faculty need fingertip information about sources and processes by which credit is assessed. Students clearly need more help than a few exemplary cases to help them decide whether to submit and how to prepare material. Otherwise, something like a stone hauling exercise often ensues: Student materials are inappropriate; they are sent back; they are redone and sent in again. This also impacts the productivity of our assessment professionals.

Thus, we need more than a learning model. Opaque outcomes, uneven results and frustrating rework usually signal the need for more systemic and collaborative solutions. Our organizational culture is somewhat antisystemic. We probably lean too heavily on theorists like Kolb (1984), whose model is designed for integrative, lifelong development of the individual. As do later writers on adult development, including Kegan (1995), Kolb invokes developmental stages toward the state of being fully integrated as a learner.

The ESC philosophy I have seen and heard in my corner of the College closely resembles these developmental visions. It is student-centered, promoting individual achievements across a wide spectrum. I heartily agree with the importance of supporting students as individuals in diverse circumstances.

However, supporting individuals cannot be optimally achieved in the absence of coordinated guidelines and processes within an institution. We can't ask models that were built for individuals to solve systemic problems. If we translate support of student individualism into an atomistic kind of mentor individualism, we hinder our chances of developing better student and mentor supports throughout the organization. By all going off in our own directions, we are less effective at helping students succeed on their own terms, and we generate an enormous amount of frustration.

Developing whole, creative people with integrity does not mean that we have to go at it in cumbersome, labor replicating ways. The "individualist" answer was, I do it this way, it all depends on the individual case, and we just have to develop ourselves better as individual mentors. Certainly we must develop as individuals, but at the same time we must also develop as an organization to meet the demands of an external environment of which our students are well aware, in which both numbers and learning modalities are proliferating. To borrow from Kegan, we are all in this "over our heads." We need to put them together a little more.

Lateral thinking and some systematic diffusion across the College could help us make evaluative decisions more integral and defensible. I do not think that integrative development in Kolb's or Kegan's sense is compromised, if we collaborate

to develop and adopt better organizational resources to help us design and evaluate experiential learning. We have a long way to go toward making the most of the scant time we have for each student. Improved tools and resources would enhance, not diminish, the freedom and creativity of mentoring.

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ALL ABOUT
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Learning as Self and World Transformation: An Interview with Satish Kumar **Alan Mandell, Metropolitan Center and The Mentoring Institute**

Editor's Note: Satish Kumar is the director of programs at Schumacher College, a center for ecological studies in England, and the editor of Resurgence, a journal of ecological, holistic and spiritual thinking. He has spent his life as a Jain monk, a community organizer, a peace activist, an educational pioneer and as a writer. His autobiography, Path Without Destination, was published in the United States by Morrow in 1999. The following conversation took place at his home in the village of Hartland, Devon, the U.K. on 21 August 2000.

AM: In your book, *Path Without Destination*, you describe an "inner journey" that has connected so many of your life activities. Can you explain the term, especially as it is relevant to your thinking about schooling and learning?

SK: Actually, I think that "inner journey" is an especially good term as it relates to education. In the true sense of the word, education has to do with bringing out what is inside you. Modern education has become a static affair rather than a journey. Education should be dynamic. Most education has lost that quality.

AM: Paulo Freire speaks about this kind of learning as part of the "banking" model.

SK: Yes. We think about education as putting in rather than bringing out. So you look at a student and you think, this student is an empty bucket and we have to pour knowledge into this bucket. This is the static education most of us have experienced and that we see around us today.

AM: So you are trying to imagine learning as a process of "bringing out."

SK: "Bringing out" is always a dynamic process. There is no quantifiable amount of material to bring out. It is unquantifiable. Education is rather a process of bringing and leading out. I give the example of the acorn. An acorn already knows all the knowledge, all the information it needs. The acorn needs no information from the forester about how to become an oak tree. The only thing the acorn needs are appropriate conditions — right circumstances — in which it can bring out its potential. That is what true education has to do: to bring out each human being. No teacher can make someone an Einstein or a Buddha or a Jesus or a Shakespeare. The only thing a master, a guru, a teacher, can provide is right circumstances in which that seed can flourish. That is why I think about true education as dynamic and never static.

AM: In the particular circumstances in which I teach, we have used the term "mentor" as one who offers such guidance.

SK: I like the word mentor more than teacher because the pupil can see that his or her teacher, once upon a time, was an acorn and has grown and has become who that person is. The student can see that the mentor has made his or her own inner journey. The mentor is there to help me as a student discover that I can make my inner journey, uncover or bring out my own potential, and become who I am.

AM: So from this point of view, the mentor is modeling a certain stance in the world, or a certain attitude about learning

and knowledge. In effect, the student can see the example of someone going through his or her own learning process.

SK: Most importantly, the students can see that a mentor does not impose knowledge. The mentor is a sounding board; the mentor is an excuse. Mentoring is an opportunity for questioning, for examining. The mentor is not there to give information, but to bring out information.

AM: This is particularly interesting when working with adult students who already bring to the mentoring situation a great deal of experience, of insight, of knowledge.

SK: Those students have come to you, or they should come to you, because they need right conditions to find themselves and to explore. So as they continue to be in industry, in family, in business, in their work places, they don't have the time of quietness, of silence, of peace, where they can be free of their day-to-day responsibilities. So a school should be providing that possibility, that condition, where students can come and be, and really discover for themselves. And you are there as support, as help, as example — as mentor — so they can ask you questions. And when they are asking questions, more important than being told the answer is working with the questions and finding answers in the process of questioning.

AM: At least at the first level, adult students are typically coming to university for quite practical reasons: for the credential, for the degree requirement, for the badge of completion required of them. Many students seem less interested in a journey of self-discovery than in dealing with externally-driven demands. Trying to work with the tension between such an instrumental purpose and the process you are describing is what we are confronted with.

SK: This is the greatest challenge. A true mentor will use the degree, use the qualification, use the practical need as a framework. But the framework is not the painting. You have to have the framework so that you can hang the painting on the wall. But the painting is the education, which self-examination, discovery, the inner journey, will help you create. The focus of the mentor should be on the picture, not on the framework. The framework is only there as an occasion — the opportunity for the picture, for the inner journey.

AM: How do you think your own experiences and your own process of learning have contributed to your understanding about knowledge, the schooling and the learning process?

SK: I have been very fortunate in that I have had mentors who were true mentors. They never tried to impose their way on me. They offered themselves to me so that I could discover myself. So my Jain teacher, Tulsi, was like that; and my second Gandhian teacher, Vinoba, was also like that. Both had a deeply spiritual attitude toward life. And they really did *offer themselves* so I could benefit from their company in making my own inner journey, and in finding my own knowledge. Every human being is born with this potential of his or her own. Learning with a mentor is the process of bringing out that potential.

AM: Is this way of thinking directly connected to the traditions of India in which you grew up?

SK: There is a saying in India, which was actually stated by a man called Ananda Coomaraswami. He used to say: An artist is not a special kind of person. But every person is a special kind of artist. So if this is true — if every person is a special kind of artist, how can you turn every student into the *same* person? Modern education tries to create this sameness. It wants to put people in such a situation that they turn out to be the same accountants, the same doctors, the same lawyers, the same social workers. Same technique. Same information. Same knowledge. So the in-built quality of every human being is completely lost. What I think of as participatory or inner journey education — which is not based on empty buckets being filled by a teacher — aims to bring out the unique qualities of every person.

AM: You were a Jain monk for nine years; and then you decided that this was not to be your final path, so you became what you have described as a “wanderer,” and then you became a peace activist, an ecologist, an editor. Something seems to have continued to move you on a different journey or another path.

SK: I would say that the reason I was able to move on was that my teachers did not put me in a straightjacket. They allowed me — they really helped me — to be a free spirit. So I moved on and tried not to remain stuck or stagnant in a

single pool. I thank my teachers for this. I sometimes criticized them, like I did Tulsi. I rebelled. And yet I am grateful that these teachers were able to give me that sense of freedom that has helped me not to become dogmatic and not to become static and bound to one way of thinking. That kind of energy has been a genuine gift from my mentors. These men also taught me that to be a true mentor is not to be interested in disciples or blind followers.

AM: You write in your book that whatever you have learned in life you have learned through “wandering.”

SK: There are really two “wanderings.” One wandering is moving from Jainhood to Gandhian life, to ashram life, to writer’s life. These are all creative parts, which I have followed in my own personal spiritual/intellectual journey. That is one kind of wandering. The other wandering is a more physical one. I wandered through India, walking as a monk, day to day from village to village, bare feet, begging bowl in my hand. That was wandering. Then I wandered with Vinoba from village to village, asking for land. Then wandering from India to Afghanistan to Iran to Russia to Europe to America to Japan. Wandering for peace. And then wandering throughout Britain for 2,000 miles in four months and through the Himalayas and Tibet. So these are two kinds of wanderings in external life. But then I think there is a third kind of wandering of a more inner nature. So, for example, I have wandered from a more meditative attitude to a more active attitude; and I have wandered between doubts and dilemmas to hope and trust.

When you are going through ups and downs, physically, geographically and spiritually, you learn. If you are just straight and narrow; if your path is laid out for you, if you just follow what is prescribed in the book, there is no adventure, there is no risk, there is no wandering, there is no uncertainty, there is no doubt. To me that is a living death. That is not education.

AM: How did the founding of what you named the “Small School” grow out of the kinds of experiences you have been describing?

SK: You cannot have this kind of “inner journey” education in a school that contains 500 or 1,000 or 2,000 students. Schools cannot be institutions; they have to be learning communities. And so, when I had my own children, and they had to be bused 15 miles each way to school, a 30 mile return journey, I saw they were living a commuter’s life at the age of 11! And, on top of that, what they were taught there was not bringing out what they were, but filling them in. So for these kinds of reasons — of size, distance and the static notion of learning upon which the school depended, I wanted to start a school for my children and children of the village. I wanted to see if we could create a school in which children could really learn by participating in the activities of life. Not just sitting in the classroom and listening to the teacher and watching the chalkboard, but doing — fully participating in the actual living process.

AM: And for children, this “actual living process” refers to what?

SK: At the simplest level, take food. If you do not participate in the growing of food, in the cooking of food, in the serving of food, in the washing of dishes, you are not a participant. You are a mere consumer. If you do not participate in the actual process of life, there is no education. For me, education is discovering how life works: how food works, how clothes work, how house works, how relationships work. Our industrial educational system makes us into consumers. We are mere consumers of culture. This is very far from participating with your mentors and with your fellow students in the learning process.

AM: This focus on learning-as-doing seems reminiscent of John Dewey’s notion of a true education.

SK: There are two or three people who have worked in this way. Dewey is one, but for me, Gandhi has been a greater influence on my thinking. They understood that education is not about the acquisition of facts. It is a discovery of life. So Dewey in the West and Gandhi in the East came to the same point about education as part of an actual living process. And both also understood that knowledge is never about power. It’s not about dictating, dominating, showing that I know more than you. Knowledge is an instrument of service. I know how to take care so I will come and serve you. I will help you. I will be your servant. So the more you know, the more humble you are. Gandhi’s idea was that knowledge and humility go together.

AM: We are certainly very tied to the link between knowledge and power. Even the more critical term “empowerment”

suggests the significance we place on the connection.

SK: No. Knowledge is not power. It is always an instrument of service. So I acquire knowledge to cook so I can prepare a good meal for my family, for my friends and for people who are hungry. I become an architect so that I can serve the community by building comfortable housing. Not for profit; not for money; not for fame; not for power, but to serve the community. Knowledge without humility is only a burden. It's a weight on your shoulders. It's an impediment. Knowledge with humility is a source of transformation.

AM: So one needs to search for forms of learning, for new models, that don't lead to arrogance but to the kind of service-giving you are describing.

SK: That was the idea behind the Small School. For example, we said that the real center of the school would be the kitchen. This would be the place where all the children would participate in the process of cooking. Lunch would be prepared and served by the children to the whole school community. Not food technology; not becoming a chef, but being engaged in the process of learning about food through service. So for the last 18 years, the children have been involved in the growing of the food, the cooking and the actual construction of new buildings. All of this has been part of an effort to find opportunities for students to actively participate, to learn as genuine members of the community.

AM: Earlier in our conversation, you mentioned the importance of "size." I understand that you have purposefully kept the school at about 40 students, ages 11-16.

SK: Yes. We are saying that just like you have small families, it is good to have many many small schools. And for the schools, facilities always come second. The human interaction between parents, students and teachers together in a learning environment always comes first. So learning and living cannot be divided into two compartments. Learning and living are one continuum. How can you live if where you live becomes an institution? Thus, transforming schools from institutions into communities, learning communities, is the challenge. Communities cannot be too big. Yes, you can have a school of 100 students, but every child must know one another by their first name; and every teacher should know every child; and every teacher should know every parent. If that is possible, then you have found a good size. That sense of community and that sense of "place" in the school, where teachers and students can feel at ease and at home — this is the goal, whether in schools for small children or in universities. The principles are the same.

AM: How does a teacher, how do all of us, learn to teach in the kind of learning communities you are describing? You are certainly imagining a distinctive set of skills and sensibilities.

SK: The first principle that every teacher has to remember is that the teacher does not know more than the student. Most teachers believe they know more, they know better. I would say that this is false. Teachers don't necessarily know more than their students. Different teachers may know some different things; different people may know different things. So if a peasant came to your college, that peasant might know better how to milk a cow, or how to plow the land, or what tree is what and what tree grows when and what fruit is best in what place. But that peasant may not know how to run a computer. So a computer teacher thinking that he knows better than his pupil is not right. He only knows different things. So first of all, the teacher has to become humble and acknowledge that he or she does not know better.

Secondly, any teacher has to develop patience. Patience is about listening. It is about listening to the questions of one's students. And rather than giving ready answers, answers that one can compile and "know" beforehand, answers should be given in a question form. What will then emerge is a continuous conversation between the two participants in this journey of knowledge. The teacher and the student are traveling together. This is the process.

AM: So this is also the collaboration, the participation in learning, to which you were referring earlier.

SK: We have to learn to turn the teaching into a dialogue. So when you are engaged in this conversation together, the teacher may discover things totally anew and afresh, just as the student might discover things anew and afresh. If the teacher is there to only pass along yesterday's stale knowledge, you have no need for the teacher at all. You can get that information in the books. Just assign the books. You need a teacher only because two living things can make this collaborative journey together. That's why you have a living teacher. If learning is only about facts and figures and

techniques, you only need a manual!

AM: As you know, Satish, in the U.K. and certainly in the U.S., there is a great deal of attention these days to the issue of testing and evaluating. What do students know at this level or that? Have they succeeded in mastering the age-appropriate material? Are schools teaching them what they need to know? There is a real obsession with this kind of weighing, sorting and judging. How do you think about this?

SK: If you left on a journey by yourself from New York, in a boat, and arrived in South Hampton, England, across the Atlantic, and it took you 20 days, and you went through high waters and storms and all the other events of the seas that would typically occur, and you arrived safely, this very act — the fact that you have made the journey — is, in itself, evidence of learning. You don't need, necessarily, to sit down and say to the student: 'Now write a paper and I'll evaluate you as to whether you have made the journey or not.' No. You have made the journey! So I would say that evaluation is necessary not for the pupil but for the jobs or companies or offices — all situations where you need a piece of paper to know that you are qualified to do something. That's the framework. That's as valuable as any frame can be. But the actual painting is the journey itself — the work you have done with the teacher, exploring, examining, deepening, expanding over some period of time. That's the place of the teaching and the learning. We have to understand that the frame is not so valuable. In our modern evaluation and assessment mindset, we have completely turned things around. We overvalue the frame. We don't care about the real journey of the student. And, regrettably, we completely ignore the journey of the teacher.

AM: I am interested in the link for you between the Small School and Schumacher College that you helped to establish in 1991. How has Schumacher College attempted to respond to your criticism of modern education and to your ideals about teaching and learning?

SK: You could say that the Schumacher College is for adults what the Small School is for children. The same educational principles. For example, participation in the process of living is very prominent at Schumacher College. Students have come from about 75-80 nations and have been from 18 to 80 years old. When they come for the 'short-courses' we offer, they are divided into groups of four or five, and each group is responsible for taking care of a particular task. So today, one group is responsible for cooking, another for cleaning, another for working on the grounds. We do have visiting teachers, like John and Nancy Todd, Wendell Berry, Carolyn Merchant, Thomas Moore, James Lovelock, and Arne Naess, but at Schumacher College, they serve as mentors. They come as sounding boards, as companions, as guides, to participate with the students. And, in keeping with E. F. Schumacher's basic principle of "small is beautiful," we make sure that no course has more than 25 students. And these students are also teachers for each other, so for example, there are regular opportunities for "students" to teach — to work with each other and with the "teachers." Teachers teaching, students teaching each other, and learning by doing. These are the same principles we have used in the Small School.

AM: I think that a distinctive part of your work has been to help us see these educational principles and the bringing to life of a particular learning process, whether at the Small School or at Schumacher College, within the context of a holistic and ecological vision. That is, the process is not some abstraction that can be divorced from the world. The process of learning is directly tied to your specific view of contemporary society.

SK: Yes. I believe that education has to deal with four major relationships. The first is our relationship with society. For example, if we do not relate with the issues of social justice, of Third World debt, of the gap between the rich and the poor, of the exclusion of the poor within the European countries — of our relationship with other human beings — if this is not tackled, what is the good of learning architecture and art and biology and anthropology? All this mere theoretical knowledge makes no real sense unless in a living way, we can relate it to society and to the quality of our daily lives.

The second aspect is peace. If all of our efforts, our talents, our time, our science and our industry are devoted to war — and so many of us today are slaves to war and war preparation — we will never make peace with ourselves, peace with society and peace in the world. Unless there is peace, nothing else can flourish. This focus of education on peace comes from the Jain, the Gandhi, the nonviolent influences on my life. We need a foundation of peace to do anything.

The third thing is that even if we are at peace within the human world, we can be at war with nature. Therefore, if there is pollution, if there is global warming, if the rain forests are gone, if agriculture is dependent on chemicals, if animals are

on factoryfarms, if human beings are cruel masters of nature and dominating nature and squeezing all of nature for short-term human benefit, what kind of education can there be? You can't just sit in the armchairs and luxury of Harvard and Cambridge or the Sorbonne and pontificate about fine points of knowledge while, more or less, the whole world is in flames. So I think that education that does not take into account our relationship with the environment and with importance of sustainability is totally irrelevant. It is just a burden. It is a total waste of time.

AM: And you have also emphasized the importance of the spiritual side as the fourth relationship.

SK: These first three relationships — the social, the peace and the ecological — are about the external world. But we are inner spiritual beings as well. Our compassion, our love, our care, our meditation, our tranquillity, our being at ease within ourselves, all concern the spiritual dimension. We are fundamentally spiritual beings. Unless education can nurture the human spirit, what is the good of just nurturing the human body? Human body and human spirit have to go together. That is why I think the spiritual dimension of education is so important.

AM: This spiritual dimension certainly takes us back to your notion of education as a personal and inner journey. It also is connected to your criticism of modern education as both instrumental and materialistic.

SK: Education has become very materialistic, very reductionistic, very economical. It's about how to build more, how to make more, how to earn more profit. No soul. No spirit. So I want schools to embody the human spirit. If the human body is good and the human spirit is good — then education is truly relevant. Then education can serve the interests of humanity, not of big industry, big military and big government. The moment education becomes a handmaiden of these vested interests, it has lost its way. We live in what I think of as a “monoculture of the mind.” In contemporary society and partially as a result of our educational institutions, which are very much part of that society, our minds have grown narrow.

AM: I wonder if we can go back for a moment to Gandhi. In your book, you emphasize the importance of Gandhi's use of the word “experiments” in the title of his autobiography. Not the truth, but My “*Experiments with*” Truth.

SK: Very important. Gandhi is my mentor. He said: I believe in God. What is God? God is not a person. He said: God is a principle. What principle? The principle of truth. So he said: Truth is God and God is truth. So our purpose in life is to seek God, meaning, to seek truth. But how do you do this? There is no one God. There is no one truth. So, Gandhi said, you do this by always experimenting with truth, always seeking truth, always discovering truth. This is what education is about. This is its process and its goal. This is the experimenting with forms. Discovering. Losing our arrogance. This is the educational journey of self-realization and social transformation we spoke about earlier.

AM: In your autobiography, you include a Sanskrit verse that you chanted twice a day while you lived in the ashram in India. It struck me as embodying many of the principles we have been discussing. Could you recite it?

SK: Nonviolence, truth, nonstealing,
Sacred sex, nonconsumerism,
Physical work, avoidance of bad taste,
Fearlessness, respect for all religions,
Local economy,
and respect for all beings,
These eleven principles
Should be followed with humility, care and commitment.

AM: Thank you, Satish.

SK: Thank you.

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Public Intellectuals and the Promise of Democracy in the Age of the Corporate University

Henry A. Giroux , Penn State University

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Higher Education Under Assault

The current debate over the reform of higher education appears indifferent both to the historic function of U.S. universities and to the broader ideological, economic and political contexts that have shaped them. Against the encroaching demands of a market-driven logic, a number of progressive educators have argued forcefully that higher education should be defended as both a public good and an autonomous sphere for the development of a critical and productive democratic citizenry. Higher education represents for many a central site for keeping alive the tension between market values and those values representative of civil society that cannot be measured in narrow commercial terms but are crucial to a substantive democracy. In this view, education must not be confused with training, suggesting that educators resist allowing commercial values to shape the purpose and mission of higher education. The late Richard Hofstadter, the eminent historian, recognized the threat that corporate values pose to education, arguing that the best reason for supporting higher education "lies not in the services they perform . . . but in the values they represent." For Hofstadter, the values of justice, freedom, equality, and the rights of citizens as equal and free human beings are central to higher education's role in preparing students for the demands of leadership, social citizenship and democratic public life.

Corporate Ascendancy

The ascendancy of corporate culture in all facets of U.S. life has tended to uproot the legacy of democratic concerns and rights that historically defined the stated mission of higher education. Moreover, the growing influence of corporate culture on university life has largely undermined the distinction between higher education and business that educators such as Hofstadter wanted to preserve. As universities become increasingly strapped for money, corporations are more than willing to provide the needed resources, but the costs are troubling and come with strings attached. In the industrial/business/corporate model of education, "curriculum is narrowly defined as a product, students are reduced to consumers to be served on the lowest possible cost per unit basis, faculty are relegated to contract employees who deliver the product, trustees or regents constitute a corporate board, and chancellors or presidents" are redefined as CEOs.¹ It gets worse.

Corporations increasingly dictate the very research they sponsor. At the University of California at Berkeley, for example, business representatives are actually appointed to sit on faculty committees that determine how research funds are spent and allocated. Equally disturbing is the emergence of many academics who hold stocks or gain other financial incentives in the very companies sponsoring their research. As the boundaries between public values and commercial interests become blurred, many academics appear less as disinterested truth seekers than as operatives for multinational interests. Yet there is more at stake than academics selling out to the highest corporate bidder. As large amounts of corporate capital flow into universities, those areas of study that do not translate into substantial profits get marginalized, underfunded or eliminated. Hence, we are witnessing both a downsizing in the humanities as well as the increasing refusal

on the part of universities to fund research in public health or science fields that place a high priority on public service. The new corporate university appears to be indifferent to ideas, forms of learning and modes of research that lack commercial value.

Within the neoliberal era of deregulation and the triumph of the market, many students and their families no longer believe that higher education is about higher learning. Instead, the university offers a means of gaining a better foothold in the job market. Colleges and universities are perceived — and perceive themselves — as training grounds for corporate berths. Corporate culture has also reformulated social issues as largely individual or economic considerations, canceling out democratic impulses by either devaluing them or absorbing such impulses within the imperatives of the marketplace. As the state is hollowed out and the power of civil institutions is reduced in their ability to make corporate power accountable, it becomes more difficult within the logic of the bottom line to address pressing social and ethical issues. This shift suggests a dangerous turn in U.S. society that threatens both our understanding of democracy as fundamental to our basic rights and freedoms and ways to rethink and reappropriate higher education's meaning and purpose.



Henry Giroux
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Tom Stock

Besieged by the growing forces of vocationalism, hostile legislators and neoconservative cultural warriors, prospective and existing classroom teachers are caught in an ideological crossfire regarding the civic and political responsibilities they assume as engaged educators and cultural critics. Faculty and disciplines are now judged by their ability to make money for the university. Every space in higher education is being outsourced for commercial profit. And as the marketplace of ideas gives way to the values of the marketplace, full-time faculty positions are increasingly being replaced by part timers. (Nearly half of all higher education faculty, twice as many as in 1970, are part timers).² At the same time, faculty are losing their autonomy as states such as Texas call for the large scale administering of competency tests as a means of setting standards for public colleges, students or both.³ But there is more at work here than corporate culture setting the agenda for how and what should be taught in higher education. Schools such as Boston University now want to regulate the most minute aspects of academic labor by forcing their faculty to be in their offices at least 40 hours a week.⁴ Asked to define themselves either through the language of the marketplace or through a discourse of objectivity and neutrality that abstracts the political from the realm of the cultural and social, educators are increasingly being pressured to become either servants of corporate power or disengaged specialists wedded to the imperatives of narrow, if not irrelevant, forms of academic professionalism.

What is surprising about the current attack on education, especially in light of the growing corporatization and privatization, is the refusal of many theorists to rethink the role academics might play in utilizing the university (and public schooling) as a crucial democratic public sphere defined primarily to serve as the conscience and critic of society.

Lost here is any attempt to rethink what it would mean to consider higher education as a critical sphere concerned not with training but educating, a sphere in which pedagogy becomes a moral and political practice rather than a value-neutral technique, mode of transmission or an a-priori set of classroom methods. As a moral and political practice, education is not about marketing corporate values or allowing corporations to control university curricula and research funds, but about accountability, equity and social justice. At stake in this discourse are not only questions of purpose and meaning, but also issues of content, ethics, power and ideology. More specifically, education registers the need for teachers to make the pedagogical more political and in doing so to be able to provide opportunities for students to learn how to govern rather than be governed and to participate in transforming the conditions that shape their lives in a time of escalating social problems.

Unfortunately, a growing number of progressives refuse to address pedagogy as a political and moral practice and often fall prey to the seduction of methodological quick fixes in which pedagogy is reduced to teaching tips or an abstract formalism aimed at decoding cultural texts. Politics drops out of this type of pedagogical practice as meaning is disassociated from issues of power and social change. But the depoliticization of pedagogy is not limited to foggy deconstructionists or advocates of teaching techniques. It is also evident in the theoretical work of many self-defined guardians of canonical truth and orthodox cultural critics who completely remove pedagogical practice from the operations of ideology and power, though for different reasons. For instance, conservatives such as William Bennett and Harold Bloom reduce pedagogy to an unproblematic method for inculcating the virtues of beauty, truth and civility. While few progressives support this position, they are willing to claim as Todd Gitlin argues that any form of cultural politics, including pedagogical interventions, either gets in the way of “real politics,” or that pedagogy can only function within the school as a repressive, conservative and normalizing set of practices. In this way, however, the controversy over pedagogy bears a resemblance to the broader attack on cultural politics itself and has generated resentment from intellectuals across the ideological sphere.

Higher Education as a Public Sphere

I believe that higher education must be defended as a vital public sphere whose moral and pedagogical dimensions are crucial for renewing democratic social relations and fostering critical engagements with civic life. The university influences large numbers of people not only in terms of what they learn and how they locate themselves in the context and content of specific knowledge forms but also in terms of their impact on a variety of institutions in public life.⁵ For example, if cultural critics were more attentive to what is taught in professions such as nursing, social work and education, they might become more aware of the effect of such teaching on the thousands of educators, health workers and community members who do battle on the health care, social service and the public school fronts. Perhaps the more important question here is: What silences have to endure in the debate on higher education for socially engaged intellectuals to be dismissed as irrelevant, even though much of the work that goes on in institutions of higher education directly impacts thousands of students whose work concerns public issues and the renewal of civil society? Moreover, the university historically has been one of the few public spheres of any size that still provides teachers and students with an institutional and pedagogical space for highlighting, nourishing and evaluating the tension between civil society and corporate power. As a democratic public sphere, the university offers the promise of those forms of knowledge, skills and values that expand the capacities of students to fight for a society where social responsibility is the rule rather than the exception, where democracy is seen as a task and not a given, where critical scholarship links self and social development to the intellectual, ethical and social imperatives of the promise of a radical and substantive democracy.



Giroux and President Moore

Tom Stock

In what follows, I want to argue that as engaged public intellectuals, educators need to approach educational reform and critical teaching as a question of political and moral leadership and not simply as an issue of management or training for corporate culture. As committed educators, we need to respect the lives of our students by asking important questions about what schools and other public spheres should accomplish in a democracy and why they fail, and how such failures might be understood within a broader set of political, economic, spiritual and cultural relations. In part, I will take up these issues by analyzing how the related fields of cultural studies and critical pedagogy address the ways in which culture is related to power, and learning is connected to social change.

My own interest in cultural studies emerges out of an ongoing project that attempts to theorize the regulatory and emancipatory relationship among culture, power and politics as expressed through the dynamics of what I call public pedagogy, particularly as the latter is played out around the construction of youth within the broader terrain of schooling and popular culture. I have also been concerned with the ways in which culture is “a site for the production and struggle over power and how and where it functions both symbolically and institutionally as an educational, political and economic force.” Within such an approach, culture would be seen as constitutive. That is, it not only reflects larger forces it also shapes them. It is the ground of both contestation and accommodation and it is increasingly characterized by the rise of institutions and technologies, which are transforming the traditional spheres of the economy, industry, society and everyday life. Culture now plays a central role in producing narratives, metaphors and images that exercise a powerful pedagogical force over how people think of themselves and their relationship to others.

Central to my work in cultural studies is the assumption that the centrality of culture and power must be organized through an understanding of how the political becomes pedagogical; that is, how the very processes of learning constitute the political mechanisms through which identities are shaped, desires mobilized, and experiences take on form and meaning. In this context, pedagogy is no longer restricted to what goes on in schools, but becomes a defining principle of a broader set of cultural apparatuses engaged in what Raymond Williams has called permanent education. Pedagogy in this instance represents both a mode of cultural production and a type of cultural criticism that is essential for questioning the conditions under which knowledge is produced and subject positions are put into place, negotiated, taken up or refused. With this said, I first want to comment on some very schematic and incomplete elements of cultural studies that I think are useful for thinking about the interface between some the most insightful work being done in cultural studies and its implications for critical pedagogy and how we might think about the role of educators as public intellectuals.

Rethinking the Importance of Cultural Studies for Educators

First, in the face of contemporary forms of political and epistemological relativism cultural studies makes a claim for the use of highly disciplined, theoretical work to engage the problem, as Stuart Hall puts it, of addressing and understanding “what keeps making the lives we live and the societies we live in profoundly and deeply antihumane.” Former CUNY

Chancellor Joe Murphy has captured the spirit of what it means for educators to address such a project. He argues that educators should “give students [the critical] sensibility to understand economic, political and historical forces so they’re not just victims of these forces but can act on them with effect. Giving [students, especially the poor] this power is a threatening idea to many. But it is essential to the health of a democratic society.”⁶

Second, cultural studies is radically contextual in that the very questions that it asks change in every context. Pedagogy in this instance is always a response to particular contexts, questions and social relations and its practices are judged in part by their ability to provide a better understanding of how power works in and through such historical and institutional contexts while simultaneously opening up imagined possibilities for changing them. Larry Grossberg puts it well in arguing that cultural studies must be grounded in an act of doing, which in this case means “intervening into contexts and power in order to enable people to act more strategically in ways that change their context for the better.” For educators, this suggests that pedagogy is not a priori set of methods that simply needs to be uncovered and then applied regardless of the contexts in which one teaches but is the outcome of numerous deliberations and struggles between different groups over how contexts are made and remade, often within unequal relations of power.

The notion that pedagogy is always contextual also suggests linking the knowledge we teach to the experiences that students bring to their encounter with schools and their institutionally legitimated knowledge and social relations. One implication for such work is that future and existing teachers be educated about the viability of developing context-dependent learning that takes account of student experiences and their relationships to popular culture and the terrain of pleasure, including those cultural industries that are often dismissed as producing mere entertainment. Despite the growing diversity of students in both public schools and higher education, there are few examples of curriculum sensitivity to the multiplicity of economic, social and cultural factors bearing on students’ lives in spite of the alleged “multicultural turn” in higher education. Even where there is a proliferation of programs such as ethnic and black studies in higher education, these are often marginalized in small programs far removed from the high status prestige associated with courses organized around business, computer science and Western history. Cultural studies at least provides the theoretical tools for allowing teachers and other cultural workers to recognize the cultural resources that students bring to school and other educational sites and the willingness to affirm and engage them critically as forms of knowledge crucial to the production of their sense of identity, place and history. Equally important, the knowledge produced by students offers educators an opportunity to learn from young people and to incorporate such knowledge as an integral part of their own teaching. I am not suggesting a romantic celebration of the relevance as much as I am arguing that we need to connect to student’s lives in order to raise questions about the strengths and limitations of what they know and what they might become. This is not a matter of making a narrow notion of relevance the determining factor in the curriculum. It is a matter of using a variety of historical and contemporary texts and genres to speak to contemporary issues and concerns. (For example, we might begin to think of this as challenging current emphases on standardization — how context matters, linking knowledge to power and not just achievement, and how the latter raises questions about the social function of teaching.)

Third, the cultural studies emphasis on interdisciplinarity is important because it provides a rationale for challenging not only how knowledge has been historically produced, hierarchicized and used to sanction particular forms of authority and exclusion, but also because it operates at the frontiers of knowledge, and prompts teachers and students to raise new questions and develop models of analysis outside of the officially sanctioned boundaries of knowledge. The point here is that educators need to work both within the academic disciplines and in the in-between spaces that separate them. This is crucial because such work foregrounds the necessity of bridging the work educators do within the academy not only to other academic fields but also to other political sites; it also suggests that educators function as public intellectuals by engaging in ongoing public conversations that cut across particular disciplines while attempting to get their ideas out to more than one type of audience. Put simply, educators should consider learning the knowledge and skills that enable them to speak critically and broadly on a number of issues to a vast array of publics. But the emphasis on interdisciplinarity should not be viewed as a call to abandon high culture or simply substitute it for popular culture. On the contrary, it might best be viewed as a critical attempt to refigure the boundaries of what constitutes culture, knowledge and really useful knowledge in order to study it in new and critical ways.

Fourth, in a somewhat related way, the emphasis on the part of many cultural studies theorists to study the full range of cultural practices that circulate in society opens the possibility for understanding a wide variety of new cultural forms within society that have become the primary educational forces in advanced industrial societies. The scope and power of

these “teaching machines” warrant that educators become more reflective about engaging the production, reception and situated use of varied popular texts, and how they structure social relations, values, particular notions of community, the future, and diverse definitions of the self and others. Texts in this sense do not merely refer to the culture of print or the technology of the book, but to all those audio, visual and electronically mediated forms of knowledge that have prompted a radical shift in the construction of knowledge and the ways in which knowledge is produced, received and consumed. Recently, for instance, my own work has focused on the ways in which Disney’s corporate culture — its animated films, radio programs, theme parks and Hollywood blockbusters — functions as an expansive teaching machine in which it appropriates media and popular culture to rewrite public memory and offer young people an increasingly privatized and commercialized notion of citizenship.

As Benjamin Barber noted in *The Nation*, “It is time to recognize that the true tutors of our children are not [only] the schoolteachers or university professors but [also] film makers, advertising executives and pop culture purveyors. Disney does more than Duke (University), Spielberg outweighs Stanford, (and) MTV trumps MIT.”⁷ Barber is partly correct in noting that contemporary youth do not simply rely on the culture of print and the book to construct and affirm their identities; instead, they are faced with the task of finding their way through a decentered cultural landscape no longer caught in the grip of a technology of print or closed narrative structures. I don’t believe that educators and other cultural workers can critically understand and engage the shifting attitudes, representations and desires of this new generation of youth strictly within the dominant disciplinary configurations of knowledge and practice and traditional forms of pedagogy. We need a more expansive view of knowledge and pedagogy that provides the conditions for young people and adults to engage popular media and mass culture seriously as objects of social analysis and to learn how to read them critically through specific strategies of understanding, engagement and transformation. Informing this notion of knowledge and pedagogy is a view of literacy that is multiple and plural rather than singular and fixed. The modernist emphasis on literacy must be reconfigured in order for students to learn multiple literacies rooted in a mastery of diverse symbolic domains. At the same time, it is not enough to educate students to be critical readers across a variety of cultural domains; they must also become cultural producers. That is, they must also learn how to utilize the new electronic technologies, how to think about the dynamics of cultural power and how it works on and through them so that they can build alternative cultural spheres in which such power is shared and used to promote non-commodified values rather than simply mimic corporate culture and its underlying transactions.

Fifth, cultural studies provocatively stresses analyzing public memory not as a totalizing narrative, but as a series of ruptures and displacements. Historical learning in this sense is not about constructing a linear narrative but about blasting history open, rupturing its silences, highlighting its detours, acknowledging the events of its transmission, and organizing its limits within an open and honest concern with human suffering, values, and the legacy of the often unrepresentable or misrepresented. History is not an artifact to be merely transmitted, but an ongoing dialogue and struggle over the relationship between representation and agency. James Clifford is insightful in arguing that history should “force a sense of location on those who engage with it.”⁸ In spite of John Silber, Chester Finn and Tom DeLay, history is not merely about recovering facts, dates and events. It is about making connections that are often hidden, forgotten or willfully ignored. Public memory in this sense becomes not an object of reverence but an ongoing subject of debate, dialogue and critical engagement. Public memory is also about critically examining one’s own historical location amid relations of power, privilege or subordination. More specifically, this suggests engaging history by analyzing how knowledge is constructed through its absences while recognizing the fundamental inadequacy of this knowledge in representing marginalized and oppressed groups along with, and as John Beverly points out, the deep seated injustices perpetrated by institutions that contain such knowledge and the need to transform such institutions in the “direction of a more radically democratic nonhierarchical social order.”⁹

Sixth, cultural studies theorists are increasingly paying attention to their own institutional practices and pedagogies.¹⁰ They have come to recognize that pedagogy represents forms of cultural production and struggle implicated in and critically attentive to how power and meaning are employed in the construction and organization of knowledge, desires, values and identities. In effect, I am concerned about how pedagogy works to articulate knowledge, meaning, desire and values to effects. Once again, pedagogy in this sense is not reduced to the mastering of skills or techniques. Rather, it is defined as a cultural practice that must be accountable ethically and politically for the stories it produces, the claims it makes on public memories, and the images of the future it deems legitimate. As both an object of critique and a method of cultural production, critical pedagogical practices cannot hide behind claims of objectivity, and should work, in part, to link theory and practice in the service of, as Cornel West argues, “organizing and deepening political, economic and

social freedoms.” In the broadest sense, critical pedagogy should offer students and others — outside of an officially sanctioned script — the historically and contextually specific knowledge, skills and tools they need to engage in what the philosopher and Czech president, Vaclav Havel (1998) calls “the richest possible participation in public life” (p. 45). Needless to say, such tools are not pre-given but are the outcome of struggles, debate, dialogue and engagement across a variety of public spheres.

Havel’s comments suggest that progressive educators and cultural workers must address the task of defending public schools and higher education as essential to the life of the nation because they are one of the few public spaces left where students can both learn those critical languages and modes of experience that are vital to defending those institutions, values and experiences deemed vital to the public good. In the face of ongoing corporate takeovers, the increasing commodification of the curriculum, and the growing interest in students as consumers rather than critical citizens, educators must consider mounting a collective struggle to reassert the crucial importance of public education as a public good as opposed to being merely a private good. This suggests providing students with the educational opportunities to recognize the dream and promise of a radical democratic vision, particularly the idea that as citizens they are “entitled to public services, decent housing, safety, security, support during hard times, and most importantly, some power over decision making.”¹¹

While this list is both schematic and incomplete, it points to a core of theoretical considerations that offer a beginning for advancing a more public and democratic vision for higher education. Hopefully, it suggests theoretical tools for constructing new forms of collaboration among faculty, a broadening of the terms of teaching and learning for teachers, and new approaches toward interdisciplinary research that address local, national and international concerns. The potential that cultural studies has for developing forms of collaboration that cut across national boundaries is worth taking up.

Weaknesses of Cultural Studies

But like any other field or area, cultural studies is marked by a number of weaknesses that need to be addressed by educators drawn to some of its more critical assumptions. There is a tendency in some cultural studies work to be simply deconstructive; that is, there is a refusal to ask questions about the insertion of symbolic processes into societal contexts and their imbrication with power. Any viable form of cultural studies cannot insist exclusively on the primacy of signification over power and in doing so reduce its purview to questions of meaning and texts. Within this discourse, material organization and institutional power disappear into culture. In opposition to this position, cultural studies needs to foreground the ways in which culture and power are related through what Stuart Hall calls “combining the study of symbolic forms and meanings with the study of power,” or more specifically the “insertion of symbolic processes into societal contexts and their imbrication with power.”

Moreover, cultural studies is still largely an academic discourse and as such is too far removed from other cultural and political sites where the work of public pedagogy goes on. In order to become a public discourse of any importance, it will have to focus its work on problems that are more public and pressing in terms of their relevance to important social issues, whether they be drug policy legislation, the widespread attack by corporate culture on public schools, the ongoing attack on the welfare system, the increasing rates of incarceration of people of color, or the dangerous growth of the prison-industrial complex, which in states such as California is allocated more money than higher education.

In addition, cultural studies theorists have to examine their own formative histories, and political and cultural ideologies in order to determine how they might be locked into the very systems of power they are attempting to get out of, given that they often exercise power in and through the very institutions, cultural relations and practices of the systems of which they are critical. Critical educators need to register and make visible our own subjective involvement in what we teach, how we interact in the classroom and other cultural sites, and how we locate, mediate, and defend the political nature of our work as teachers and cultural workers. One useful approach is for educators to think through the distinction between a politicizing pedagogy, which insists wrongly that students think as we do, and a political pedagogy that teaches students by example the importance of taking a stand without standing still, while rigorously engaging with the full range of ideas about an issue. Politicizing education silences in the name of orthodoxy and imposes itself on students, while political education respects dialogue, deliberation and critical engagement. At the same time it teaches students to take risks, challenge those with power, and encourage them to be reflexive about how power is used in the classroom. Political education suggests that the role of the public intellectual is not to consolidate authority, but to question and interrogate it. It suggests that teachers and students should, as Edward Said, argues temper any reference for authority with a sense of

critical awareness. Moreover, political education foregrounds education not within the imperatives of specialization and professionalization, but within a project designed to expand the possibilities of democracy by linking education to modes of political agency that promote critical citizenship and engage the ethical imperative to alleviate human suffering.



Mentor Adele Anderson makes a point during Giroux talk

Tom Stock

Finally, if cultural studies theorists are truly concerned about how culture operates as a crucial site of power in the modern world, they will have to take more seriously how pedagogy functions to secure and challenge the ways in which power is deployed and resisted both within and outside traditional discourses and cultural spheres. In this instance, pedagogy becomes central to understanding the institutional conditions that place constraints on the production of knowledge, learning and academic labor itself. It also provides a discourse for engaging the production of social hierarchies, identities and ideologies. Pedagogy as a form of production and critique must also offer a discourse of possibility, a way of providing students with the opportunity to link meaning to commitment, and understanding to social transformation — and to do so in the interest of the greatest possible justice. Unlike traditional vanguardist or elitist notions of the intellectual, cultural studies should embrace the notion that the vocation of intellectuals be rooted in pedagogical and political work tempered by humility, a moral focus on suffering, and the need to produce alternative visions and policies that go beyond a language of critique.

I now want to shift my frame a bit in order to focus on the implications of the concerns I have addressed thus far and how they might be connected to developing an academic agenda for teachers as public intellectuals in higher education, particularly at a time when neoliberal agendas increasingly guide social policy.

Public Intellectuals and the Politics of Education

In opposition to the corporatizing of everything educational, progressive educators need to define higher education as a resource vital to the democratic and civic life of the nation. At the heart of such a task is the challenge for academics, cultural workers and labor organizers to join together and oppose the transformation of higher education into commercial spheres, to resist what Bill Readings has called a consumer oriented corporation more concerned about accounting than accountability.¹² As Zygmunt Bauman reminds us, schools are one of the few public spaces left where students can learn the “skills for citizen participation and effective political action. And where there is no [such] institutions, there is no ‘citizenship’ either.”¹³ Public and higher education may be one of the few sites left in which students can learn about the limits of commercial values, address what it means to learn the skills of social citizenship, and learn how to deepen and expand the possibilities of collective agency and democratic life.

Defending higher education as a vital public sphere is necessary to develop and nourish the proper balance between democratic public spheres and commercial power, between identities founded on democratic principles and identities

steeped in forms of competitive, self-interested individualism that celebrate selfishness, profit making and greed. This view suggests that higher education be defended through intellectual work that selfconsciously recalls the tension between the democratic imperatives or possibilities of public institutions and their everyday realization within a society dominated by market principles. If the university is to remain a site of critical thinking, collective work and social struggle, public intellectuals need to expand its meaning and purpose. That is, they need to define higher education as a resource vital to the moral life of the nation, open to working people and communities whose resources, knowledge and skills have often been viewed as marginal. The goal here is to redefine such knowledge and skills to more broadly reconstruct a tradition that links critical thought to collective action, human agency to social responsibility, and knowledge and power to a profound impatience with a status quo founded upon deep inequalities and injustices.

There is more at stake here than recognizing the limits and social costs of a neoliberal philosophy that reduces all relationships to the exchange of goods and money, there is also the responsibility on the part of critical intellectuals and other activists to rethink the nature of the public. There is also the need to address new forms of social citizenship and civic education that have a purchase on people's everyday lives and struggles expressed through a wide range of institutions. I believe that academics and others bear an enormous responsibility in opposing neoliberalism by bringing democratic political culture back to life. Part of this challenge suggest creating new locations of struggle, vocabularies and subject positions that allow people in a wide variety of public spheres to become more than they are now, to question what it is they have become within existing institutional and social formations, and "to give some thought to their experiences so that they can transform their relations of subordination and oppression."¹⁴ In part this suggests resisting the attack on existing public spheres such as the schools while simultaneously creating new spaces in clubs, neighborhoods, bookstores, schools and other places where dialogue and critical exchanges become possible.

As public intellectuals, educators need to revitalize the language of civic education as part of a broader discourse of political agency and critical citizenship in a global world, and to ground such a call in defense of militant utopian thinking as a form of educated hope. Utopianism in this context suggests that any viable notion of the political must address the primacy of pedagogy as part of a broader attempt to revitalize the conditions for individual and social agency while simultaneously addressing the most basic problems facing the prospects for social justice and global democracy.

Educators need a new vocabulary for linking hope, social citizenship and education to the demands of substantive democracy. I am suggesting that educators need a new vocabulary for connecting how we read critically to how we engage in movements for social change. I also believe that simply invoking the relationship between theory and practice, critique and social action will not do. Any attempt to give new life to a substantive democratic politics must address both how people learn to be political agents and, what kind of educational work is necessary within what kind of public spaces to enable people to use their full intellectual resources to both provide a profound critique of existing institutions and struggle to create, as Stuart Hall puts it, "what would be a good life or a better kind of life for the majority of people."¹⁵ As critical educators, we are required to understand more fully why the tools we used in the past feel awkward in the present, often failing to respond to problems now facing the United States and other parts of the globe. More specifically, we face the challenge posed by the failure of existing critical discourses to bridge the gap between how the society represents itself and how and why individuals fail to understand and critically engage such representations in order to intervene in the oppressive social relationships they often legitimate.

The growing attack on public and higher education in American society may say less about the reputed apathy of the populace than it might about the bankruptcy of the old political languages and the need for a new language and vision for clarifying our intellectual, ethical and political projects, especially as they work to reabsorb questions of agency, ethics, and meaning back into politics and public life. Along these lines, Sheldon Wolin has recently argued that we need to rethink the notion of loss and how it impacts upon the possibility for opening up democratic public life. Wolin points to the need for progressives, theorists and critical educators to resurrect and raise questions about "What survives of the defeated, the indigestible, the unassimilated, the 'crossgrained,' the 'not wholly obsolete'."¹⁶ He argues that "something is missing" in an age of manufactured politics and pseudo-publics catering almost exclusively to desires and drives produced by the commercial hysteria of the market. What is missing is a language, movement and vision that refuses to equate democracy with consumerism, market relations and privatization. In the absence of such a language and the social formations and public spheres that make it operative, politics becomes narcissistic and caters to the mood of widespread pessimism and the cathartic allure of the spectacle. In addition, public service and government intervention is sneered upon as either bureaucratic or a constraint upon individual freedom.

Against neoliberalism, critical educators need to resurrect a language of resistance and possibility, a language that embraces a militant utopianism while constantly being attentive to those forces that seek to turn such hope into a new slogan or punish and dismiss those who dare look beyond the horizon of the given. Hope, in this instance, is the precondition for individual and social struggle, the ongoing practice of critical education in a wide variety of sites, the mark of courage on the part of intellectuals in and out of the academy who use the resources of theory to address pressing social problems. But hope is also a referent for civic courage and its ability to mediate the memory of loss and the experience of injustice as part of a broader attempt to open up new locations of struggle, contest the workings of oppressive power, and undermine various forms of domination. At its best, civic courage as a political practice begins when one's life can no longer be taken for granted. In doing so, it makes concrete the possibility for transforming hope and politics into an ethical space and public act that confronts the flow of everyday experience and the weight of social suffering with the force of individual and collective resistance and the unending project of democratic social transformation.

I believe that academics must combine the mutually interdependent roles of critical educator and active citizen. They must find ways to connect the practice of classroom teaching to the operation of power in the larger society. I think Edward Said is on target when he argues that the public intellectual must function within institutions, in part, as an exile, as someone whose "place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma, to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations."¹⁷ In this perspective, the educator as public intellectual becomes responsible for linking the diverse experiences that produce knowledge, identities and social values in the university to the quality of moral and political life in the wider society; and he or she does so by entering into public conversations unafraid of controversy or of taking a critical stand.

Intellectuals who feel an increased sense of responsibility for humanity may not be able to and do not necessarily have to explain the problems of the world in terms that purport to be absolute or all encompassing. On the contrary, public intellectuals need to approach social issues mindful of the multiple connections and issues that tie humanity together; but they need to do so as border intellectuals moving within and across diverse sites of learning as part of an engaged and practical politics that recognizes the importance of "asking questions, making distinctions, restoring to memory all those things that tend to be overlooked or walked past in the rush to collective judgment and action."¹⁸ Within this discourse, the experiences that constitute the production of knowledge, identities and social values in the university are inextricably linked to the quality of moral and political life of the wider society.

If educators are to function as public intellectuals they need to provide the opportunities for students to learn that the relationship between knowledge and power can be emancipatory, that their histories and experiences matter, and that what students say and do counts in their struggle to unlearn privileges, productively reconstruct their relations with others, and transform, when necessary, the world around them. More specifically, such educators need to argue for forms of pedagogy that close the gap between the university and everyday life. Their curriculum needs to be organized around knowledge of communities, cultures and traditions that give students a sense of history, identity and place.

At one level, this suggests pedagogical practices that affirm and critically enrich the meaning, language and knowledge that students actually use to negotiate and inform their lives. Unfortunately, the political, ethical and social significance of the role that popular culture plays as the primary pedagogical medium for young people remains largely unexamined. Educators need to challenge the assumption that popular cultural texts cannot be as profoundly important as traditional sources of learning in teaching about important issues framed through, for example, the social lens of poverty, racial conflict and gender discrimination. As I mentioned previously, this is not a matter of pitting popular culture against traditional curricula sources, as it is a matter of using both in a mutually informative way.

Although it is central for university teachers to enlarge the curriculum to reflect the richness and diversity of the students they actually teach, they also need to decenter the curriculum. That is, as Stanley Aronowitz points out, students should be actively involved in governance, "including setting learning goals, selecting courses and having their own, autonomous organizations, including a free press."¹⁹ Not only does the distribution of power among teachers, students and administrators provide the conditions for students to become agents in their learning process, it also provides the basis for collective learning, civic action and ethical responsibility. Student agency primarily emerges from pedagogy of lived experience and struggle not from mere formalistic mastery of an academic subject.

At the risk of being too bold, I have suggested that educators need to become provocateurs; they need to take a stand while refusing to be involved in either a cynical relativism or doctrinaire politics. In part, I mean that central to intellectual life is the pedagogical and political imperative that academics engage in rigorous social criticism while becoming a stubborn force for challenging false prophets, deflating the claims of triumphalism, and critically engaging all those social relations that promote material and symbolic violence. At the same time, such intellectuals must be deeply critical of their own authority and how it structures classroom relations and cultural practices. In this way, the authority they legitimate in the classroom (as well as in other public spheres) would become both an object of selfcritique and a critical referent for expressing a more “fundamental dispute with authority itself.”²⁰

Central to my argument is the need for educators to define themselves less as narrow specialists, classroom managers or mouthpieces for corporate culture than as engaged public intellectuals willing to address those economic, political and social problems that must be overcome if both young people and adults are going to take seriously a future that opens up rather than closes down the promises of a viable and substantive democracy. There is a lot of talk among social theorists about the death of politics and the inability of human beings to imagine a more equitable and just world in order to make it better. I would hope that of all groups, educators would be the most vocal and militant in challenging this assumption by making it clear that at the heart of any form of critical pedagogy is the assumption that learning should be used to expand the public good and promote democratic social change. Individual and social agency becomes meaningful as part of the willingness to imagine otherwise in order to act otherwise. And knowledge can be used for amplifying human freedom and promoting social justice, and not for simply creating profits. I realize this sounds a bit utopian, but we have few choices if we are going to fight for a future that does not endlessly repeat the present, a future that enables teachers, students and others to work diligently and tirelessly in order to make despair unconvincing and hope practical for all members of society.

Endnotes

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- 10 See Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren, Eds. *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
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- 20 R. Radhakrishnan. “Canonicity and Theory: Toward a Poststructuralist Pedagogy.” in Donald Morton and Mas’ud

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ALL ABOUT
MENTORING
A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 22, Fall 2001

Response to Henry Giroux

Ellen G. Hawkes, Genesee Valley Center

Henry Giroux has much to say about the meaning and purpose of higher education, the growing influence of corporate culture, and the potential loss of funding for those areas of study which focus on public service. He offers examples of funding availability for research with commercial value, and he asks whether faculty and disciplines should be regarded as moneymakers, and if marketplace values should replace ideas. Much to consider! Through pedagogy, he notes, particularly pedagogy that addresses social change and power, faculty who focus on the vital task of educating students about social responsibility can help them understand the economic, political and historical forces that impact our institutions.

Mentors at ESC have learned the relevance of developing context-dependent learning, by using student experiences to design learning contracts, connecting with students' lives and helping them recognize those economic, social and cultural factors that bear on their lives. Contemporary issues become part of our teaching as we work within and between boundaries of an academic discipline, helping students raise new questions about how that knowledge has been produced. How much more vivid an experience it is for a student to learn about prejudice and gender discrimination, for example, through use of a variety of "texts." Giroux observes, for example, that words of popular songs and radio scripts from the '30s and '40s can be analyzed to help us better understand societal expectations about women's roles in the period before World War II.

All educators, Giroux argues, should be urged to form a more expansive view of knowledge and pedagogy in order to encourage their students to learn how to view "popular media and mass culture seriously and critically." By learning multiple literacies, students will become critical readers, able to analyze public memory, acknowledge the "often unrepresentable or misrepresented," and make important connections between their personal and more public lives. A review of their own histories will offer them opportunities to focus on relations of power, privilege and subordination. In effect, for Giroux, by using "proper tools, skills and knowledge," students can learn to participate more fully in public life prompted by faculty who can help them design projects which "emphasize critical citizenship and ethical consideration of ways to lessen human suffering."

To prevent higher education from becoming commercialized, faculty, as "public intellectuals," can help students learn skills of social citizenship through examination of democratic ideals and realities. Giroux urges Empire State College and similar institutions of higher learning with a special public calling to ensure that students learn to challenge and question what they have become and why. Blending their role as critical educators with that of active citizens, faculty can link practices within the university to the wider social, political and moral domains by adopting forms of pedagogy that "close the gap between the university and daily life."



Henry Giroux

Tom Stock

A clear call for action! Giroux's ideas bear directly on ESC mentoring practices of individualized learning, use of multiple resources to meet student needs, and emphasis on helping students think critically and analytically about what they read, observe and experience. Interdisciplinarity is found in numerous learning contracts, as are opportunities for community involvement and studies of cultural diversity. Popular culture blends with traditional curricula when we develop studies with our students about poverty, racial conflict and gender discrimination. Students can learn about student agency, as they become agents in their own learning process.

Thank you, Professor Giroux, for your words of inspiration, for encouraging us educators to take a stand, become even more engaged in "rigorous social criticism" and "be deeply critical of (our) own authority." Critical pedagogy will become even more prominent and important to our mentoring lives as we strive to design learning opportunities for ourselves and for our students to "expand the public good."

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

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Response to Henry Giroux

Efrat Levy, Northeast Center

I begin my response to Henry Giroux with reflections which flow from a personal perspective but are quite relevant, I believe, to this written dialogue, specifically connecting to the themes of critical engagement and agency which were highlighted so compellingly in our time with Giroux at All College. The two topics I choose to focus these topics through are Empire State College's institutional identity and the question of intellectual life at the College. I also hope to illustrate my understanding of other points in Giroux's address by applying these to discussion of the College's recent efforts to develop a graduate-level teacher education program.

Institutional Identity

My formal academic training, and other aspects of my work and community involvement since adolescence, have been infused with tensions that arise from acting within what Giroux in other contexts has termed borders. My borders start with being a bi-national (by definition of the passports I carry), but I have never quite stopped dancing around my alienation from both American and Israeli society; instead, I have tried to balance my privileged position in life with that alienation. This balancing act has led me to live where I live, has certainly affected my choice of career and has also affected choices within that career. I did not end up at Empire State College by chance.

To describe a clearer example of this kind of tension, I received my doctorate from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, not at first glance a natural environment for what Giroux describes as "the development of a critical and productive democratic citizenry." Like it or not I have a highly pedigreed credential that also implies status and power I often find objectionable in others. The incongruity is that it was also quite definitely at Harvard where I became comfortable with my own intellectual capacities, where I learned to interact rewardingly with other people who challenged my world view, and where I became familiar with the writings of Paolo Freire, Ira Shor and Henry Giroux, among others. My experience at Harvard has profoundly affected my philosophy of education, my interaction with ESC students and in more mundane terms, my suggestions of reading resources.

I was quite excited, therefore, to learn that the keynote address at the 2001 All College Conference was to be offered by Henry Giroux. To be honest though, I was also a bit concerned. To read Giroux's work can be more than somewhat daunting at times. His language and conceptual frameworks can be complex, especially for those of us who are used to reading things that fit neatly into familiar disciplinary boxes. Most students I have exposed to Giroux begin at that point of needing clearly delineated content and have struggled to find a personal connection to the material. I have thought this struggle worthwhile, a process I consider a relevant contribution I can make as a mentor to my students' intellectual development. But I have to admit I have sometimes struggled with the material too and wondered the morning of Giroux's presentation if this talk was going to present the same challenges.

What I came away with was something entirely different. In person, I found Henry Giroux to be compellingly clear, engaging and stimulating. I came away thinking about the importance of personal interaction as an instrument of intellectual engagement. I also came away more convinced than I had been that as an institution, the time has come for

Empire State College to re-examine our approach to pedagogy, to engage in a deliberate effort to think together about “how pedagogy works to articulate knowledge, meaning, desire and values to effects” so that we can truly offer our students “the historically and contextually specific knowledge, skills and tools they need to engage in what the philosopher and Czech president, Václav Havel (1998), calls ‘the richest possible participation in public life’ .” (Giroux, 3/21/01).

We are all understandably caught up in the mundane details of our everyday work life as mentors, much of this driven by conditions imposed on us by workload issues, by the external environment, and by the genuine and necessary intrusion of the demands of our lives and the lives of our students from outside the mentor/mentee relationship. One thing I took away from our session with Giroux was to wonder once again about our institutional identity. What value is there in being “nontraditional” if we do not pause from time to time, as an institution, to challenge ourselves to find the traditions we should adhere to and those we need to abandon? A valuable way for us to do that might be to examine our approach to pedagogy in light of what Giroux challenges us to think of as “advancing a more public and democratic vision for higher education.” (Giroux, 3/21/01)



Levy speaks with Giroux.

Tom Stock

Rather than merely focus on being student centered, on freeing our students from the constraints of time and place, and all the other valuable phrases in our institutional mantra, might we not also take on the explicit task of understanding (or defining) what kind of people we hope our students to be after they complete their studies with us? Why not make explicit the implications of what we frequently define as empowerment of our students? Empowerment for what? And if we are to be a vehicle for that empowerment, what shape would that take? And what does that say about our identity as an institution of higher education? What might be our “niche” if we seek to renew our identity in this way?

Intellectual Life at the College

I have some thoughts about how we might seek to answer some of the questions I have outlined above. One relates to a question raised during Giroux’s talk about whether we can create “pedagogical practices that affirm and critically enrich the meaning, language and knowledge that students actually use to negotiate and inform their lives” (Giroux, 3/21/01) when we focus so much on the individual student and individual mentor. I believe that inherent in these kinds of practices is a commitment to social connections, to learning from others, in a way that is severely limited when carried out in a dyadic framework only, no matter how sensitive that framework is to differences of power and culture.

Another way for us to carry forward the challenge to reconsider our institutional image might be for us to continue to try to create a genuine role for intellectual life at the College. I would add here that the inclusion of an address like this at All College was a commendable contribution to that kind of effort.

About a month after Henry Giroux’s talk, I had the unfortunate experience of being the target of personal attacks on

my experience and viewpoints by a speaker invited to a monthly meeting of the Northeast Center, a speaker who clearly was expecting to deliver a canned lecture rather than to engage in respectful, critical dialogue. This event was organized as part of an ongoing effort to make time for intellectual activities in our center agenda and work life. I raise this here not to criticize these efforts but to contrast them with my reaction to Giroux's talk, and as a starting point for asking how we might craft a genuine space for intellectual development at Empire State College.

My own take on what would enrich my life intellectually would be to "find ways to connect the practice of classroom teaching to the operation of power in the larger society." (Giroux, 3/21/01) In my view, the most powerful and meaningful intellectual development activities at the College would be those that would directly connect to the cultural and social context of my life and those of my students, broadening our understanding of those contexts, and enhancing our ability to critically confront the contradictions in those contexts.

As an example, we might broaden our consideration of how to digest general education requirements by explicitly asking questions about what a quality undergraduate degree should look like, as well as asking questions about who gets to define that. Our efforts to understand how to best work with adult learners might extend beyond learning theories and innovations in technology to an explicit consideration of adults as agents who live and act within specific cultural and political conditions.

In my view, these are the kinds of questions that might inform genuine intellectual life at the College. It is certainly valuable to encourage additional formal scholarship. But in addition to seeking further structures and formats for such scholarship, we might also consider how to create conditions at every level of the College where the process of raising and discussing questions like those I suggested above is encouraged, and where we can be open and intellectually curious with each other. The spirit I would hope we could capture would be the openness and engagement of Giroux's talk rather than the transmission of a closed container of knowledge I sought unsuccessfully to break apart in the Northeast Center meeting.

Teacher Education and Empire State College

I recently took on a reassignment with the Office of Academic Affairs to work on development of a graduatelevel teacher education program at Empire State College. To be honest, I jumped into this without too much thought, feeling that this was a task I simply could not allow someone else to get to before me. After all, this is an opportunity to play a role in shaping something from the ground up. And not just any new program, which would be exciting enough, but a program that has potential for truly changing the world (albeit a very small part of the world). After listening to Giroux, I was even more enthusiastic as I thought about our proposed M.A.T. program. Here, I thought, was a chance for Empire State College to fulfill a societal need by placing teachers in underserved urban schools. In addition, specifically because we are building this from the ground up, I thought we might also be able to create a program flowing out of a view of "higher education as a resource vital to the democratic and civic life of the nation" and in doing so, to invigorate and reconceptualize what teacher education might be.

Six months later, my enthusiasm for the possibilities has not waned but my awareness of the practicalities of this task has been greatly enhanced. And while I would like to say that we could open a program tomorrow guided by the possibilities, I now know that many of the challenges Giroux outlined will be playing themselves out as we move towards the day when our students first enter their urban classrooms.

For example, in his talk, Giroux outlined the growing influence of corporate culture on university life, with the marginalization of areas of study that are less profitable. I wonder, as I begin work on voluminous program applications that need to be submitted to the New York State Education Department and to SUNY, applications that need to incorporate highly detailed and very extensive requirements, whether teacher education at ESC can avoid becoming commoditized. This is not to say that SUNY or State Ed are themselves placing the same kinds of direct pressures on us that Giroux outlined in his talk (such as those at UC Berkeley where business representatives are appointed to sit on faculty committees which determine how research funds are allocated). But it seems to me that market forces do come into play in the field of teacher education in New York State.

The question is how the undeniable reality of shortfalls of qualified teachers in urban school districts, and the undeniable difficulties of preparing teachers who will be able to effectively work in those districts, interacts with the

prevailing power structure of higher education in the state. This power structure and a more general dominant culture have influence not only over who is credentialed but also over the teacher education curriculum. Corporate influences Giroux points to, such as those that impose competency testing and quantifiable work weeks upon academic institutions, have direct parallels in New York State teacher certification requirements and on the standards new teachers must help their pupils meet.

A central challenge for us in seeking to mold our program to the requirements we must meet for registration of our M.A.T. will be to retain a sense of how we wish to educate teachers, not only what will sell Empire State College to those who must approve our Master Plan amendment. My strong conviction is that we can in fact retain this focus and I offer some thoughts here as to how that might take shape.

Beyond demonstrating that our graduate students will know how to manage a classroom or to articulate lesson plans that match outcomes and rubrics parallel to state standards, we need to be thinking about how to place teachers who will be able to flourish in difficult working conditions, who will understand the evolution of these conditions and how to improve them, and who will also connect with and build an ongoing relationship to the young people in their charge as well as the communities in which they live. My conviction is that Empire State College is precisely the place where these challenges can be met.

Built into our program proposal are elements such as our experience with adult learners, exploring further our growing expertise with technology-mediated learning and offering a statewide distributed model of learning and governance, all familiar aspects of life at Empire State College. I'd like to focus on two additional core elements of our program and relate these to points raised by Henry Giroux.

The model we are developing for our M.A.T. seeks to enroll cohorts of students at each of our regional centers. Central to our vision of how to create effective teachers is that they must be able to work with and learn from others, bringing skills in cooperative learning and team building into the schools where they will be employed. This is an explicitly democratic statement about teacher education and about the role of higher education that will, I hope, distinguish our M.A.T. program from others. This also has implications internally. We will need to explore how to link students across locations and with different faculty for different purposes. I think this has tremendous potential, not only for our own institutional learning about technology and effective mentoring, but perhaps even more importantly, for our institutional learning about collaboration among faculty, among faculty and students, and for breaking down the institutional reliance on individuality.

Built into program approval requirements are detailed specifications of subject area content as well as quantity of fieldwork practice learning. A central part of our program will be the explicit integration of content and practice, something that is not new to ESC, of course, but not necessarily prevalent in other teacher certification programs. In a field of higher education that sometimes struggles with an identity crisis, wavering between vocational training and theoretical education, our curriculum design offers us the potential to play a leading role in the conversation about how to advance the profession of teaching and in so doing, better serve American children.

Both of these elements (of cohort-based study and of integration of theory and practice), might be an example of what Giroux describes as "theoretical tools for constructing new forms of collaboration among faculty, a broadening of the terms of teaching and learning for teachers, and new approaches towards interdisciplinary research that addresses local, national and international concerns." (Giroux, 3/21/01)

And so, I conclude this response by returning to my personal perspective, which is to express some hope for how the possibilities offered by the development of teacher education at Empire State College might bring us some of the promises of democracy that Henry Giroux presented to us so compellingly.

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

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Issue 22, Fall 2001

Response to Henry Giroux **Bernie Flynn, Metropolitan Center**

Alan Mandell asked me to write a few thoughts on Henry Giroux's paper. I mention this at the start because I have not read Giroux's work and thus would not normally comment on it in print. Thus, these thoughts should be seen only as a response to one of his writings. My first and strongest response to Giroux's presentation at the All College Conference was delight that there was a presentation with serious intellectual content. That this has not always been the case is something of an understatement.

But more substantively, I want to proceed by pointing out one massive area of agreement with Giroux, and that is his sense that education, in any meaningful sense of the term, is under serious attack. It is attacked on the level of reality — i.e. shrinking funds, downsizing of the humanities, and the use and abuse of adjuncts. It is also under attack on the level of what Cornelius Castoriadis has called the "social imaginary" — the figures and the images which purport to incarnate the meaning of life: the 30-year old millionaires and the semi-literate drivers of gas-guzzling SUVs, etc. There is afoot in the land a stupidity that has become militant, a lack of culture that has become self-assertion. It would be easy, not to say therapeutic, to go on, but I will stop here.

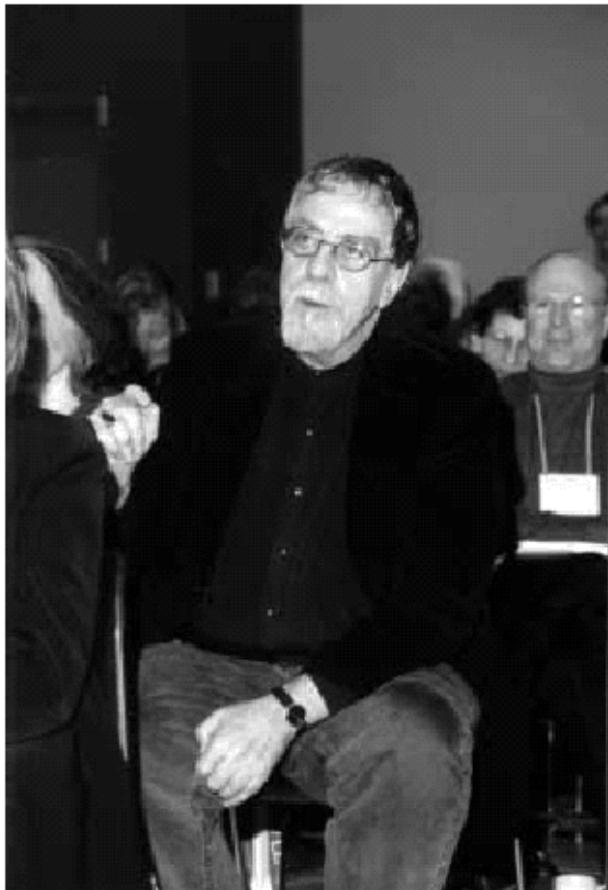
However, it is in terms of the ways that the university should defend itself that I have some hesitation concerning what I take to be Giroux's position. I employ the word "hesitation" advisedly, as I am not sure that in the context of an expanded dialogue, our disagreements would be so marked. Beginning with a philosophical divergence, I will show that this leads to a conception of the university at some remove from his. The issue is the relationship of power and knowledge.

Giroux speaks of the importance of questioning the "conditions under which knowledge is produced." That knowledge is "produced" is both true and trivial. That it does not come down from heaven nor grow on trees is self-evident. Knowledge is "produced" under specific historical and institutional arrangements, but this does not, of itself, establish an intrinsic link between knowledge and power.

This issue has been extensively debated in the history of philosophy beginning with Book I of Plato's Republic and The Gorgias. From what I can cull from this one paper, I take Giroux's position to be influenced by the cultural studies school of Birmingham — his repeated citations of Stuart Hall — and the work of Foucault — his conception of the production of knowledge and the creation of "subject positions." While I respect this as an arguable and in many ways convincing position, I have some serious reservations concerning it that I cannot go into in any detail here. The interested reader might take a look at my chapter titled, "Foucault: A Metaphysics of Power" in my Political Philosophy at the Closure of Metaphysics. As one might glean from the chapter title, I think, from a long sojourn in the phenomenological tradition no doubt, that Foucault's position is reductionist and metaphysical in the pejorative sense of the term.

I can't pursue these issues here, but where can I pursue them? In the university, and this brings me to my second point.

According to Giroux, it would appear that the “praxis” of the “cultural workers” in the university should be informed by a certain conception of cultural studies. I think that the university should be the open space in which issues like the relationship of power and knowledge are debated. In a number of places, Giroux tells us that pedagogy should be “radically contextual.” I would submit that this very issue — the relationship of power to knowledge — is not radically contextual. I would go so far as to state that an overly contextual pedagogy, stemming from theoretical foundation that condenses power and knowledge, can be deadening. In placing an author or an issue “in its place,” historically or sociologically, we can insulate ourselves against what Gadamer calls the ability of a text to “challenge the horizons of our own pre-comprehension.”



Flynn listens from audience as Giroux speaks at 2001 All College Conference.

Tom Stock

All this is to say that I think, as far as possible, no particular epistemological position, neither cultural studies nor phenomenology, should be inscribed in the structure of the university. I would defend a kind of “formalism.”

I now turn to a political issue in which I suspect that our disagreement is more real than apparent. Giroux cites approvingly a statement of Stuart Hall that strikes me as problematic, to say the least! “What keeps making the lives we live and the societies we live in profoundly and deeply antihuman.” Concerning the phrase, “The lives we live,” I am inclined to say, “speak for yourself.” More seriously, is life in the United Kingdom really “profoundly and deeply antihuman?” If so, from what perspective? Clearly not in comparison to life in the U.S. or France, and certainly not from the perspective of most of the rest of the world. (Witness the tragic willingness of immigrants to risk their lives to enter the U.K.) It is insufferably “antihuman” from the point of view of nowhere — that is to say, from the perspective of utopia. Indeed, toward the end of his paper, Giroux writes that, in opposition to neoliberalism, we need a “language that embraces a militant utopianism.” I think we need a “militant utopianism” like we need a hole in the head!

Francois Furet has shown in great detail in his work, *The Passing of an Illusion*, that the point of connection of “progressive intellectuals” to 20th century totalitarian movements was the image of Utopia. If the societies that we live

in are “profoundly and deeply antihuman,” they do not need to be reformed or changed. They need to be redeemed, thus enter the phantasmagoria of “The Revolution,” the “New Man,” etc. I think we need a resolute critique of utopianism, both in terms of its stupefying historical costs (*The Black Book of Communism* puts the number of people killed in the 20th century in the name of the revolution at 68 million), and its systematic disempowering of the critical imagination — in rendering it incapable of effecting political judgements in any form other than the calling down on our heads the thundering “last judgement” of a quasi-biblical god — inhuman.

The political imagination of the left must be dragged kicking and screaming from its long-term mesmerization by the image of Utopia. To begin with, this fascination must itself become an object of analysis. In what relation does the utopian desire, to employ the title of a recent book, *The Longing for Total Revolution*, stand to what Max Weber called “the religious rejection of the world” and what Nietzsche named “blasphemy against the earth?” All of which is to say that I think the left should be more self-critical than I see signs of in Henry Giroux’s paper.



Henry Giroux

Tom Stock

ALL ABOUT
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The Hidden Transformation of Women Through Mothering

Xenia Coulter, Ithaca Unit

Author's Note: A version of this paper was presented at the 2000 Adult Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) conference in Chicago and, with a somewhat difference emphasis, at the 2001 Society for Research in Adult Development (SRAD) conference in New York City.

At Empire State College, as at many institutions of higher learning that primarily serve adult learners, academic credits awarded for knowledge acquired at work or in other settings are a very important part of the curriculum. Yet, of the very large number of such credits awarded to our students each year, only a small percentage appears to represent knowledge that emerges out of “women’s work,” and an even smaller percentage relates to mothering. In 1999 out of some 16,000 titles describing learning acquired from experience, 6,000 were from “independent” learning opportunities (as contrasted to opportunities acquired in a professional setting). Of these 6,000 titles, a little over 50 (that is, less than one percent) could generously be regarded as arising from women’s work as mothers (see Table 1), and only three referred, more or less, to mothering explicitly (as in “maternal” and “matrimonial”). These figures hold true despite the fact that at least 60 percent of our students are women, most with children.

When asked about mothering as a source of creditable knowledge, most people are quite uncomfortable and in many instances rather hostile to the idea. In a casual conversation, they might defend their negative position with such assertions as:

- Anyone can be a parent, whereas college-level learning is achievable by only a subset of the population.
- The knowledge required to raise children is not college level.
- Mothering is inarticulated, subjective knowledge, without a reflective basis.
- Maternal knowledge that emerges from raising one’s own children has no theoretical or generalizable components.

When mothering is considered a potential source of college-level credit, the assumption is, of course, that we are interested in the knowledge acquired by women as a result of their mothering experience. This assumption is implicit in one of the cardinal rules of prior learning assessment — award credit not for experience but for knowledge. What may be disconcerting about mothering as a source of knowledge is that some of the experiences unique to mothering are intensely physical — pregnancy, childbirth, breast-feeding, emotional bonding, and the like — and are often designated as instinctual rather than an act of intentional learning such as other physical activities can be. However, today considerable research and inquiry have raised doubt about the importance of volition, intentionality, reflection or consciousness for learning.¹ To require intentionality in learning as a prerequisite for knowledge, as in Kolb’s model of experiential learning (1984), may simply reflect a bias toward modes of academic learning that mislead us when inappropriately applied to the learning that occurs in real life:

The academic form privileges knowledge of a certain type, and elevates that form of knowledge to universal and moral status as the kind of knowledge that people should have if they are said to have knowledge at all. . . Such selection practices can serve to fundamentally skew accounts of the phenomena under study and obscure certain

essential elements that “do not fit” into theoretical idealizations. . . [This can be identified] as a privileging of an “idealized” over an “activity” perspective. This in turn relates to a privileging of the “intellectual forms” over the other forms often associated with “doing” (Clifford & Marcus, 1986, cited by Glick, 1995, p. 361).

This bias may be the result of an assumption held for centuries that pure knowledge is in the head — disembodied, so to speak. From that point of view, it makes sense that raw and undigested experience has no meaning unless it is extracted from the body that housed it and is then subjected to the civilizing forces of intentional reflection. Currently this assumption is being challenged. A number of writers argue forcefully that, far from residing in the head, knowledge is distributed socially, historically, and even technologically (see, e.g., Salomon, 1993; Martin et al., 1995; Wertsch et al., 1995). This argument has been extended to intentionality (e.g., Hobson, 1991). As observed by Zeedyk (2001), who does research on the development of intentionality in children:

It does not make sense, from the social theorists’ perspective, to conceive of communicative acts and intentions as only a property of mind, lodged within the head of an individual. Rather, from their perspective, intention and intentional capacities are constituted within the child’s embodied relation to the world, initially the world of people and later that of objects (Zeedyk, 2001, p. 90).

Other writers now struggle to find ways of reconnecting mind and body through the concept of embodied knowledge (see Grosz, 1993; Carlson, 1997; Damascio, 1995; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Varela et al., 1997). Although rarely acknowledged in this quite varied literature, it has been the philosopher Merleau-Ponty who has long recognized the obstacle that “ontological dualism” places in the path of those trying to understand what it means to know something (see Dillon, 1998/1997). The importance of these challenges to more traditional conceptions of knowledge is that they alert us to ordinarily unquestioned assumptions that make it easy to dismiss mothering as a potential source of legitimate knowledge.

Our traditional understanding of the nature of learning is not the only reason mothering is not regarded as a legitimate source of knowledge. Many social and cultural beliefs, which permeate academia as much as other social institutions, contribute to the devaluing of women’s experience (and knowledge).² This situation, particularly as applied to the topic of mothering, has not escaped the attention of many feminist writers (e.g., Brown et al., 1994; Trebilcot, 1983). Rothman (1989) provides a particularly cogent analysis of how prevailing ideologies compel us to denigrate mothering. What is important in a capitalist and patriarchal society, she argues, is not the experience of mothering, but its product — the child. How the mother feels or what she knows is unimportant so long as the child develops acceptably. Thus, while her knowledge of “child development” or “parenting” might be considered potentially creditable, anything else that might be learned by the mother for herself from the experience of mothering is not worthy of consideration. The titles listed in Table 1 certainly support this analysis: It would be easy to argue that of the 52 titles listed there, only five⁵ focus attention upon the mother rather than upon the child.

In my own research on experiential learning I have videotaped conversations with adult students in which faculty and student explore together what a student might know that is worthy of college credit. The requirement, at least at the present time, is that knowledge attained through experience, even if without reflection, volition, or conscious intent, must ultimately be articulated if the student expects to receive credit.⁴ Initially, in my own conversations with women about mothering, we concentrated almost entirely upon what they knew about child rearing (requirements for basic care, safety, health, discipline) and child development (physical, cognitive, social). Indeed, in a conversation I had with a college administrator who majored in home economics as an undergraduate, when I expressed surprise at how few women sought credit for their knowledge of mothering, she agreed but corrected me with, “you mean their knowledge of child development.” The idea that women might know more than child development from their parenting experiences did not, at that time, cross our minds. It was only after exploring some of the feminist writings on mothering described above, that I thought to ask my students whether and how mothering might have affected their lives and their life views.

The videos directly contradicted the usual preconceptions about the non-creditable nature of women’s knowledge from mothering. In terms of child development, the women were well read, able to generalize, theorize and discuss issues abstractly, and fully capable of articulating their knowledge. In many instances their knowledge seemed boundless and

often on the cutting edge. (One mother described how she had to learn to deal with her children's fears about being shot at in school. Another mother described how she had to explain to a seven-year old the act of oral sex the child had observed on a school bus.) The question of how mothering might have affected their own development at first seemed to take them aback, but they very quickly recovered. They went on to describe again and again ways by which mothering "transformed" their perspective ("I felt connected with other women; I began to be concerned about other children in the world"), their own desires ("I was suddenly no longer concerned about my own well-being and instead became totally concerned about the well-being of someone other than myself"), and their own ideas about tolerating differences, punishment, physical abuse, and even war. The ease, and speed, with which, with only a few days notice at best, they were able to talk clearly and at length about what mothering taught them was quite striking. More than ever, it suggested to me that their knowledge, even if acquired in many instances without conscious intent (and controlled no doubt by many physical, cultural and social factors), was nonetheless very real and worthy of credit.

On the other hand, it was interesting to note the problem we faced in trying to force these life changes into a format acceptable for a credit request in an academic institution. We seemed to have no language by which to frame this knowledge or make it "fit," as suggested by the Clifford & Marcus quote earlier, into an academically acceptable set of knowledge claims. This problem required us to face the fact that although an important goal of higher education is to purportedly encourage critical thinking or other forms of transformational change, we don't typically give, or know how to give, credit for those changes.

For mothering, Ruddick (1983, 1989) offers a possible solution. In her writings, she has interestingly explored the changes in thinking that result from mothering and has tried to conceptualize them, from a philosophical point of view, as a discipline of thought. If we too could characterize the new ways our students describe that they now see the world as a "discipline," transformational changes might be conceptualized in a way that could in fact be acceptable to the academy. Rather than using Ruddick as a stepping stone, one might also try to define a discipline of thought by analogy. When we want our students to "think like a psychologist," we could analyze what exactly we have in mind (or, when we want to encourage our faculty to think like mentors, we might consider what exactly such thinking might look like or how it might be characterized). We could then borrow the general categories developed from such an exercise and use them to help our students structure and analyze for themselves what it means to think like a mother.

Without such a framework, when I tried to encourage such characterizations from many of these women students, it became clear that here, at last, were the limitations in their knowledge as predicted by those who question the validity of seeking knowledge from mothering. Many women were, indeed, not easily able to generalize from their experience, to form abstractions, to theorize about their own life changes, or to find a way of stepping away from the particulars of their own lives. It is fair to suppose that they were not able to do this in large part because the transformations they experienced are, no doubt due to the biases of our own culture, not valued, not written about in an accessible fashion, and certainly not common knowledge. How can one generalize about one's own experience if it has not been routinely shared with others or even recognized as valuable?

Perhaps it's time for academics to address this interesting developmental phenomenon that seems "hidden" to many of us, even including many of us who have experienced it. Perhaps we can start by doing more to force attention upon the knowledge women gain from the experience of mothering and the developmental changes this experience seems to induce, including changes in the way they think. Perhaps we ought at least to routinely offer courses to our adult students in maternal (or possibly parental) thinking in which we explore these changes and develop together (stimulated by appropriate readings) a way of defining an apparent discipline of thought. We need to find as many ways as possible of characterizing these changes so that they are more accessible than Ruddick's, and other feminist's, philosophical approaches and more immediately meaningful. Having students in small groups articulate, reflect upon, and then frame these changes might at least be a beginning.

Table 1
Mothering-related Experiential Learning Titles:
Independent Study Credit Awards, 1999, at Empire State College¹

Adoption	6	Home Based Child Care	2
Adoption	6	Home Schooling	4
Adoption Issues	6	Home Schooling	4
Adoption: Issues in the Contemporary World	5	Homeschooling	2
Adolescence	3	Homeschooling	4
Applied Child Psychology	3	Issues in Child Care	2
Caregiving Internship	4	Issues in Foster Care Parenting	3
Child Care	6	Kindergarten Readiness	3
Child Development	4	Maternal Practice	3
Child Development	3	Maternal Thinking	3
Child Development	3	Matrimonial Law	1
Child Growth & Development	3	Observing Children's Behavior	3
Child Growth & Development: Practicum	3	Parent Effectiveness Training	2
Childbirth Education	3	Parent Education	4
Childbirth Education	4	Parent-School Advocacy	6
Childbirth Preparation	3	Parenting	1
Childhood Development	4	Parenting & Family: Issues	4
Childhood Stages & Issues	4	Parenting Education	2
Children and Divorce	4	Parenting Practicum	4
Developmental Psychology	4	Parenting Skills	4
Domestic Relations	3	Parenting Skills & Education	3
Dynamics of Child Care	3	Parenting Skills: Child Problem Solving	2
Early Childhood Development	3	Partnering	6
Early Childhood Development	3	Single Parenting	3
Early Childhood Practicum	3	Social Issues; Single Parenting	3
Foster Care for Children	4	Step-Parenting Issues	4

¹ These topics were omitted because they probably did not arise out of mothering experiences: Child Care Administration, Developmental Disabilities, Midwifery, Education, Domestic Violence, and Emotional Disorders

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Note: For those interested in pursuing the questions tentatively raised in this paper, the references below, while certainly not exhaustive, may be useful as a starting place.

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ALL ABOUT
MENTORING
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Roundtable on Feminist Mentoring **Marnie Evans, Metropolitan Center**

Last June I attended the 2001 annual conference of the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) at the University of Minnesota and moderated a roundtable discussion on feminist mentoring. NWSA was founded in 1977 to further the development of women's studies throughout the world at every educational level. The organization's annual conferences feature numerous keynoters and interest sessions. This year's conference program, with the title: 2001.women's studies.com? listed almost 600 presenters. With over 1,600 individual members, and well over 300 institutional members, NWSA represents college and university women's studies/gender studies teachers, programs and women's centers, educational press/media organizations and advocacy groups across the USA. The NWSA Journal, which appears three times a year, publishes interdisciplinary scholarship that links feminist research and theory in all fields relating to women's studies.

Our session at the 2001 conference was the third roundtable on this theme that I have organized for NWSA conferences. Each session has elicited lively discussion among the participants. The previous two roundtable themes were Conversations About Feminist Mentoring, at the 1999 conference in Albuquerque, and Values and Goals in Feminist Mentoring, for the Boston conference in 2000. Our approach has been to propose questions for the panelists to open the topics, inviting general discussion on the theme. While the intent has been to foster discussion of thorny questions, the "roundtables" have been stimulating enough that participation in the "conversations" has increased each year and, in response, we are beginning an e-mail network to pursue these issues further. My work on feminist mentoring is closely related to a larger project that I have been working on with Mayra Bloom, mentor in New City. We are co-editing a volume on Mentoring in the New Academy for Temple University Press, for a series under the general editorship of Elizabeth Minnich. Our purpose there will be to look at mentoring from a multidisciplinary perspective and to help develop language, concepts and perspectives, which will help us talk about mentoring in new ways.

I was the organizer and moderator of the roundtable whose participants also included:

- Kathryn Brooks, who is director of the Women's Resource Center at the University of Utah, which houses The Feminist Therapy and Multicultural Issues Training Program. She has also directed women's studies programs and is a founding member of NWSA.
- Linda Nathan Marks, who is the founder and director of a feminist grass-roots educational organization in New York City, The Crystal Quilt, Inc., and who coordinates a group mentoring project for young women aged 20 to 35, How to Succeed Without Selling Out.
- Harilyn Rousso, an educator and activist, who is the director of Disabilities Unlimited Consulting Services, an organization that provides training, consultation, research and advocacy on disability equity issues. She is co-editor of Double Jeopardy: Addressing Gender Equity in Special Education (2001) and the founder of the Networking Project for Disabled Women and Girls, a mentoring project for adolescent girls with disabilities at the YWCA/NYC.

What follows is the handout my colleagues and I developed for our session at NWSA 2001:

NWSA 2001 Roundtable

Is Honesty the Best Policy? Using the “Self” in Feminist Mentoring

How far should we go in revealing the “self” in feminist mentoring? As feminist academics and activists, engaged in a variety of mentoring relationships, we face daily decisions about the use of the self. In formal structures as well as spontaneously, we mentor women who are our students or our colleagues, both in academe and in our community organizations.

Inevitably we face questions about what we choose to disclose and not to disclose. Decisions about what we reveal are often influenced by differences and similarities of age, class, race, dis/ability, sexual orientation, etc. Our roundtable will raise the following questions:

- How is self-disclosure affected by the complexity of our personal and professional positions and responsibilities? By the size, character and political environments of the communities in which we live and work?
- How do we decide which aspects of our “selves” are appropriate to make evident in various kinds of interactions? What do we expect in return?
- How is the use of the self in feminist mentoring different from other mentoring? Are we role models? How do we share our struggles?
- How do we communicate our experience and passion? How do we combine our perspective on “how to do it” with respect for the other’s reality? When is advice valuable and when is it oppressive? How do we receive validation for our own values and choices without imposing them on others?
- How can self-disclosure in mentoring contribute to the building of women’s community, especially between different generations?
- What role might mentoring play in helping women succeed in making changes in their personal or professional lives? In becoming more effective in fighting for social justice?