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Table of Contents

From the Editors

That Which We Dare Not Speak: The Scourge of Wokeness, Cancel Culture, and the Fight for Justice

Whether you cheer for or hate either or both of these characters, you may have caught Bill Maher's 2023 interview with Elon Musk[1] where they discuss, among other things, "wokeness." Maher, who claims politically to be neither right nor left and who has long made it his business to confront head-on the so-called "politically incorrect," has himself borne the brunt of wokeness' cancel culture on several occasions, losing his job in the bargain. What comes through most in their discussion is their bewilderment: bewildering because wokeness is a constantly changing script, a script mysterious and wily, a primer for power-grabbing victimhood that proves a bottomless chasm of shape-shifting entrapment meant to "cancel," fire, or even jail those who violate its ever-more-nuanced script. During their discussion, Maher explains the wokeness virus as something you never see coming and can neither anticipate nor get out in front of: "it's like walking on a roof blindfolded," he says. Dangerous work indeed.

The scourge of the wokeness movement and its close companion cancel culture have no role in the dream of justice or the promise of democracy. In the earliest incantation of the term, "woke" was coined by Black folks first as a "watchword" to warn one another to take care, to "stay woke,"[2] and later colloquially to describe white folks who "got" the legacy of systemic racism and who acted in ways that humbly advanced racial justice. Unsurprisingly, like much Ebonic parlance, this term was swiftly appropriated and retooled, veering away from "woke" to arrive at "wokeness," teed up to become the toxic anti-speech, anti-critique phenomenon wokeness manifests as today: as an ever-evolving, ever-lengthening list of ideas, phrases, and words, many of which are now named "hate speech," designed to threaten the life, livelihood, and freedom of anyone who dares dissent or differ and threatening to subject the speaker to unemployment, doxing, or jail time. Paradoxically, wokeness proponents proclaim it to be a movement and orthodoxy aimed at building tolerance, made all-the-more ironic by laws emerging around the world that criminalize any social-media post, for instance, that causes another person "anxiety" or upset,[3] a well-worn step in the painful march toward totalitarian rule in formerly "democratic" nations. This dystopic scenario is playing out as we speak, with few acknowledging—let alone acting upon—

the growing threat of increasingly deployed speech crackdowns. The past four years have seen Orwell's novel *1984* brought to life, and we have come to witness the truth of how "Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing."[4] This is the aim of the "wokeness" political agenda; this is its only aim.

In the movement's insincere, ironic resolve to build tolerance, wokeness is instead revealed as chiefly concerned with sowing seeds of hate and divisiveness. To put it plainly, today's wokeness is not about justice, and never was. Wokeness cannot advance justice, rather it threatens the fight for justice. It is meant violently, bitterly to divide us, not unite us, in the fight for human rights and justice. We cannot fall for it. Instead, we in Social Foundations of Education have to call the question about what we stand for, who we are as a discipline, and who we are as human beings so we may begin properly to investigate from where or whom this current scourge of wokeness comes.

Wokeness seems to have become as viral as covid and, like covid, seems largely to be a disease of the left. Wokeness runs riot across university campuses since few of its inhabitants seem to have acquired immunity. Moving from "a single-word summation of leftist political ideology, centered on social justice politics and critical race theory," at once "shorthand for political progressiveness by the left, and as a denigration of leftist culture by the right," now its meaning grows murkier than ever.[5] Wokeness escapes deep critical examination because to question its nature or any of its claims is to put oneself in grave danger of being set upon by an anti-free-speech mob determined to dismantle the career and character of anyone who dares question, oftentimes jeopardizing their safety in the process. In practice, wokeness is peculiarly infantilizing in how its believers patrol to "protect" those who claim hurt feelings or feel "unsafe." Among our colleagues in academe, wokeness drives out many faculty bold enough to challenge it, and many of those who remain fear the day they stumble across wokeness' many tripwires. Wokeness and cancel culture therefore constantly threaten, two points of a Bermuda Triangle of sorts: once cancelled, the "victimized" hungry mob moves on to suck in and disappear its next victim, with no justice served.

Hurt feelings and "feeling unsafe" of late rapidly have moved from vague excuses to crush free speech to the installation of totalitarian censorship laws complete with prison time. Look across the Western world at present and you'll see evidence of such calls to squelch speech everywhere, and increasing police brutality against those who practice free speech. Indeed, as I write, Pavel Durov, the founder and CEO of the Telegram app, has been violently arrested and detained in France, accused of many crimes, but alleged to have been targeted because he refused to censor his platform's users critical of the UK's current mass migration and associated policies.[6] But as former UK MP, the Rt. Hon. Ann Widdecombe, argued a few years back at an Oxford Union Society debate of proposed

"no platforming" interwebs legislation, "Nobody has the right to live their lives being protected from offence or from insult or hurt feelings. It is an occupational hazard of living in society."[7] In the UK, convicted violent offenders are gaining early release from prison[8] so the government can relieve overcrowding, only to jail those who violate the Online Safety Act of 2023[9] which criminalizes tasteless and offensive social-media posts, among other forms of speech. By way of warning its citizens, the UK government just posted a positively Orwellian tweet—"Think before you post,"[10]—and got spectacularly ratioed in the process. Just yesterday Elon Musk tweeted vintage MSNBC video where U.S. democratic vice-presidential candidate Tim Walz argues there should be "no guarantee of free speech…especially around our democracy."[11] Allow me to suggest, in the wise words of Maya Angelou, "when people show you who they are, believe them the first time."[12] Right in line with Walz's proclamation, and something I've witnessed consistently during my time within the global medical-choice dissident movement, I call upon you to begin to recognize—if you have not already—that any time you hear speech branded "disinformation" or "misinformation," you are witnessing global, systematic, totalitarian suppression of speech.

Craft founder David Sacks points to how Americans are sharply divided by political party allegiance in their trust of the mainstream media (MSM): "Republicans [whose trust plunged to just 10%] realize it's propaganda… Democrats [whose trust grew rapidly since 2015 to 73%] are the people still plugged into the Matrix."[13] This poll data provides important empirical evidence for the vast divide Americans now feel and uphold, a pernicious, deeply felt divide far-and-away vaster than any in modern memory. The "free press," U.S. and world MSM outlets, recently revealed to have been paid handsomely by the U.S. government to push the experimental covid transfection shots as "safe and effective"[14] despite clinical trial data to the contrary,[15] largely have worked overtime to uphold the "woke is a thing" and "woke is right" narratives in ways overt and snide. During covid the mainstream media were paid to do the government's dirty work, only outed via a well-placed FOIA request,[16] yet even though the MSM has publicly been shamed and damned, they do not appear to have learned from their recent indiscretion or be motivated to change. When critiquing the role of the MSM, some now point out how schools of journalism all over the U.S. newly focus curriculum on manufacturing woke-adjacent "activist journalists" instead of old-school, investigative journalists; perhaps this educational phenomenon has a hand in our current, post-truth predicament.

While briefly chronicling the Musk/Maher interview, the formerly hard-hitting investigational journalists and now-woke staff of *Rolling Stone* open their article by declaring, Musk and Maher's "conversation… included a strained discussion of the **imaginary** 'woke mind virus' that both men worry is ruining younger generations."[17] The *Rolling Stone* article is entitled "Elon Musk and Bill Maher Warn Against the 'Woke Mind

Virus,' a.k.a. Historical Fact," by which the author means to ridicule these men for daring to name wokeness as a virus since the alleged crimes of wokeness obviously represent "the truth." Now, I ask you as educators, if people with a such large listening audience as they are willing to discuss and even debate wokeness out of worry for the health and welfare of future generations and the price wokeness extracts from the functions of democracy, shouldn't their willingness to speak of "that which we dare not speak" be acknowledged as necessary by a supposedly free press? As Tyler Durden, publisher of *Zero Hedge*, pointed out recently, "The woke activist invasion of popular media since 2015 continues to ignore the reality that they are not 'rebels,' they are villains."[18]

Anon Substacker Eugyppius, a former academic, got his start after being banned from twitter for investigative work into the truth behind the covid pandemic. In addition to his work on covid and the shots, he worries over wokeness, writing recently on its nature and political roots. He traces the nature of the "ideological cancer" and "menace" of wokeness to the "phenomenon of the high–low alliance," drawn primarily from French philosopher and economist Bertrand de Jouvenel, because he argues the high–low alliance is "central to understanding the modern political order, and in particular leftism and the various forms it adopts."[19] He chronicles how, during feudal times, the people were little governed practically, so a person could live their whole life long without ever encountering an agent of the crown. Aristocrats arose as a class to collect rents, etc., replaced by state agents as the populace grew. These state agents owed their living to the king and claimed their power locally to govern from the king. This new system begins the vast reach of state powers and, paradoxically, a "new ideology of freedom, rights, and the popular will emerged—all of it betokening, ironically, a closer governance of the common man than history had ever seen before."[20] This power relation sets the stage for the low to challenge the high: "the merchants and later the capitalists drove out the landed aristocracy, only to find themselves the target of new socialist revolutionary movements in the nineteenth century."[21]

Similar to today, those groups who make up the left, who occupy the bottom of this high–low alliance, are never treated equally, some groups among the low are more "unjustly disadvantaged," and this demarcation means…

> …the highly unstable nature of the lower classes in modern society, driven by mass immigration and rapid economic change, accounts for the volatility and malleability of leftism, which is the ideological cluster that is primarily responsible for articulating and justifying these high–low alliances. Classical Marxism promised justice to factory workers, the New Left of the postwar era shifted its focus to students, and today their Woke successors forge alliance with racial and sexual minorities. The promise is always one of a totally egalitarian society, but even when completely successful, the revolution merely extends the power of the rulers.[22]

As Eugyppius sagely posits, "everyone preaching Wokeness is either a direct, personal beneficiary of the power process it represents, or a would-be target seeking ideological cover. [In academe] the end state toward which the Woke are driving, academically, is a university system where an all-powerful administration manages a wholly subordinate faculty employed on renewable contracts."[23] In the end, he says, "in the modern world, changes at the bottom—however they're advertised—presage systemwide revolution within the space of a [single] generation."[24]

Mathematician and relentless wokeness critic James Lindsay who recently penned "A Letter of Warning to Young Woke People"[25] offers a more direct and sordid take on the nature of wokeness. Some of you may dismiss his thinking outright because he appears on Joe Rogan and Fox News, but over the past four years I have come to understand that those of us who are not reading and listening to *everything* on both deeply divided partisan "sides" and everywhere in between, are not making use of our critical-thinking toolkit to try earnestly to figure out what is happening to our society and our republic, and are doing both themselves and our republic a grave disservice. In fact, the narrative producers are counting on the fact that we do not have the time or wherewithal to attend to another full-time, unpaid job in order to know what is happening, in order to search for and sift through, day after day, year after year, an amount of information that is at once astonishing in volume and oftentimes soul-withering in content. They are counting on our relentless curiosity to ebb, for us to wish so strongly for "before times" that we check out, that we comply rather than resist the fear porn, the incendiary provocations, the bait-and-switch social contract. But our intellectual curiosity and spiritual energy has never been more needed. I believe as strongly as I've ever believed anything in my lifetime that our lives and the lives of the ones we love and our communities depend on *not* giving up this Herculean task critically to seek, sift, understand, and act.

In 2022 at *The Drake Lecture* I focused upon the danger of failing consistently to scan for, recognize, and act upon blind spots.[26] Failure in this moment to listen to and give genuine consideration to absolutely everything in the ways I pointed to in my talk proves, without doubt, a grave blind spot. I argue dismissing some thinkers because they fall into a partisan pile I have come to believe I abhor becomes dangerous to our autonomy and agency, particularly in this very strange and disturbing moment in history. In his open letter, Lindsay draws his evidence from history's repetitive lessons as he pleads directly to the young woke.

> You know how everything in Woke philosophy is "temporal," "spacial," and "contingent"? … [Well,] you are a contingency for the Woke movement. You have your time—until you don't. When you become useless or a hindrance to the movement of History, you will be discarded. Every Marxist and Hegelian movement in history has proceeded this way, and this one will not be different.

> … In the past, activists like yourselves were seen as useful "political prostitutes," and after the revolution, you were lined up against the wall and shot or deported to labor-reeducation camps and ground into destruction. …Mao explained all of this in 1957…. **You have been trained to hate, allegedly in the name of "stopping hate."**[27]
>
> You are being trained by this movement to be a destabilizer. That's what all that "disrupt and dismantle" stuff is about. You are misled to believe you're disrupting and dismantling systems of oppression, but you're merely displacing the existing society for the one they'll seize control over. … That's your future. Look at the screen, scan your face, and smile for the government, and don't dare signal in any way that you think anything you shouldn't be thinking.[28]
>
> "Liberation" movements are lies. Mao called his army—the same one he dispatched to destroy your counterparts in the Red Guard—the People's *Liberation Army* for a reason. Liberation is a destructive lie. You need to fight for Liberty. Your chains are forged by frauds and locked only in your heads.[29]

Let me say here and now that even though I am a Social Foundations of Education scholar, teacher, and activist, I have changed radically in my thinking as I've watched events unfold over the past four years. I said it plainly during *The 2022 Drake Lecture*: I'm [forever] changed. And I now find myself examining every single thing that I teach and have taught, all I write, and the causes I champion, even though I can humbly say I worked hard to be responsible in what I taught and wrote in the past. Now I see that if we do not address wokeness head-on, we succumb to the role of indoctrinators rather than fulfilling our role as educators. As I told you in 2022, my awakening has been painful and wrenching; I have gone kicking and screaming from where I was to where I now am. I now examine closely, in particular, everything I teach because I want to make sure I am, to the best of my present knowledge, challenging wokeness and championing justice. I can tell you this with certainty: our students and our young colleagues are hungry for support in their own work to champion justice while eschewing wokeness. But, as I say in my paper's title, practically no one dares speak it.

I can tell you that the DEI industrial complex we see shamelessly cashing in on academic and corporate organizations is impressively bound up in wokeness, virtue signaling, and the cancel culture that accompanies the wokeness movement's agenda, all in the name of "equity." A few years back my university, ISU, instituted new Core Values, among those Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: a fervent call my Foundations colleagues and I made of the institution many times over many previous years; we cheered when DEI was named a Core Value. We of course were horribly deflated to

find the DEI Core Value was only window dressing: Black, brown, and LGBT bodies plastered on every webpage, but nothing of substance done to support minoritized students' success. Curiously, in his *2023 State of the University Address*, then-Interim President Aondover Tarhule spoke over and again of ISU's commitment to and accomplishments in Diversity and Inclusion. No equity. It was never mentioned; bizarrely equity was disappeared. It's simply too much trouble. Equity requires that something big gives, and it's clear that's never going to happen.

The university's affair with the DEI industrial complex is not about justice, but about market-share, about virtue signaling, and, perhaps most disturbingly, is about luring minoritized students and families to come to schools with piss-poor records of persistence to graduation. The DEI industrial complex gallops on, healthy as a horse, because the DEI industrial complex is just another form of corporatized snake oil: never about equity, never about justice: prioritizing "'the immaterial and symbolic' over 'the material and the concrete.'"[30] In academe we have painfully landed about as far away from the genuine, grassroots origin of the term "woke" as we can get and a far cry from where we ought to be as Foundations faculty teaching for justice.

In this moment, in our world, hope and hopelessness dance uneasily. Some argue vehemently that to claim guaranteed free speech is absolute is to misunderstand the concept, but I see the truth beneath the scourge of wokeness as simple: you either ascribe to free speech or you don't—there's no middle ground. Constitutionally protected free speech is and must remain absolute, just like you either fight for our rapidly receding republic or you fight against it, just like you either teach for justice or you teach against it. When you choose to buy into the current scourge of wokeness, you buy in to an ever-changing no-win game that requires you always comply by using "correct" speech. But speech branded either "correct" or "incorrect" is no longer free speech. As Lindsay[31] cautions, such a political distinction flies right from the pages of Mao Tse-Tong's playbook, where we "are being targeted by the politics of compliance" using the same dynamic, and being told if we don't comply, if we don't have so-called "correct opinions" then we "don't have a soul."[32] This is the exact way many on the left now divide the world: you are either woke or soul-less. He reports the goal of such a political movement is to cast those who comply as "better than everyone else…but also frustrated with everybody else"[33] who refuses to comply. This "political wedge" of "rightspeak" that typifies wokeness is the lynchpin on which the entire wokeness machine turns. In fact, the wokeness movement and all the parallel anti-speech movements that exist at present are setting out "to dehumanize [those who won't comply or who even question] and motivate the other two groups [who buy in or who aren't sure] to destroy"[34] those who refuse to comply. Those who come

around to compliance end up "agreeing with the tyranny,"[35] then falling upon those who remain noncompliant and unsure, calling them the crux of the social problem and preventers of "unity."

Mao called this formula 'unity, criticism, unity.'"[36] Foundational to this formula is creating the most highly "contentious, fractious, polarized situation where there's tremendous disunity."[37] Exactly the situation in which we find ourselves today, and not just with wokeness, but with covid and the shots, environmentalism and climate change, identity, national origin, sexual orientation, ability, and immigration—the exact same playbook utilized in every single one of these political imbroglios. Few seem to see or acknowledge the uncanny manufactured commonality across these political campaigns or how history foretells of their crushing, bloody, long-lived, totalitarian outcomes.

So, when you hear a political argument that "everything would be fine if 'these people would just do this thing,'" you are witnessing at its basest a political strategy calling for such compliance. Lindsay terms this "hatecraft," which amounts to "teaching the compliant to hate the people who are holding them back."[38] History shows that "the larger the proportion of people that you can get to comply, the more powerful the hatecraft. … That's how it works…they twist every virtue and every value into a weapon of enmity and hate. …and the target is you."[39] In the words of one of my colleagues in the medical-choice dissident movement, "the 'tell' of a fascist is now the catch phrase 'danger to our democracy.'"[40] Listen for this phrase to be uttered as it has been carefully distilled by those meaning to bring you into compliance and to invoke in you a reaction of pure hatecraft.

In Social Foundations we are the folks who ask the questions, get deep beneath the surface, examine critically. So why aren't we doing so with wokeness? We have the tools and the theory, but we seem as a whole painfully to lack the motivation to call it. Have even we been silenced by the fear of pronoun landmines, cancel culture, and hate-speech accusations? Are the consequences now too grave, even for us, because our fight for justice has made a sharp 180-degree turn into a fight for our own personal and professional lives? If so, how will we ever turn this careening cart around? I can say that no matter whomever or whatever is pushing wokeness' political agenda, complete with all its punitive outcomes, this movement is in no way organic; it certainly has not bubbled up from the people, but rather operates as a massive, top-down campaign global in scope, inorganic in origin, and totalitarian in intent.

I have long argued that in Social Foundations of Education, many of our disciplinary quests for justice, for equity, for peace, for love, for a far-more-kind and compassionate world remain disappointingly unrequited.[41] Our unrequited striving for justice, our teaching that sometimes seems

paradoxically to drive discrimination and deficit thinking more deeply below the surface in some of our teacher candidates, remain a source of sadness, of bewilderment, of burning shame. When I think about how to act in a way that can reveal and dismantle the scourge of wokeness and political compliance's many identically manufactured political pony shows, I remind myself of wisdom imparted by James Lindsay, speaking at the 2024 International Crisis Summit, who pleads with the young and old alike to awaken, to find a unifying credo that does not demand compliance, that does not stir the pot or gaslight or fire up hatecraft, that cannot make us forget our humanity in order to have us set upon one another.[42] He says,

> I want to tell you something just to change your perspective on this in a tiny way that means everything: it is not enough to tell the truth. I'm gonna wax biblical on you: you have to love the truth. You have to love the truth with all of your heart and all of your mind and all of your soul and all of your strength, and then you must love your neighbor as yourself by telling him the truth as well. Why this is important is because if you tell the truth in the pressure of hatecraft or the politics of compliance comes [at] you hard enough, you will buckle. But if you love the truth, you will not. You will stand for the truth, you will seek the truth, you will defend the truth when it's under attack, you will defend other people who are standing for, seeking, and speaking the truth because it's the truth that you love, and you love it more than anything. And when you love the truth, speaking the truth becomes easy.[43]

As the western world teems with, it seems to me, ever-more-deep partisan polarization and amidst the deeply suspect covid "pandemic" and the state's attacks on bodily autonomy, freedom of speech, and the scientific process itself, our mission humanely to teach, to teach for humanity and the just treatment of all humans, endures its own puzzling partisan polarization: "wokeness" versus justice, lies versus truth, hate versus love. I wholeheartedly know the so-called wokeness movement to be a separator, not a unifier or enlightener, but rather a pernicious and—importantly—idiopathic distraction from our quest for justice and for all children and families to be served well and equitably by public schooling. Such partisanship endangers our disciplinary work via a sharp movement away from justice toward judgment, shutting off pedagogy and difficult dialogue in favor of indoctrination to force compliance and cancel culture's pronouncement. In so doing, today's "woke" abandon all hope that education can lead to social change, to enlightenment, to growth, and the just world Foundations educators have long envisioned, advocated for, and worked for; education's democratic enterprise is then left hopelessly unrequited. As Social Foundations scholars, what does it mean to be so

committed to something "right" that, it turns out, is not right? In the end, "wokeness" has evolved into just another tool in the master's toolkit…and, if that's so, we've all just been played.

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Endnotes

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[11] Elon Musk [@elonmusk], *Twitter/X* post, August 24, 2024, https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1827551238893776956

[12] Jennifer Harris and Elwood Watson, *The Oprah Phenomenon*, updated ed. (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 59. This is a Maya Angelou quotation made popular by Oprah Winfrey, but I could not locate a print source that offered citation confirming its origin. Whether or not it's properly attributed or accurately quoted, these are wise words indeed.

[13] Reproduced from a Gallup poll tracking America's trust in mass media by political party, 1997–2020; David Sacks [@DavidSacks], *Twitter/X* post, August 25, 2024, 2:34 pm, https://x.com/DavidSacks/status/1827776545412505855

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[15] For years now we've had proof positive that Pfizer concealed and meant to conceal serious adverse reactions from and high levels of contaminants in its BioNTech mRNA covid transfections, the first of which is documented by Pfizer's own clinical trial data. Pfizer requested and was granted that clinical trial results for this product be sealed for 75 years. Litigator Aaron Siri successfully sued for their release, requiring Pfizer turn over to the public all documents and the complete data set by March 2022 [needless to say this suit and the document release were not covered by the MSM, but was reported and analyzed by many in the medical-choice dissident movement such as here: https://www.westonaprice.org/health-topics/pfizer-documents-confirm-covid-injections-are-dangerous/#gsc.tab=0 (Kendall Nelson, "Pfizer Documents Confirm What We Already Knew: Covid Injections Are Dangerous," *Weston A. Price Foundation*, July 24, 2022); additionally, Aaron Siri's testimony before Congress on the covid transfections can be viewed here: Aaron Siri, "My Congressional Testimony: Why Covid-19 Vaccines Were Never Going to Be Properly Safety Tested," *Injecting Freedom* [Substack], July 2, 2024, https://aaronsiri.substack.com/p/my-congressional-testimony-why-covid]. In

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Party, 1957), 12. Text of speech made on February 27, 1957, distributed at the Eleventh Session of the Supreme State Conference, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/red-book/ch25.htm. A slightly longer Mao quotation that helps contextualize phrasing abbreviated by Lindsay in "The Politics of Compliance": "This democratic method of resolving contradictions among the people was epitomized in 1942 in the formula 'unity, criticism, unity.' To elaborate, it means starting from the desire for unity, resolving contradictions through criticism or struggle and arriving at a new unity on a new basis. In our experience this is the correct method of resolving contradictions among the people" (Tse-Tung, *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*, 12).

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The 2023 SoPHE Presidential Address

Unmoored: The Case for and Confounding of Educational Foundations in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Basiyr Rodney, Webster University

Vignette: The Unseen Bridge

In the bustling auditorium of the annual Educational Innovations Conference, Dr. Alex Hart, an advocate for integrating Generative AI into educational frameworks, steps onto the stage, his eyes gleaming with anticipation and a dash of rebellion against traditional norms. The room, filled with educators, administrators, and technologists, simmers with a palpable tension between excitement for the future and apprehension of the unknown.

Alex begins his talk, his voice steady and confident, weaving a tale of a future where Generative AI not only assists in creating a dynamic, interactive learning environment but also transforms the conventional paradigms of student assessment and engagement. He speaks of classrooms where technology-enabled feedback and where students, aided by AI, delve deeper into discussions, exploring and creating knowledge in a symbiotic relationship with artificial intelligence.

As the presentation unfolds, the audience is transported into classrooms of the future, where written assignments are no longer the sole measure of a student's understanding and capability. Alex describes a shift towards task-based and performative assessments, where students demonstrate their learning through various mediums, reducing the traditional reliance on written outputs.

Amid the captivated audience, Professor Lynn Carter, a seasoned educator in Social Foundations of Education, feels a twinge of unease. As the Q&A session begins, Lynn's hand rises hesitantly, her voice carrying a mixture of concern and curiosity, "How do we, as educators, navigate through this transition, ensuring that we are not left behind or, worse, rendered obsolete by the very technology we introduce to our students?"

The room falls silent, all eyes shifting between Lynn and Alex, awaiting a bridge between the posited future and present concerns.

Alex pauses to acknowledge the depth of the query. "It's a journey of adaptation," he begins. "The role of educators will undoubtedly evolve, but it will not diminish. Instead, it will become one where educators become facilitators and co-creators of knowledge alongside students and their AI."

Her eyes reflect a storm of thoughts, and Lynn responds, "In teaching Social Foundations of Education, we are already in a constant battle to validate our significance. Suppose foundational subjects are perceived as less-vital in an AI-driven educational model? How do we preserve our role and ensure that the essential principles of education are not lost amidst technological advancements?"

Alex nods, recognizing the valid fears embedded in Lynn's words. "The preservation of foundational education principles is paramount," he affirmed. "The integration of AI does not negate the need for understanding the roots and ethics of education. It amplifies the need for educators to guide how technology is implemented and utilized, ensuring it is aligned with ethical and foundational principles."

The vignette closes with Alex and Lynn, representing two ends of a spectrum, engaging in a dialogue that is a microcosm of the larger conversation within the educational community.

—B. Rodney 70%; ChatGPT 30%

Background

This vignette describes a real conversation at an actual event. In full disclosure, I must state at the outset that the retelling of this episode is highly embellished with ChatGPT. ChatGPT is one of many emergent computer-based text generation programs called Generative Pretrained Transformers (GPTs). GPTs are computing platforms that construct or amalgamate novel information from massive, unlabeled digital datasets scraped from unwitting creators from all corners of the internet. These applications use machine learning and algorithmic computer processing to reconstruct predigested information scraped from across the internet into novel responses to a user's query or "chat prompt." The current utility of these systems is to use algorithms and data (a.k.a. "neural networks") to respond to questions, comments, or musings posed by individuals. Individuals may access these large-language models with a chat box interface on their phones, tablets, computers, or televisions. These models can generate novel, coherent, and fluent texts on various topics and domains. They can also generate images of varying types and styles, each unique and different. These models can

create voice and sound recordings to mimic preexisting voices or sounds or novel voices as yet unheard.

It would be accurate to claim AI tools as a watershed technological development. They represent an advancement in human–computer interaction long described in cybernetic computer philosophy and science-fiction novels. Open AI published the first GPT transformer in 2018. Its most popular progenitor is GPT 3.5, published in November 2022. Within 30 days of its introduction to the public, GPT went from 0 to 57 million active users. The launch of ChatGPT sparked what has been referred to as a new information race. Reactions in all knowledge-generation and knowledge-management fields run the gamut from intrigued to frantic.

Microsoft, the world's most-widely used desktop and server-computer company immediately made plans to embed GPT into its computer-programming products and into GitHub, the massive computer-programming storehouse used by coders around the world. Today, just 10 months following its broad availability, 41% to 46% of the code published on GitHub is generated by AI.

In the field of education, the rush by many to adopt AI seems unrelenting. Educational institutions, ed-tech firms, and governments are all competing to harness what they perceive to be the transformative powers of AI. In a reversal of an earlier position, New York City Public Schools is now working with Microsoft to build an AI for each student. Online learning-management corporations such as Khan Academy, Grammarly, and Blackboard have already rolled out some GPT-based AI to assist users of their platforms.

Those within the AI education project aiEDU say the project's aim is to create personalized learning environments, provide individualized student and teacher support, and automate or make administrative tasks more efficient. OpenAI's GPT series, Google's BERT, TensorFlow, and IBM's Watson are all AI products vying for market share in educational settings. Their creators claim the products can facilitate adaptive-learning systems, automate administrative tasks, and enhance student engagement through intelligent interactions with their specific AI product. Amazon's Alexa technology has also been updated, infused with nuanced AI capabilities, and Amazon claims the new Alexa offers educators and learners new ways to interact, deliver content, and manage tasks.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of AI across educational institutions and organizations. As U.S. schools and universities shifted *en masse* to online learning platforms, educational technology was rapidly deployed and was branded indispensable to educational access. This shift led to schools' and universities' increased reliance on educational technology and led to these institutions advancing a conceptual rationale for deepening technology augmentation in education.

Just this week, Microsoft announced the broad availability of its Copilot AI to billions of users of its Microsoft Office products. At its recent global conference, Google made a similar announcement about its first-generation Bard AI platform. As these corporate AI rollouts suggest, today's AI tools have already given rise to an unsettling feeling among many of AI as a boat that has become unmoored and is drifting far ashore.

In yet another example of this compelling educational shift, I offer a short poem that carries the theme of my talk forward. The poem, a *kwansaba*, is a style of poem invented by Dr. Eugene Redmond, a former poet laureate of East Saint Louis, IL. The poem is composed of seven lines, each with seven words. It describes how many people experience a sense of disconnect from their pasts given the social and technological change that technology oftentimes presents. The poem ends hopefully with a call to consider technology's ethics and for us to remember our humanity. The format of the poem is precise; the words predictably align to convey meaning and even depth, yet this poem is, in large part, generated by a GPT tool.

Unmoored: A Kwansaba

Unmoored, we drift in vast, digital seas,
Humanities whisper tales of ancient keys.
Silicon minds, devoid of ancient tales,
Navigate blindly through life's vast, complex trails.
We seek wisdom in the coded streams,
Yet lose ourselves in unbridled digital dreams.
Anchor in ethics, sail with human beams.

— ChatGPT 90%; B. Rodney 10%

The Programmed Human and AI in Education

Ivan Illich (1926–2002), a critic of institutionalized education and technological society, relied on the Greek myth of Prometheus to analogize modern humans in relationship to technological development. In his "Promethean man" concept (Illich, 1995), Illich recognized something beyond human beings' reliance upon ingenuity, mastery over primal elements, and exploration of forbidden knowledge. He foresaw, too, that technologies served to shape human agency and interactions. He writes, "Man the helmsman has turned the rudder over to the cybernetic machine" (Illich, 1995/1976, p. 115). Such interactions often have unintended consequences, he argued. Other thinkers, such as Günther Anders (1902–1992) drew upon the Greek myth of Prometheus to explore the advent of technology and reveal the unintended consequence of atomic development and its potential to destroy (Babich, 2022). A third consequence of

technological advancement to which Illich alludes is his concern over technology's remaking of human beings and the eventual obsolescence of disciplines once considered to hold epistemological value. Technology holds real potential to embed the seed of humanity's destruction at its worst or to reshape humanity—dare I posit mere reprogramming as the least harmful outcome.

A conversation between Seymour Papert and Paulo Freire (Friesen, 2012) often inspires my work in educational technology. One of these thinkers, Papert, sees the use of technology as a cognitive amplification tool that can extend and expand human learning potential, even to the point of making traditional schools obsolete (Freisen, 2012). The other, Freire, sees technology as a tool that can inform new types of pedagogy, but ultimately Freire maintains that emancipatory pedagogy can occur without digital technology. These scholars' contrasting viewpoints highlight the complexities educators face today. AI has ushered in an era where educators must grapple with the **pedagogy of the prompt**. How do we guide learners to interact with AI in ways that foster critical thinking, creativity, and a deep understanding of the subject matter? How do we ensure that AI serves as a tool for empowerment, rather than a crutch that hinders intellectual growth?

Papert's vision of technology (Freisen, 2012), which enables learners to bypass traditional schooling and engage directly with knowledge, resonates, I believe, with the possibilities AI offers. But Freire's emphasis on the human element in education (Freisen, 2012), the importance of dialogue and critical consciousness, reminds us that technology alone cannot be used by humanity to achieve true liberation. In my view, the pedagogy of the AI prompt is about finding that balance. It's about crafting prompts that spark curiosity, challenge assumptions, and encourage learners to explore the vast landscape of knowledge AI opens up to them. It's about guiding them to use AI not just as an information retrieval tool, but as a partner in the learning process, a collaborator in the creation of new knowledge.

AI tools like Microsoft's ChatGPT-based AI, "co-pilot," and Google's Bard or Anthropic's Arthur all include a personal assistant element. This assistant is designed with a cognitive amplification feature (Jonassen, Carr, & Hsiu-Ping, 1998) which carries the potential (or risk) to "reprogram human beings." In his "Homo Programmundus," Illich (2013) advances a critique of how society becomes shaped by its technologies. As per Illich, the Promethean man is a metaphor for a community driven towards creating tools that eventually reshape it, often in ways that counter the original intent. He states, "Promethean man, Homo Faber, man the toolmaker, has become a slave to his tools" (Illich, 1995, p. 87).

Considering the burgeoning transhumanistic perspectives, whereby "the human being can, in and of itself, become more than what it was" (Bostrom, 2005, p. 202), the dialogue around AI in education necessitates

scrutiny that transcends the mere technical or pedagogical. It invites the question, what does it mean to be human? Moreover, the tension between social and techno-corporate educational foundations frames a poignant exploration arena. The potential polarization between "education as a social equalizer" and "education as a market-driven entity" (Spring, 2015, p. 11) accentuates the complexities and threats of integrating AI technologies often driven by corporate interests, yet embedded within systems that serve diverse, and often socially driven, educational landscapes.

The "enhancement" of human capabilities using AI invites questions about education as a process of transmitting knowledge vs. education as an experience in human augmentation. The following fundamental question and three sub-questions might guide one's exploration of this intricate interplay:

1. How can education maintain human-centered approaches, avoid acceding to technological determinism, and resist the worst impulses of neoliberal techno-corporate objectives in the face of rapid, corporatized AI-based technological change?
    a. How can Artificial Intelligence in educational contexts effectively balance with humanism over trans-human cybernetic impulses?
    b. How could AI make students better learners and not simply better cheaters?
    c. How does Artificial Intelligence support new "assistive" pedagogies that can bolster personalized learning along with democratic engagement?

AI and Education

The roots of AI can be traced back to the mid-20th century when cybernetics emerged as a field of study. The Macy Conferences, held between 1946 and 1953, brought together leading thinkers from various disciplines to explore the potential of machines to mimic human intelligence (Bostrom, 2005; Von Foerster et al., 1953). These early pioneer computer scientists analyzed the constructs of cryptography, language models, and machine learning, laying the groundwork for the AI revolution we now witness.

The current push toward AI use is undeniably transforming the educational landscape, and its effects are already palpable. In Mustafa Suleyman's book, "The Coming Wave," (2023) he describes the ways in which computing power, cloud-based data storage, and algorithmic coding capacity have led to a massive development of AI technology. Suleyman argues that we are only at the beginning of this wave, a time perhaps analogous to the advent of the first smartphone, the iPhone, circa 2006. His bullish Silicon Valley-favoring analysis illustrates the urgency assigned

to AI transformation, highlighting how universities across the nation are grappling with the challenge of preparing students for a future where institutions believe AI will play an increasingly significant role.

In an economic context where university closures seem routinely to occur due to financial exigency and while many institutions are making what Brian Alexander (2013) calls the "queen sacrifice,"—shuttering humanities programs at the expense of prioritizing STEM—the risk grows of institutions mass-deploying AI out of efficiency and exigency. Such a scenario raises vital questions about the future of democratic approaches to higher education and the role of humanism in the learning experience.

One of "wicked" problem educators face is found amidst the dialectic between human autonomy and technology-augmented human learning. As AI tools become more sophisticated, there is a growing concern that our students will become overly reliant on them to complete the bulk of academic tasks. Typical student papers, essays, math exercises, and how we "do school" are easy to automate with GPT tools. Educators now carry a palpable and justified fear that these technologies will lead to a decline in critical-thinking and problem-solving skills among learners. Furthermore, the ever-present fear of students engaging in academic misconduct like cheating is even more apparent. Educators struggle with AI to find ways to strike a balance between leveraging the power of technology-based aiEDU as a cognitive and task assistant vs. an information processing cut-and-paste machine.

Looking beyond educators' justifiable fears, students' reliance on AI raises many problems: (1) AI tools co-opt ideas and feed them back to students in a perpetual "echo chamber." This invariably leads to a decline in critical thinking and problem-solving, both necessary for creative expression. (2) AI tools normalize a "copy–paste" culture and thus make plagiarism and cheating potentially routine. (3) GPT tools "hallucinate," in that since these tools are programmed to construct responses, their nature is to sound authoritative and be verbose; novice learners are at risk of taking AI's strength of voice as accurate information. In most cases, the constructed material is incorrect.

As educators grapple with the disruptive nature of AI, three critical problems in the context of teaching and learning loom large. These problems are not novel, though, indeed these problems and questions are fundamental and have been since the first communication and information technologies entered the classroom. They are: The problem of teacher replacement; (2) the problem of learner agency; and (3) the problem of cheating or academic dishonesty.

Problem 1: The Replacement Dilemma

In higher education, faculty like Lynn in our opening vignette wonder if AI will take their jobs and destroy their disciplines. Indeed, some fields

appear more vulnerable in this regard than others. Faculty in the Social Foundations of Education and the related humanities disciplines and subdisciplines seem somewhat adrift in a broader educational context already obsessed with prioritizing STEM-based knowledge. Again, this phenomenon is not new; it occurred at the beginning of the Cybernetic age at the end of World War II. Heims, in his history "The Cybernetic Group" (1991), describes educators grappling with technological change as an ongoing phenomenon in the Western intellectual tradition:

> It was a time when human sciences rather than humanistic studies were in the ascendancy, solving problems rather than reflecting on meanings. Normally the humanistic and scientific modes of understanding coexist, overlap, and are seen by the generalist as complementing each other. Yet the two modes also compete, and at certain times and places in Western intellectual history, one mode has been strongly favored over the other. In the period following the Second World War in the United States, universities increasingly emphasized the social and behavioral sciences at the expense of humanistic scholarship. (p. 4)

We are going through one such period again. Universities nationwide are making what Bryan Alexander, a self-described educational futurist, calls the "queen sacrifice," (Alexander, 2013), in that colleges and universities, particularly those facing financial challenges, eliminate seemingly vital programs and faculties—often in the humanities and social sciences—to cut costs and redirect resources towards STEM and business programs. These two areas are often perceived as more lucrative career paths and so immediately relevant to students coming through school during a technologically advancing age.

While it can offer advantages, integrating AI into educational settings also inadvertently casts a shadow over disciplines like the humanities and "in-between" fields like education and our field, Social Foundations of Education, fields often touted as less valuable to a university's bottom line. In my opening vignette, Lynn's apprehensions mirror educators' concerns who try to navigate the tightrope between embracing innovation and foregrounding tools that are subtly or openly being cast for faculty efficiency or curriculum streamlining.

Problem 2: The Augmentation Dilemma

Developments in machine learning, robotics, and digital computing are rapidly fusing human agency with technological augmentation in some ways to the point of co-dependency. The intertwining of technological advancements and human activities accentuates the vital role of critique, dialogue, and constructivist exploration in education. The philosophical and critical nature of Social Foundations of Education, rooted in philosophy, history, anthropology, and sociology, are necessary to explore these interactions.

The humanities, which delve into the meaning and value of human experience, provide a pivotal perspective for critically examining our relationship with technology. Sherry Turkle (2011), an expert on technology and society, poignantly notes, "Technology doesn't just do things for us. It does things to us, changing not just what we do but who we are" (p. 1). Her concern is founded in the public's profound reliance on digital devices and platforms, from mobile phones to learning applications, which have permeated every facet of our lives. Despite this dilemma, the rise of GPT use as educational and organizational "co-pilots" appears at present as a foregone conclusion.

Problem 3: The Integrity Impasse (Navigating the Ethical Ambiguity of AI Assistance)

AI-powered tools like ChatGPT have ushered in an era of unprecedented "academic assistance," blurring the line between legitimate educational support and outright cheating. The ease with which students can access AI-generated essays, code, and solutions presents a moral quandary for both learners and educators. While these tools can enhance research and streamline learning, misuse and over-reliance can undermine academic integrity and devalue the educational process. The challenge lies in distinguishing between the ethical utilization of AI as a learning aid and its exploitation as a shortcut for assignments and end-run around student thinking. The temptation to outsource one's cognitive efforts to machines also raises questions about the authenticity of student work and the accurate measurement and appraisal of academic accomplishment.

The dilemma introduced by the proliferation of AI therefore demands a reevaluation of traditional notions of authorship, originality, and the very purpose of education. This is especially important since educators are tasked with fostering a culture of academic integrity in an environment where the boundaries of permissible assistance are now constantly shifting. This dilemma is even more poignant since we in Social Foundations of Education are tasked with educating future educators.

Purpose and Significance

In my talk I've attempted to highlight the importance of strengthening Social Foundations of Education amidst the advancements in AI technology. Additionally, I have suggested we delve into how metaphors can aid in comprehending the effects of AI on education. Lastly, I aim to showcase how collaborating with AI to create narratives can foster innovative participation and analysis supporting Social Foundations of Education.

In an era where AI is being tightly intertwined with education, crafting one's educational philosophy becomes critical. Focusing on educational questions rooted in educational philosophy, history, anthropology, and sociology is work best understood through employing the dialogic.

Consequently, acknowledging and critiquing the dichotomy between technological progress and the nature of what it means to be human shapes the questions of our time. Moreover, examining this dichotomy becomes particularly challenging when most technological tools are rooted in structural arrangements directed by a small, elite number of billionaire, deterministic, technology entrepreneurs who often are rooted in narrow cultural and geographic contexts like Silicon Valley, a group whose framework is defined by walled-garden approaches to data management, and whose inventions largely rely on mass aggregating individual user data and digitizing collective knowledge from the global information commons.

Conclusion

Although educators grapple with the real risk AI poses, that of becoming unmoored from the educational humanities and traditional ways of learning and thinking, I argue we will have purposefully to become unmoored from an overreliance on technologies made, accessed, and utilized without thoughtfulness or humility. As education stands on the precipice of a potential new era, one where AI's influence seems inescapable, I call upon educators to grapple with necessary, profound questions. Will humanity become the "homo programmundus" (Illich, 2013) that of which Illich warns, shaped and potentially limited by the very tools we create? Or can we harness the power of AI to amplify our human potential while remaining mindful of the social, ethical, and even existential implications of our humanity?

In order to engage in dialogue around AI that moves democratic education forward, educators must delve into examining the very essence of what it means to be human, to learn, and to exist in a world increasingly intertwined with so-called intelligent machines. Such a dialogue requires educators to question, critique, and envision a future where technology is only accepted which serves our collective well-being and enriches, rather than diminishes, our humanity. In a nod to the phenomenon of technological disconnection, I leave you with a ChatGPT-created Haiku that centers on this question.

Unmoored: A Haiku on Education

Unmoored from the past,
Tech waves shape learning's new mast,
Seek balance; hold fast.

—ChatGPT 90%; B. Rodney 10%

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The 2023 Drake Lecture

Showing, Telling, and Teaching: Philosophically and Practically

William Lloyd Fridley,
Southeastern Oklahoma State University

It is an honor to give *The Drake Lecture* and I thank you all for attending.[1]

Origin, Agenda, and Objectives

Today's lecture was inspired by the time-tested educational activity *Show and Tell*,[2] but that venerable activity, per se, is not my focus. Using some basic tools of analytic philosophy and especially those pioneered by Israel Scheffler, I will delve into the activities of *showing* and *telling* in teaching. On occasion, I have stated that, "For teachers, showing is almost always better than telling." I would like to modify that claim to "is sometimes better," and will be less inclined to use it in the future.

For a few years I have been attracted to viewing teaching in terms of paired concepts such as *show and tell*, *hide and seek*, *lost and found*, *giving and receiving*, and the *pushmi-pullyu*.[3] This is my first formal presentation of what I hope will be a larger project of using these concept pairs in a two-fold way. First, as a tool to review, gather, and organize my previous work and readings. And second, these are simple, familiar pairings, rooted in our childhood and everyday experiences, that I hope can serve as conceptual lenses that are capable of generating insights that deepen our understanding of education and enhance our teaching.

I will also *show* and *tell* some ways that I have used analytic philosophy to teach Foundations of Education at the undergraduate level, and Philosophy of Education at the master's level. I will argue that the tools of analytic philosophy can be applied fruitfully across all fields/subjects represented by pre-service teachers and by practicing teachers, and that these tools are applicable to students at all age levels. One last point. I am looking for a name for these word pairs.[4] For that reason, the recent publication of a children's book by the Minister of Culture for The University of Texas, Matthew McConaughey, caught my attention. The beautifully illustrated book, entitled *Just Because*, consists of a series of paired verses that McConaughey calls *transactional couplets*.[5]

Analytic Philosophy via Israel Scheffler

Born in Britain, analytic philosophy focused on linguistic analysis and the careful assessment of arguments. Known as the "linguistic turn," analytic philosophy became the dominant mode of doing philosophy in Britain and North America during the first third of the of the twentieth century. After the end of World War II, the techniques of analytic philosophy inundated teacher's colleges and schools of education, becoming the reigning approach to "doing" philosophy of education. The premier philosopher of education in North America was Israel Scheffler (1923–2014). His entire 40-year academic career was at Harvard, where he had dual appointments in Philosophy of Science and Philosophy of Education.[6] In his 1973 collection of essays, *Reason and Teaching*, Scheffler makes the following point about the book's audience:

> The analyses and interpretations it offers, will, I hope, be of interest not only to educational theorists and philosophers but also to thoughtful educators and the reflective reader. Though its method and approach are philosophical, in a broad sense of that word, it presupposes no technical background in philosophy.[7]

Broad access and ease of application led some to label analytic philosophy as "ordinary language philosophy." My experiences of introducing students to analytic philosophy confirm Scheffler's claim. While few students have any significant background in philosophy, I have found that most of my students can grasp (with a stretch) and apply the tools and concepts of analytic philosophy. With practice, many can apply the tools with skill and insight and, at times, in a way that is original, funny, and moving.

Showing and Telling in Two Vignettes

Showing

Showing usually involves seeing or an optical metaphor. Can we be shown things with our eyes closed? *Hello darkness my old friend*.[8] Can we show things to students who are unsighted? Yes.[9] Thank you, Anne Sullivan (1836—1936). Can the deaf be told something and understand it? Yes. And, at the same time, we know there are people who can hear but aren't listening. This talk of seeing and hearing reminds me of the learning-styles enthusiasts, and their favorite theoretical schema known by the acronym VAK. They posit that there are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/tactile learners.[10] According to this schema, Helen Keller (1880–1968) is, by default, a kinesthetic/tactile learner. Carolyn and I wrote a piece that appears in *JoPHE 60* entitled "Some Problems and Peculiarities with the *Learning Styles*: Rhetoric and Practice."[11] We pulled our punches in the title. In the concluding paragraph we explain what good teachers do, and we render a verdict that VAKing has little to contribute to the project of good teaching.[12] We learn through different senses at different times—granted. And good teachers try to engage the range of senses with a sensitivity to

what is appropriate for the subject matter, and the students' developmental level. That is a hallmark of holistic teaching with the intent of integrating our senses, our body, our emotions, and mind.

Shema! (that is Hebrew for "Listen up!"). No more talk about visual learners—let's look at something beautiful. I'll hear no more about auditory learners—let's listen to some soulful music. *Show and Tell* by Al Wilson will do, because "it's a game we play when I want to say, 'I love you'."[13] Stop it with the kinesthetic/tactile learners—we want to feel something that moves us. Hell—let's dance to *Show and Tell*. If you don't care to dance, you may want to clap your hands, stomp your feet, or snap your fingers. That would be great! 4-H y'all—head, heart, hands, and health.[14]

Telling

How do you do that? I take that question as a great compliment. The question "would you show me how to do that?" is different. That is, of course, a big part of what teachers do. Consider *The Karate Kid*. Mr. Miyagi, would you teach me karate? *Oh, no, Daniel-san*. But I really want to learn karate. *Okay, let's start with this: wax on, wax off*. But I want to learn karate, not how to wax cars. I will not be a spoiler for what happened in that 1984 film.[15] An idea for your consideration: *What we ask of someone, or something (including ourselves) will be proportional to our estimate of their ability to deliver*. A command: "Show me your work!" An attractive request: "Would you show me what you are working on? I am really curious to see your progress on the essay." Questions almost always work better than commands. *You see, Billy, it's not so much* what *you are saying as it is* how *you say it. Got it. By the way, mom, could you tell me again about the best way to catch flies?*

There are also times when even well-intentioned questions can meet resistance. Several writers and artists, including the late David Foster Wallace (1962–2008)[16] and Stephen King have identified their least favorite question: *Would you tell us where you get your ideas?* I love King's response, "I really don't know, and if I did know, do you think I would tell you?"[17]

Is Showing Better Than Telling?

Israel Sheffler identifies the having and giving of reasons as the hallmark of authentic teaching. "To teach, in the standard sense, is at some point at least to submit oneself to the understanding and independent judgment of the pupil, to his demand for reasons, to his sense of what constitutes an adequate explanation."[18] Teachers must have reasons for their claims and then submit their claims to the rational judgment of the students. Scheffler notes that not every means to get someone to conform to a norm constitutes teaching (e.g., "threats, hypnosis, bribery, drugs, lies, suggestion, and open force").[19] A more-subtle distinction Scheffler makes is between teaching and telling. In Scheffler's account, it is once again the *reasons* component that sets the concepts and practices apart. Simply telling students *such and such is the case* without rational support and without

allowing students the opportunity to question or ascertain the reasons for the teacher's claim is not worthy of the honorific title of *teaching*.[20] Scheffler uses *telling* as shorthand for any mode of instruction, be it showing, presenting, or giving a handout. He does not make a distinction between *showing* and *telling*.

The preferability of showing versus telling depends on a host of considerations, including audience, purpose, subject matter, and the operative pedagogical repertoire of the teacher. There is significant overlap between the terms, and it is often difficult to identify discrete acts of showing without telling (perhaps a mime). Examples of telling without showing, however, are abundant, and these examples often expose cases of pedagogy that could use some improvement. A picture is worth a thousand words, and we can also benefit from being told (or better yet, finding out) the photo's context and backstory.

I will offer two broad examples of where showing *is* better than telling. First, when telling relies on commands and orders. Telling students what to do can be a futile and frustrating task, often leading to power struggles, disengagement, and resistance. In the struggle to enforce commands, orders, and rules, teachers may, in some cases, escalate the use of coercive means to ensure compliance. When a student refuses to comply with a teacher's dictate—especially if the imperative is issued publicly—the teacher is faced with the inescapable question, "what now?"[21] A tip: asking and requesting rather than commanding and telling students what to do will typically work better and spare a teacher from headaches and conflicts. A second example that is worthy of mention is when *telling* is "in word only" and we are not doers of the word. Metaphorically, we are all talk and no walk.[22]

Drop-the-Mic Example of Telling

I would like to conclude this section of the lecture with a humorous video depiction of a drop-the-mic example of telling. A commercial for bundling State Farm Insurance policies features Jake from State Farm and Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes addressing players, coaches, and aides in the locker room. Jake exhorts the group to, "In one word: bundle home and auto." A shirtless, but shoulder pad-wearing player with one knee on the floor counts off the words with his fingers and exclaims "but that is four words." To which Mahomes wryly interjects, "not if you bundle!" The player's eyes grow wide, and he begins to tremor and quake as if the profundity of the realization has triggered an electric current coursing through his body. He falls back, in an apoplectic fit. The locker room erupts in a riotous celebration of spraying champagne, rending uniforms, and intense guttural shouts of manic exhilaration.[23]

Education and Language Analysis

In *Brave New World Revisited* (1958), Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) engages in a "real-world" investigation to determine the degree to which

the social control mechanisms and language manipulation portrayed in *Brave New World* (1932) have infiltrated society, chiefly through the rhetoric and actions of politicians, bureaucrats, and advertisers. He finds the abuse of language for exploitive ends to be pervasive, yet tractable, primarily through an education that emphasizes a critical analysis of language.[24]

> An education for freedom (and for the love and intelligence which are at once the conditions and the results of freedom) must be, among other things, an education in the proper uses of language. For the last two or three generations philosophers have devoted a great deal of time and thought to the analysis of symbols and the meaning of meaning…. Suffice it to say that all the intellectual materials for a sound education in the proper use of language—and education on every level from the kindergarten to the postgraduate school—are now available.[25]

Huxley's eloquent statement of the purpose of education (for freedom) is achievable, Huxley argues, through an education grounded in the proper uses of language. Moreover, the tools to implement this approach are accessible and applicable at every level of schooling. While not explicitly labelling it as such, Huxley is referencing the work and spirit of analytic philosophy. Drawing from the analytic tradition, I stipulate in my teaching that there are two basic activities in philosophical thinking: clarification and justification.

Clarification

The task of clarification is concerned with the question "What do you mean?" We are attempting to determine the relation of language to meaning. When clarifying, we seek to make clear our own use of language, as well as attempting to attain a clear understanding of the statements and claims of others. Educational discourse is rife with *vague* (a qualitative distinction about a lack of clarity in the borders of application for a word) and *ambiguous* (a quantitative distinction, a word has two or more uses) concepts that beg for clarification: *needs*, *interests*, *freedom*, *discipline*, *good student*, *at-risk student*, *diversity*, *multicultural*, *indoctrination*, and *Critical Race Theory*.[26]

Clarification is not simply supplying a dictionary definition, though those are sometimes helpful. Clarification can also involve charting and mapping concepts, giving explanations, providing examples, counterexamples, and illustrations, making comparisons (this is like that in this way) and distinctions (it is different from that in this way). And children, as Huxley claims, can engage in these activities fruitfully and enjoyably. For example, engaging in a comparison between the stories of *The Three Little Pigs* and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (How are they alike? How are they different?). Another example of a popular and accessible activity for children is the classic *Sesame Street* song segment *One of These is Not Like the Others*. The song provides a pleasant earworm to enliven the task of making distinctions and identifying similarities.[27]

Justification

Justification poses the question, "How do you know?" This is a call for reasons, evidence, and arguments to support or justify a given statement or claim that involves evaluative judgment.[28] On matters of evaluative judgment, *equally reasonable and informed people may disagree. That does not mean that all evaluative judgments are equally reasonable*. This dictum is a hedge against relativism, a nudge toward epistemic humility, and a claim that some judgments can be reasonably demonstrated to be better than others. For example, consider the late film critics Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert and their television show, *At the Movies*.[29] While they were equally reasonable and informed critics, they would at times arrive at opposite appraisals of a given film, with one issuing a thumbs up and the other a thumbs down.

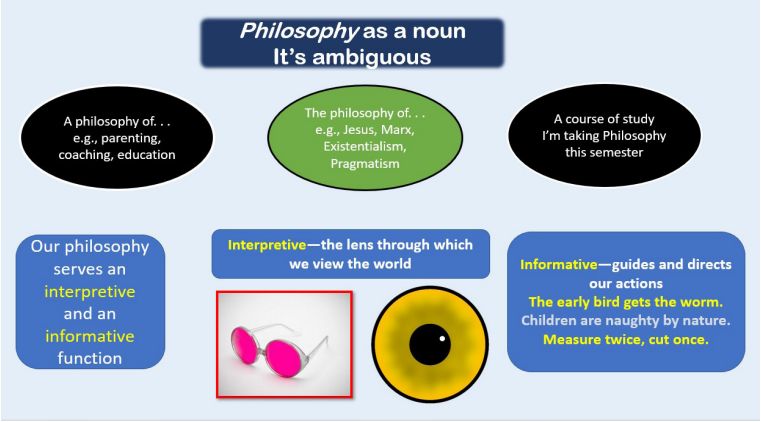
Note that the reasons we use to justify our evaluations need to be relevant and appropriate. If, to use a hypothetical example, Siskel and Ebert explain that their two thumbs-down reviews of Oliver Stone's 1991 *JFK* are given because the film "was not funny, did not have a strong romantic element, and Kevin Costner had no RBIs," we would think their review was a joke. *JFK* was not a romcom, and RBIs are a baseball statistic.

Clarification, Justification, and Personal Philosophies

Clarification, evaluation, and justification serve as the structure and format for most assignments in my classes. The structure is applicable to a wide variety of fields, and texts. These tasks engage students in critical thinking, align with higher-order instructional objectives, and lend themselves well to focused assessment with the development of clear assessment rubrics. This structure is also foundational to many of my lectures. I have included a slide that I use to clarify the uses of the concept *philosophy* as a noun. We speak of *having* a philosophy (e.g., of education) that consists of a set of ideas, beliefs, precepts, and metaphoric conceptions that functions as both an interpretive lens through which we view the world, and as a foundation or platform that informs and guides our practice.

To illustrate, consider a simplistic rendering of two extreme views of human nature. The first is that people are basically good, are more likely to help than to hurt, and are worthy of our trust and affection. Up with people! Those who hold these beliefs are said to be "looking at the world through rose-colored glasses." On the other hand is the view that people are naughty by nature, evil, wicked, mean, and nasty. Watch your back because *a smile is just a frown turned upside down*.[30] Concerning this perspective, Alexander Pope (1688–1744) comments that "all is yellow to the jaundiced eye."[31] Adherence to this belief will typically play out in educational practice with an approach to classroom discipline in which rules are rigidly set and strictly enforced. Since children are "naughty by nature," teachers must keep them under control. After all, "if you give them an inch, they'll take a mile." Teachers who subscribe to the optimistic view of human nature will

usually adopt a less-stringent disciplinary approach and be inclined to allow students a greater degree of freedom.



An instructional slide clarifying philosophy and explaining the two-fold function of a philosophy: interpretive and informative.

Metaphors

For my classes, I begin with a simple and broad working definition: *a metaphor is a figurative use of language that suggests a comparison between two things*. Put simply, *figurative* means *not literal*. This gets confused sometimes, given the popular penchant for using *literal* as an intensifier of sorts. For example, I was teaching a class on the third floor of the Russell building when a student climbed the steps and came into the classroom breathing heavily. "I took the steps," she panted, "and it literally killed me." Okay. Glad you made it to class. As indicated in our definition, metaphors suggest a comparison between two things. The comparison is one of analogy. In the metaphoric phrase "going out on a limb," for instance, the comparison or analogy is between taking a chance and climbing out on a tree limb.

Neil Postman, Language, and Metaphors

Neil Postman (1931–2003), featured in my *2022 SoPHE Presidential Address*, was a fervent advocate of an education that prepares students to be adept at using language.[32] A facility with definitions, questions, and metaphors is foundational to this task. Postman makes the case that metaphors are ubiquitous and foundational in all fields and disciplines. He laments the lack of serious consideration of metaphors in the field of education, and he claims that educators are therefore depriving students of the opportunity to confront the field's foundational assumptions about teaching, learning, and schooling. Metaphors, Postman explains, are not just ornamental, they are "organs of perception." Through metaphors "we

see things as one thing or another," and our metaphors typically suggest prescriptive action. For example, "if we view the mind as a muscle, it will need exercise. If the mind is a dark cavern, it will need illuminating."[33]

Metaphor Analysis

Philosophers and linguists have developed many ways to analyze and evaluate metaphors. I use a simple four-step method of analyzing metaphors that I adapted from Israel Scheffler's *The Language of Education*.[34] For illustrative purposes, I use the potter/clay metaphor.

1. *Identify what is being compared in the metaphor*. This is the easy part. In our working example the teacher is compared to a potter and the student is compared to clay.
2. *Identify strengths of the metaphor*. This is the step in which we begin utilizing our critical thinking abilities. We must don our metaphorical thinking caps and imaginatively "think on our feet" as we perform this step. While there are no predetermined correct answers, there may be answers that are not so good. The strengths of the metaphor are ways in which the metaphor works, the comparison fits, with insights revealed into the similarities of the things compared. To the degree the metaphor works or fits, it is "apt." Some possible strengths of this metaphor include, in both cases there is molding and shaping toward a goal or objective, and both the potter and teacher employ specialized knowledge, skills, and dispositions (care for their work and attention to detail) in their work.
3. *Identify the weaknesses of the metaphor*. For this step we identify ways in which the comparison does not fit, or the metaphor does not work. Any metaphor, when taken so far, will suffer an "analogical breakdown" where the analogy or comparison no longer holds. Weaknesses of the potter/clay metaphor include, when the potter completes a given project it is a finished product, whereas the growth and learning of the student is a continuous process. While the potter is the sole shaping influence on the clay, students have multiple shaping influences in addition to the teacher. The clay is a passive recipient of the potter's action, whereas students participate and act to further their growth and development.
4. *Suggest an alternative metaphor*. For this step, we suggest an alternative metaphor for the same phenomena

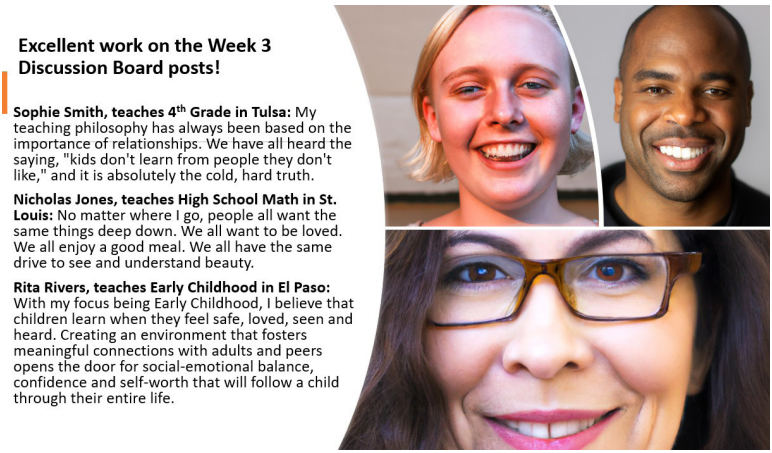
> (in this case the teacher and student relationship). The careful consideration and analysis of a variety of metaphoric conceptions can help us to broaden and deepen our cognitive perspective, to clarify our personal philosophy of education, and to lend direction and purpose to our teaching. The universal appeal of metaphors and the simplicity of thinking about (analyzing) metaphors transcends academic subject, age, and grade-level. Young people tend to like working and playing with metaphors.[35]

What Students Like and Showing Their Work

The major, semester-long project for my undergraduate Foundations students is to construct a personal philosophy of education. The philosophy has three increments, with peer editing at each stage. For each of seven topics, students are asked to clarify their claims and terms, and to provide justifications for their positions using class material, in paragraphs of 170 to 200 words. I liken the structure of the project, metaphorically, to the structure of a house. Their job is to furnish, decorate, and landscape the house. When they complete the project, I explain, I hope to tell them, "I like what you have done with the place."

In both the personal philosophy of education, and in various exercises with graduate students, the topic of Students is considered through a few prompting questions, such as *what do students like*? I realize that not everybody likes the same thing. I am reminded of the late comedian Mitch Hedberg's (1968–2005) line: "They say you can't please all the people all the time, and last night all those people were at my gig."[36] I believe, though, that there are things that most, if not all students enjoy. They like to be listened to and to be heard. They like to be taken seriously. They like to succeed. They like to feel welcomed, to be included, and to be part of the team. They like to have fun.

A technique I have used increasingly over the years to connect with students in a personalized way is to "show off" my students' good work to the rest of the class. The slide that follows is an example of how I do this. The "real time" reactions of students and their course survey comments indicate that this is a winning technique. A colleague once told me that "Our light shines brightest when we shine it on others."[37] Indeed. I also heard from an esteemed high-school biology teacher about his practice of setting up students for success, ideally in front of their peers.[38] Got it. If I see there are students who are not doing so well and haven't received a shout out, I will look for something in their work that I can put in the best light that honesty will allow and share that with the class. Having our work noticed, commended, and mentioned forges a meaningful connection, and often ignites in students a validation of their good work, and a desire to do more good work in the future.



Showing off students' good work. Photos (Dall-E) and names have been changed.

Student Teaching and the Drum Major

As a Social Studies Education major at The Ohio State University, I did my student teaching at an alternative, progressive high school in Worthington, Ohio (an affluent suburb of Columbus). I was able to design my courses: Personalities in World History, and Popular Music and American Society. It was a great experience. One of my fellow student teachers was a young man who just happened to be the drum major for The Ohio State University marching band. The best damn band in the land![39]

The drum major performed at a school assembly in the gym, and it was wonderful. I sat on the gym floor with the students. A student, sitting to my left, nudged me and leaned in, "I'd like to be able to do something like that." Yeah, me too. That student was expressing a universal human desire: to be able to do something well, with skill and precision, with passion and style, and to be recognized and appreciated for bringing some pleasure and enjoyment to people's lives. Teaching can be that. It can be our art, our craft, our jam. With teaching we can bring all our knowledge, all our skills, and all our experiences to bear on our work. We can put our heart and soul into it, and you can do something like that!

Endnotes

1 The text of the lecture, for the most part, follows what I presented at the conference. Supplementary material and issues addressed in the Q&A following the presentation are included in the endnotes.

2 *Wikipedia*, "Show and tell," last modified December 31, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Show_and_tell

[3] The pushmi-pullyu is introduced in the film *Dr. Dolittle* (1967) as a two-headed llama, with a head at each end of the creature, pointed in opposite directions. *Wikipedia*, "List of *Dr. Dolittle* characters," last modified September 13, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Doctor_Dolittle_characters

[4] I am leaning toward the *phrase generative concept pairs*.

[5] An example of a transactional couplet: "Just because you can pull it off, doesn't mean that you should do it." Matthew McConaughy, illustrated by Renee Kurilla, *Just Because* (New York: Viking, 2023).

[6] The information on analytic philosophy of education (APE) and Israel Scheffler is drawn from Section 3, Analytic Philosophy of Education and Its Influence, in Harvey Siegel, "Philosophy of Education," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition, first published Spring, 2008), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/education-philosophy. I want to thank John Covaleskie for his "gentle pushback" during the Q&A when he noted that APE and its leading thinkers were white men, most now dead. Agreed. And John's apt prompt allows me to fill some gaps in the lecture and to expand on a few things. First, the status and influence of APE waned during the 1980s and continued to decline through the 1990s, viewed by some as simply a curious relic. The decline of APE in the academy coincided with objections from a variety of philosophical perspectives including postmodernists, post-structuralists, and feminists. Criticisms of APE included challenges to its basic assumptions of a fixed and secure logical order to the world, its pretenses of disinterested neutrality and mere description, and its strict adherence to linguistic analysis and "failure to recognize culture, history, and particularity" [Richard Pratte, Philosophy of Education: Two Traditions (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, Limited, 1992), x–xi]. John and I also reminded each other that we both completed our doctoral studies with analytic philosophers, John at Syracuse with Thomas F. Green (1927–2006) and I with Gerald Reagan (1932–2022) and Richard Pratte (1929–2021) at Ohio State. Jerry Reagan was my nominal advisor, and Dick Pratte guided my dissertation while he was retired; for which I will be eternally grateful. I was his last doctoral student at Ohio State. See, "Richard Pratte Obituary" (*Legacy.com*, *The Columbus Dispatch*, June 11, 2021), https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/dispatch/name/richard-pratte-obituary?id=10195069, and "Gerald M. Reagan Obituary" (*Legacy.com*, March 17, 2022), https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/gerald-reagan-obituary?id=33665313

[7] Israel Scheffler, *Reason and Teaching* (New York: Routledge Revivals, 1973), 4.

[8] Paul Simon explains that this opening line to *The Sound of Silence* (1964) was written in his parents' bathroom, where he would play his guitar with the lights out for privacy and with the water running to enhance the splendid acoustics in the tiled room. Tony Schwartz, "*Playboy* Interview, Paul Simon Candid Conversation" *Playboy* 31, no. 2 (February 1984): 49–51, 162–167.

[9] Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (1902) (New York: Dell Publishing, 1961). For a thorough account of Anne and Helen's nearly fifty-year relationship, see Joseph P. Lash, *Helen and Teacher: The Story of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan Macy* (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley Publishing, 1980).

[10] Shirley Franklin, "VAKing Out Learning Styles—Why the Notion of 'Learning Styles' Is Unhelpful to Teachers," *Education* 34, no. 1 (2006): 81–87.

[11] William Lloyd Fridley and Carolyn Althoff Fridley, "Some Problems and Peculiarities with the Learning Styles Rhetoric and Practice," *Journal of Philosophy and History of Education* 60 (2010): 21–27.

[12] Ibid., 26.

[13] Jerry Fuller, *Show and Tell*, performed by Al Wilson, 1973.

[14] I often cite the youth organization 4-H's name and motto as an example of holistic education. I hold that there are four essential characteristics of good teaching: It is interactive, personalized (when possible), holistic, and it promotes critical thinking.

[15] *The Karate Kid*, directed by John G. Avildsen (Columbia Pictures, 1984).

[16] See David Foster Wallace as portrayed by Jason Segel in *The End of the Tour*, directed by James Ponsholt (Anonymous Content, 2015).

[17] Outstanding Screenplays, "10 Writing Tips from Stephen King for Writers and Screenwriters," *YouTube*, 12:51 (starting at 11:11), October 6, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6SKj_eiY9k

[18] Israel Scheffler, *The Language of Education* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, Limited, 1960), 57.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 76–101. The chapter "Teaching and Telling" also introduces the concept of *teaching in the task intent sense* in which someone engages in teaching with the intent that learning takes. There is no guarantee that learning will "take" and teaching in the *task intent* sense does not speak to the outcome or results of the teaching. This is paired with the concept of *teaching in the task achievement sense* which refers to the outcome of the teaching which may be a success (learning is achieved) or it may not be a success (learning is not achieved). To illustrate, allow me to provide an example that comes from a comic strip I saw years ago. Joe says, "I taught my dog Spike how to whistle." Johnny says, "I

don't hear him whistling." Joe concludes, "I said I taught him. I didn't say he learned it."

[21] For examples of tools and methods of classroom management and moral education that do not rely on commands and orders, see William L. Fridley, "First, Second, and Third Person in Moral Education and Classroom Management," *Philosophical Studies in Education* 34 (2003): 55–65. And Carolyn Buttner and William L. Fridley, "WWJD—What Would Jim Do? A Comparison of James Dobson's and Jim Fay's Philosophies of Parenting," *Philosophical Studies in Education* 38 (2007): 131–140.

[22] Consider this example, where Jesus asked his disciples, "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted?' 'The first,' they answered" (Matthew 21:28–31, NIV).

[23] State Farm Insurance, "Bundle Mantra (feat. Patrick Mahomes) | State Farm® Commercial," *YouTube*, :30, September 7, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVK49yWAnfg. I am **telling** the reader about a video that I **showed** at the conference to illustrate an exemplary example of **telling**. The irony is not lost on me, but it was fun to write!

[24] Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited* (New York: Perennial Library/Harper, 1989/1958).

[25] Ibid., 110. Along these lines, I would like to commend those in the Philosophy for Children movement for their fine work over decades, promoting philosophical thinking for children. Michael Pritchard, "Philosophy for Children," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/children/

[26] For an example of a philosophy of education text structured around analyses of educational concepts and their normative dimensions, see John H. Chambers, *The Achievement of Education: An Examination of Key Concepts in Educational Practice* (New York: University Press of America, 1983).

[27] Sesame Street, "Sesame Street: One of These Things," *YouTube*, :29, July 16, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6b0ftfKFEJg

[28] Assessing deductive syllogisms and identifying informal logical fallacies have long been basic tools to analyze and evaluate claims and arguments. For the application of these and other tools of justification, see "Justificatory Strategies of Clear Thinking" in Richard Pratte, *Philosophy of Education: Two Traditions* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, Limited, 1992), 63–88.

[29] *Wikipedia*, "*At the Movies* (1982 TV program)," last modified December 19, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/At_the_Movies_(1982_TV_program)

[30] Leon Huff, Gene McFadden, and John Whitehead, "Back Stabbers," performed by the O'Jays, *Back Stabbers*, 1972.

[31] Susan Ratcliffe, ed., *Oxford Essential Quotations*, 4th ed. (Oxford University Press, Online Edition, 2016), sourced from *An Essay on Criticism* (1711) l, 558, https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/

[32] William Lloyd Fridley, "The End of Education and the Existential Grand Canyon," *Journal of Philosophy and History of Education* 73 (2023): xxxiii–xliv.

[33] Postman offers a narrative (*a god*) intended to give schooling meaning and purpose by focusing on the power of language, which he calls "The Word Weavers/The World Makers." Neil Postman, *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 174.

[34] Scheffler, *Language*, 42–59.

[35] For starters, I recommend the children's books written and illustrated by Fred Gwynne (1926–1993), who also played Herman Munster on the television show *The Munsters*. The books feature "literal" drawings of metaphoric phrases. For example, a *coat of arms* is illustrated as a coat with a dozen arm sleeves. See *The King Who Rained* (1970), and *A Chocolate Moose for Dinner* (1988).

[36] Wear Haha, "Mitch Hedberg: Can't Please All the People at Once Joke," *YouTube*, :12, October 12, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cx_Hg96wbRc. For the full "Mitch Hedberg Special" (1999) on *Comedy Central Presents*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3QLx

[37] My colleague Tom Harvey was a former Texas school administrator. For a hilarious article on one of Tom's harrowing experiences, see Thomas W. Harvey, "Hog Heaven: A Test of Faith," *The School Administrator* 57, no. 10 (2000): 34–38.

[38] Jon Hazell is a long-time Biology teacher at Durant (OK) ISD and was named as the Oklahoma Teacher of the Year in 2017. See, Oklahoma Department of Education, "ShapED My Life—Jon Hazell, 2017 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year," *YouTube*, 1:59, April 12, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4efhP0HpgC0

[39] Bruce Hart was the OSU Drum Major from 1982–1983. *The Ohio State University*, "The Ohio State University Marching and Athletic Bands," accessed January 5, 2024, https://tbdbitl.osu.edu/marching-band/drum-major/biographies/hart-1982. To view the band performing

the incomparable *Script Ohio*, with Bruce Hart leading the charge, see GenSixFour, "*Script Ohio* with Woody Hayes Dotting the 'I'—1983—The Ohio State Marching Band," *YouTube*, 3:21, August 17, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jApQoH2KeGM

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Teaching as Eudaimonism: Aristotle's Moral Virtues, Intellectual Virtues, and the Phronetic Bond

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Introduction

Aristotle (335 B.C.E./1941) contends moral virtue establishes the good or bad ends humans seek. In addition to naming, defining, and explaining nine moral virtues, Aristotle (335 B.C.E./1941) identifies and defines five intellectual virtues in *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*), Book VI. Because Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) connects the moral with the intellectual through *phronesis*, a connection ideally suited to educating the young, I focus on the intellectual virtue he names, *phronesis*, and defines as "a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good and bad" (1140b5). For Aristotle, the person who desires "proper" or moral ends and enacts those ends through the intellectual virtue, *phronesis*, attains happiness or human flourishing: *eudaimonia* (Roche, 2014). Shouldn't society aim to form moral human beings who flourish individually and in community? Surprisingly, school administrators, curriculum directors, and teachers, consciously or not, often ignore, never consider, or have forgotten that educators form their students into a particular kind of human being. Although such concerns as following state mandates and ensuring students meet performance standards often eclipse teachers' forming students into moral, thriving human beings, when teachers reason well regarding good or bad ends and desire those good ends when teaching, teachers and their students achieve the *eudaimonia* (happiness, human flourishing, the good life) about which Aristotle (335 B.C.E./1941) writes.

I claim Aristotle's (335 B.C.E./1941) concept, *phronesis* (practical wisdom), and more broadly *eudaimonism*, addresses the teacher's knowing *how* while recovering teaching's virtue-oriented, humanistic purpose to form students into moral human beings who use their intelligence and learning to better themselves and society toward human flourishing. I therefore advocate that educators should consider embracing, promoting, and practicing the means to *eudaimonism*, thereby reviving the teaching profession and returning it to a meaningful, humanistic endeavor. To ground my claim and advocacy, I begin by defining and explaining Aristotle's

concept, *eudaimonia*. Next, I turn to Aristotle's moral virtues, habit, and the mean before touching upon his five intellectual virtues, focusing specifically on *phronesis*, distinguishing phronetic knowledge from the other intellectual virtues. I explain the relation Aristotle draws between *phronesis* and the moral virtues and between *phronesis* and the other four intellectual virtues. Having provided Aristotle's "virtue ethics" as foundation, I argue for the current need to infuse teaching with moral purposes. I then position *eudaimonia* within contemporary teaching practice and consider in-service and pre-service teachers' growing, developing, and practicing *phronesis*. I conclude by considering how teachers' practicing Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonism* humanizes, ennobles, and gives moral purpose to the teaching profession.

Aristotle's Eudaimonia

In *NE*, Book I (335 B.C.E./1941), Aristotle names, defines, and explains *eudaimonia*, a concept one translates to mean human flourishing or happiness, a "good": "Every act and every inquiry, and similarly every action and purpose, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim" (1094a1–5). Known as the "function argument," to reach the good, the human person must fulfill his/her function (*ergon*) (Michaelides, 2020; Salem, 2010). Aristotle (335 B.C.E./1941) posits a person's performing his/her function requires the full capacity of his/her reasoning which includes not only reflection but deliberation and selection (Michaelides, 2020). Cultivating virtuous activity leads one toward *eudaimonia* (Hirji, 2018; Michaelides, 2020), for one only realizes *eudaimonia* by acting virtuously (1098a15–19; 1177b5–9). Indeed, *eudaimonia* "is an activity of soul in accordance with perfect virtue" (1102a5), a "state of being well and doing well in being well" (MacIntyre, 1982, p. 148).

Aristotle's Moral Virtues, Habit, and the Mean

In *NE*, Book II (335 B.C.E./1941), Aristotle identifies two kinds of virtue: moral virtue and intellectual virtue. Moral virtues pertain to emotion and desire, shaping one's appetitive desires, wants, and character through reason, leading to agents' seeking right courses of action and emotive responses (Polansky, 2014). The mean between two extremes, moral virtues include courage, temperance, liberality, magnificence, magnanimity or great souledness, proper ambition or proper pride, patience or good temper, truthfulness, wittiness, friendliness, modesty, and righteous indignation. One develops moral virtue through habit (1103a15–17), for "we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts" (1103b). While one habituates oneself to the moral virtues, one should not think of habit as mindless routine. Although one translates the word Aristotle uses for moral virtue, *hexis*, into Latin as *habitus*, which in English translates to "habit," Aristotle uses *hexis* to represent the soul's active, ready condition to act deliberately and for its own sake (Sachs, n.d.). The so-called habit of moral virtue is actually the cognitive understanding

and attentiveness to know *when* and *how* to achieve the virtues. In other words, enacting the virtues depends upon each individual's disposition. One must possess knowledge, be able to choose a given act for its own sake, and have a solid and strong character from which the act proceeds (1105a30).

Aristotle (335 B.C.E./1941) defines virtue as a "state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean [the golden mean], i.e., the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it" (1107a).[1] One's situation tempers one's anger, for example. Although a pre-determined level of anger does not exist because one situation may demand more anger than another, if rationality does not temper one's anger, that anger can only occur as excess or deficit. Using art as an analogy for how the mean reflects beauty, Aristotle claims when one observes a great work, nothing excessive or defective exists. Similarly, virtue does not live in excess or defect but in an intermediate or balanced state, the golden mean (1106b10–15). Aristotle offers several examples of virtues emanating from the mean. Courage is the mean between the excess of confidence and the defect of fear; temperance is the mean between the excess of self-indulgence and defect of insensibility; and proper pride is the mean between the excess of empty vanity and defect of undue humility (1107b5–25). The man of practical wisdom judges which action is most appropriate for a specific situation (Russell, 2014). Aristotle maintains the agent's reaching the virtues in this way will "feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way" (1106b20). While hitting the mark, choosing the good, and selecting wholeness (vs. defect) is limited and difficult (1106b30), ways to miss the mark, choose excess, or select defect are limitless. Difficulty hitting the mark reflects the importance of virtue's being a disposition or character-based quality one achieves over time through reflection and practice; that is, by applying the rational principle (*orthos logos*).

While realizing Aristotle's moral virtues for oneself seems a daunting task, since the human person must develop proper habits and possess the capacity to deliberate over each situation, one could argue that acting virtuously offers clarity and freedom in both choosing the proper virtue and deliberating on how to attain it.

> Once the earliest habits are neutralized, our desires are disentangled from the pressure for immediate gratification, we are calm enough to think, and most important, we can see what is in front of us in all its possibility. The mean state here is not a point on a dial that we need to fiddle up and down; it is a clearing in the midst of pleasures and pains that lets us judge what seems most truly pleasant and painful. (Sachs, n.d., n.p.)

Aristotle indeed stipulates the virtuous person must deliberate and reason effectively (Kraut, 2022), think and deliberate over the right course

of action for a given virtuous end. The person sees a "clearing" in the specific situation based on what he/she knows and has experienced as opposed anxiously to wonder what the right course of action should be or acquiescing to a preconceived, static, moral standard.

Aristotles's Intellectual Virtues, Phronesis, and the Phronetic Bond

Although Aristotle does not comprehensively explain the intellectual virtues until Book VI, he identifies five intellectual virtues: *phronesis* (practical wisdom or prudence), *episteme* (scientific knowledge), *techné* (art, artistry, craftsmanship), *nous* (intuitive reason or understanding), and *sophia* (philosophic wisdom). Intellectual virtues are those of the rational soul (Solopova, 2016) and therefore require one's reasoning and thinking skills rather than one's emotions and desires. Associated with action, *phronesis* (practical wisdom, prudence) concerns human affairs and variable, uncertain, particular knowledge (1139b15–19; Eisner, 2002; Stenberg & Maaranen, 2020). The practical or phronetic person may have more experience than intellectual knowledge vs. having more intellectual knowledge than experience. A person may know intellectually *about* leaner and healthier meats, but without having experience consuming them, that person may also not have experienced the positive health results emerging from eating lean over fatty meats. The person having consumed lean meats over time would likely experience positive health from having eaten lean meats rather than fatty ones (1141b15–20). As the lean meat example demonstrates, *phronesis* concerns particulars and one's deliberating over these particulars. Significantly, Aristotle conceptualizes *phronesis* as the process by which human persons attain moral virtue, for while moral virtue informs humans about the right end, *phronesis* or "practical wisdom makes…[one] take the right means" (1144a5–10) to that end.

In contrast to *phronesis*, *episteme* (scientific knowledge) involves demonstrating first principles or such invariables (1140b) as a mathematical equation or the Pythagorean theorem (Vontz & Goodson, 2020) "to know why." Unlike *phronesis* whose action, good action, is an end in and of itself (1140b5–10), the intellectual virtue, *techné*, delineates "know how" that, when applied, results in producing an object or accomplishing an end. Although like *episteme* with *teché* one must know principles or methods, *teché*'s aim is not disinterested understanding but making or doing toward producing a human-created product Aristotle asserts will necessarily imperfectly represent nature. The intellectual virtue, *nous* (intuitive reason or understanding), builds upon *episteme*'s reliance on first principles. Together *nous* and *episteme* become *sophia* (philosophical wisdom), things greatest and most noble by nature. While *phronesis* concerns human affairs (1141b) and what is good for human beings (1143b20–25), *sophia* is the complete form of knowledge (1141a15), therefore superior to *phronesis*, and involves the highest objects, things higher than human beings (1141a). While developing the virtue of *sophia* means seeking the good, those working to develop the

virtue of *phronesis* observe "well the various matters concerning" (1141a25) the different ways human beings act.

Although Aristotle defines *sophia* (philosophical knowledge) as superior to *phronesis*, he defines it as a higher kind of knowledge because it rises above the particular. When looking at *phronesis*' function, one discerns one cannot achieve the happiness, human thriving, and good life that is *eudaimonia* without *phronesis*. Russell (2014) highlights the relation between *phronesis* and moral virtue: "It is because of one's virtue that one has the right end, Aristotle says, and it is because of one's…[*phronesis*] that one does the right thing toward that end" (p. 205). Both moral virtue and *phronesis* are necessary for happiness or human flourishing. As indicated earlier, attaining moral virtue means one must apply the "right rule" (rational inquiry), and the "right rule" accords with the phronetic "right means" for "right action." Although some may conceive the virtues as divided from each other, allowing an individual to master one but not the others, Aristotle insists the phronetic individual realizes all the virtues, moral and intellectual. Indeed, to possess any of the virtues is to have all of them (Kristjánsson, Fowers, Darnell, & Pollard, 2021; Russell, 2014), "for with the presence of the one quality, practical wisdom, will be given all the virtues" (1145a1–2). Moral virtues align with *phronesis* (1144b21–28) that in turn bonds with both the moral virtues and the other four intellectual virtues, manipulating "the action according to right reason" (Hadjipanteli, 2018, p. 452). The individual achieves the good life—happiness or human flourishing—through this bonding (Hadjipanteli, 2018; Kristjánsson et al., 2021).

Phronesis and the Teaching Profession

Juxtaposing this scholarship on Aristotle's virtue ethics and *phronesis* is scholarship expounding the roles, responsibilities, and tasks both PK–12 and higher education teachers must fulfill. To put this literature into perspective, I turn to Susan Moore Johnson (2004), author of *Finders and Keepers: Helping New Teachers Survive and Thrive in Our Schools*.

> Good teaching is demanding and exhausting work even in the best of workplaces. A teacher is virtually always "on," hour after hour, day after day, week after week. A typical school day reliably brings constant, though often unpredictable, demands from students, administrators, and parents. Even the most experienced teacher simply cannot rely on acquired expertise or dare to teach on automatic pilot, because each group of students presents unique instructional dilemmas and opportunities. (p. 10)

Those constant and unpredictable demands Johnson (2004) mentions include the educational setting, teachers' feedback to students, and students' behaviors and responses to teacher and lesson content (Ulferts, 2021). Teachers must reflect and decide upon instruction, including planning, implementing lessons, and assessing and evaluating students

(Burden & Byrd, 2019). Closely connected to instructional decision-making is considering students' learning styles and strategizing for teaching the content to target the various intelligences all people have (Loughran, 2010). Teachers must also keep up with and use emerging instructional technologies, fill the demands of increasingly diverse populations, and find ways to help students meet their various learning challenges (Kowalczuk-Waledziak, Korzeniecka-Bondar, Danilewicz, & Lauwers, 2019; Medford & Lee-Piggott, 2022;).

In addition to the roles, responsibilities, and tasks teachers perform relative to students and influenced by what van Manen (1994) calls a "modernist faith" in technology's rationalistic approach to knowledge, teachers must bow to a managerial class's dictating educational objectives through state mandates and accountability initiatives (Boyles, 2020). Being pressed into obedience has resulted in many teachers' "technicist views of teaching where expertise and decision-making are reduced to instrumental and technical forms of rationality which can be packaged and transmitted to practitioners in a hierarchical manner" (Florian & Graham, 2014, p. 6). As a result, the practice of teaching depends on scientific rationality and data-driven decision-making (Pickup, 2020). Thus, the managerial class rarely measures teachers' worth according to their attaining and mastering content knowledge, concepts, and skills and psychological knowledge and skills to read students' needs and behaviors and then act appropriately to help meet those needs and help students master their own behaviors. Instead, the managerial class measures teachers' worth against students' test scores, accreditation standards and outcomes, student retention, pass and graduation rates, and students' acceptance into higher-education institutions.

Eudaimonia and Teaching

To see the connection between the teaching profession and *eudaimonism*, one must understand teaching as a moral endeavor, specifically, understand how the teacher's virtuous means and ends when working with students aligns with Aristotle's virtue ethics. Higgins (2003) argues "ethical import" ladens the education profession because "school events," instructional and relationship decisions, identifying and delivering necessary instructional improvements, and assessment and evaluation processes are value-based activities. Fenstermacher, Osguthorpe, and Sanger (2009) build upon Higgins' (2003) contention that ethical import ladens the profession by moving from ethics to morals, distinguishing between "teaching morality" and "teaching morally" lest someone overrule teaching's ethical import by associating teaching morally with religion. Higgins (2003) specifically defines teaching morally to mean teaching "in a manner that accords with notions of what is good or right" (p. 8). Echoing Higgins (2003) and Fenstermacher et al. (2009), Sanderse and Cooke (2021) claim teachers should aim toward the good, teaching to reflect right actions, thereby helping their students in the present and future as they grow into living their adult lives. A prerequisite

for *eudaimonia*, teachers must indeed recognize their own moral intentions upfront because these intentions establish the relation between the ends for which teachers aim and the deliberation needed to arrive at those ends. Linking directly to Aristotle's *eudaimonism* by claiming "education, in a broad sense, is the enactment of visions of human flourishing" (Higgins, 2003, p. 136), Higgins asserts teachers perform their teaching functions by finding ways to arrive at good ends for students, thereby revealing the educational aim to promote and foster their own and their students' realizing the good life, *eudaimonia*. Aristotle explains the truly happy person leads a virtuous life; all one's actions aim toward *eudaimonism* (1094a1–5).

Growing, Developing, and Practicing Phronesis in Teaching

Moral teachers deliberate upon, select right action, and act to achieve virtuous ends through *phronesis* (Furman, 2016). Drawing from Furman's (2016) work, Stenberg and Maaranen (2020) maintain "the craft of teaching cannot be separated from practical wisdom" (p. 619). Vontz and Goodson (2020) agree, specifying teachers require practical wisdom in order to act ethically, have solid reasons for their actions, and then act in right ways. Offering a stronger argument on the need for *phronesis* (practical wisdom), Pickup (2020) advocates educators implement *phronesis* as the framework for educational practice: "*Phronesis* requires educators to consider the practical wisdom involved in engaging the complexity of lived contexts in which teaching and learning occur, rather than simply rely[ing] on decontextualizing notions of scientific rationality such as 'data-driven decision-making'" (p. 9).

Adopting *phronesis* to teaching counters the notion of teaching as a predominately skills-oriented, mechanical, or technological endeavor (Furman, 2016). While teachers rely upon technologies and therefore need a degree of technological expertise, technology and technological expertise alone cannot appropriately counter most teaching challenges (Hadjipanteli, 2018). Instead of automated, technological responses meeting situational challenges, the right course of action requires the teacher deliberate before selecting that action; the right course of action emerges from the teacher's virtue in striving for the mean or intermediate state when selecting that action (1106b10–15). The virtuous teacher uses *phronesis* (practical wisdom) to deliberate, select, and aim for the right action to achieve the desired end, the golden mean: "Again, the work of man is achieved only in accordance with practical wisdom as well as moral virtue; for virtue makes us aim at the right mark, and practical wisdom makes us take the right means" (1144a5–10). Combining *phronesis* and moral virtue to address classroom situations and educate students requires the teacher to use his/her full human powers.

Because one lives the virtuous life by understanding the meaning and value of the virtuous end desired and by practicing, deliberating, and selecting the right end to achieve the mean, becoming a phronetic teacher similarly requires such understanding and phronetic practice. Therefore, it only makes sense for future teachers to begin work toward such understanding

and phronetic practice in their teacher education programs. To do so, teacher educators will need to centralize within their programs students' growth and development in phronetic teaching, thereby leading to their own, their students', and those future teachers' future students' *eudaimonia*. Although teacher-education programs typically include field experiences through which future teachers might foster phronetic growth, development, and practice, teacher educators often fail to include ethics, ethical decision-making, and content facilitating one's growth and development in practical wisdom. Teacher educators often ignore ethics, morals, and certainly the "moral middle" targeted after deliberating a real-world or real-classroom quandary, requiring more than formal, rule-oriented responses but a considered selection of right action for the quandary at hand. To correct for this lack in teacher education programs, Kristjánnson (2024) suggests integrating case studies about workplace dilemmas and challenges into program curricula with the aim of students' becoming *virtue literate* or skilled in identifying virtues and effectively applying them to resolving dilemmas, challenges, and problems within a particular context and set of circumstances. Grappling with problems presented in case studies, future teachers would aim for particular ends, deliberate over situations, and select right actions, ultimately achieving the moral middle. Using *orthos logos* (right reason), future teachers will become practically wise, magnify the strength of their moral virtues, have experience recognizing the mean in each case study, and achieve virtue literacy. As in-service teachers, they will continue to strengthen their teaching-morally acumen, become morally sensitive teachers in their "constitutive function" (Kristjánsson, 2024, p. 1036), and come to recognize the moral or ethical issues involved in teaching and learning situations.

A case-study example might focus on a middle-school teacher who daily interacts with a student who disrupts the class through his outbursts, his jumping out of his chair, pulling girls' hair, and tapping his pencil on his desk. Given scenarios, preservice teachers would then choose the desired end, deliberate on all the virtues to arrive at the best way to reach that end, select the right action to achieve the desired end (Kristjánnson et al., 2021), and determine the intensity appropriate to the situation. In this case study, the future teacher might select the moral virtue, patience/good temper, the mean between anger's excess (irascibility) and its deficiency (spiritlessness/unirascibility). Patience/good temper requires one to temper one's anger taking the student's developmental age, possible mental health issues, and what appears to be ADHD into account. Harsh consequences would be unjust considering the context from which the child's behavior emerges. The end from such consequences, ostracizing the student and making the student dislike the subject matter, coming to class, and learning, would be a negative, counterproductive end. Aristotle stipulates the virtue's intensity applies to a particular situation, here a particular child, the child's specific circumstances and behaviors, the child and those behaviors in a given classroom with a single teacher and group of fellow students. Another

situation might demand a more or a less extensive degree of anger—a different mean for a different set of circumstances. The teacher, or in this case future teacher, uses *phronesis* to select the mean (virtue) or correct intensity for the virtue in the specific situation. Through this phronetic thinking, the teacher experiences a "clearing" (Sachs, n.d.) or further clarity about the situation. This "clearing" guides teachers to discovering the mean for their own and their students' good. Going one step further, Sachs (n.d.) contends when one chooses the mean, one sees "what is in front of… [one] in all its possibility" (n.p.). Thus, *phronesis* means the future teachers in this scenario not only practice considering a situation's dimensions and experience a "clearing," the two together guide the future teacher to the mean, wisely to select a right action, resulting in the child's modifying his behavior while still desiring to attend class, enjoy the subject, and to learn. The cherry: future teachers see "what is in front of…[them] in all its possibility" (Sachs, n.d., n.p.) for this scenario and every other case study in which they engage!

Given *phronesis*' sensitive and deliberative nature, especially in educational contexts, teachers (*phronimos*) are not external figures in children's learning processes but integral forces facilitating students' growth, development, and flourishing (Popovska, 2024). In working this case study, the future teacher who only considers the virtue of temperance when deliberating and selecting is short-sighted rather than a virtuous, effective agent who thinks expansively and with vision for his/her own and the children's—not just one child's—good. When embracing Aristotle's concept, *phronesis*, growing and developing the virtue in oneself through practice, teachers aim toward realizing the good life for themselves and their students (Sternberg & Maraanen, 2022). When engaging with students, teachers teaching phronetically toward virtuous means and ends, see each child in the class and education writ large in all their possibilities—itself an inspiring, virtuous mean and end!

However easy achieving the good life may sound, Aristotle readily concedes the virtuous life to be difficult to realize. Future teachers and in-service teachers will inevitably find deliberating on the right course of action strenuous, difficult, and requiring constant practice especially because it is far easier to select the excess or deficit than to determine and select the mean for a given situation. Educators practicing *phronesis* must therefore be opened to self-cultivation (Higgins, 2011) when practicing *phronesis*: "… [*phronesis*] both forms and is formed by the character and experience of the *phronimos*, the one whose practice is based upon…[*phronesis*]" (Spence, 2007, p. 316). Hence, the teacher, as the *phronimos*, develops and is developed by his/her own teaching practice.

Conclusion

Considering teaching as an example of how to achieve the good life through Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonism* humanizes, ennobles, and gives

moral purpose to the profession. Although improving skills, developing teaching techniques, and acquiring professional knowledge are not anathema to the flourishing teacher, many serious educators long to redeem teaching from devolving into technicism mired in bureaucracy, both ways to alienate teachers from their students. If educators fail to channel their longing into a bold, cogent virtue ethics for teaching, teachers will likely be unable to break the profession away from its current ills, manifesting in teachers' apathy and malaise and schooling's disfunction. Applying Aristotle's concepts, *eudaimonism* and *phronesis*, to teaching broadens and deepens the meaning and value of teaching as a moral enterprise, focusing on human flourishing—*eudaimonism*—the good life with endless possibilities.

Endnote

1 The mean appears in ancient Greek thought as "nothing in excess," a Delphic maxim about which Plato writes in *Philebus*. Aristotle analyzes the mean, introducing "the golden mean" in *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II.

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Book Banning, Censorship, and Gag-Order Legislation: Working through the Fear and Distrust That Threatens Public Education and Jeopardizes the Public-at-Large

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> *The paradox of education is precisely this—that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated. The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not. To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions, is the way he achieves his own identity. But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish.*
>
> —James Baldwin, 1963/1988, "A Talk to Teachers"

Introduction

On December 13, 2023, Kevin Stitt, Governor of Oklahoma, signed Executive Order 2023-31, officially defunding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Oklahoma State agencies, including public colleges and universities. Six months later, on June 27, 2024, Ryan Walters, Oklahoma State Superintendent of Public Instruction, directed all public schools to "teach" the Bible which, he stated, is "a necessary historical document to teach our kids about the history of this country, to have a complete understanding of Western civilization, to have an understanding of the basis of our legal system." Walters added that the state may also supply teaching materials and instructions for teachers to "ensure uniformity in delivery" (Mervosh & Dias, 2024, para. 7).

These are just the most recent in a series of efforts by Governor Stitt, Superintendent Walters, and others to mandate what can and cannot be taught, discussed, and thought about in public schools. Oklahoma is not

alone. In violation of the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment, conservative state politicians across the country are making significant curricular and instructional decisions as part of an ongoing attempt to, in the words of Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953), "conceal our faults by concealing the fact that they ever existed" (para. 21) and, in the words of Robert F. Kennedy (1964), to "invoke the security of a comfortable past, which in fact, never existed" (para. 12). We argue that these practices are profoundly mis-educative, erode public education, and jeopardize the public itself.

Maxine Greene (1988) insists obstacles to existential wellbeing must be "named" in order to be effectively addressed. We argue that the recent legislation poses an existential threat to our safety, wellbeing, and very identities as individuals and as a society (Baldwin, 1963; Baldwin, 1963/1988). Greene (1988) maintains that imagining something better (a more fulfilled life; a more just society; a safer and more caring world) is a precursor to recognizing the obstacles to those possibilities. Until there is a perceived possibility that things could be otherwise, an obstacle, by definition, does not exist. "As has been said, a rock is an obstacle only to the one who wants to climb the hill. Not caring, the traveler merely takes another path" (p. 5).

Focusing on existential issues stemming from negative conceptions of freedom, *laissez-faire* government, free-market capitalism, and systemic race, class, and gender oppression, Greene combines social critique, critical reflection, and the power of imagination in a dialectical quest for the "achievement of freedom by people in search of themselves" (1988, p. xi). Without risking free choice, she argues, we cannot perceive even the *possibility* that things could be otherwise. However, existential risk requires action, both physical and mental. As Foucault (1984) states, "Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects upon it as a problem" (p. 388).

Greene (1988, 1995) acknowledges that existing conditions can be viewed fatalistically, as taken-for-granted realities that cannot be changed. They can be seen as simply "the way things are," as hopelessly "there" (1988, p. 5). Thus, she insists, we must name both what currently *is* and what potentially *could be*, along with the obstacles that stand in our way.

In this paper we seek to name, as fully and accurately as possible, the legislative activities unfolding before us, including the fundamental problem, its consequences and causes, and the implications for education. First, we document the current book-banning, censorship, and gag-order legislation. Next, we examine the impact of this legislation on education and society. We then consider the underlying causes, including intersecting factors that simultaneously reproduce systemic challenges and obscure their existence. Finally, we discuss implications for education.

Book Banning, Censorship, and Gag Orders in Public Education

Within Oklahoma and the nation, extreme tension surrounds questions regarding what ideas may be taught, discussed, and thought about in public K–12 schools and higher education, as well as who should decide these matters. Freedom of speech and separation of church and state are guaranteed by the First Amendment. Yet, state lawmakers across the nation are making unilateral decisions that profoundly affect schools and society. Targeting three broad issues, conservative officials have passed sweeping legislation prohibiting the "teaching" of Critical Race Theory (CRT), "staying woke" (pejoratively referred to as "wokeness"), and issues related to sexual orientation and gender-identity development.[1] These are just the most recent in a history of political efforts to control public education, teachers, higher education, and critical thinking in general (Apple, 2006; Greene, 1988; Houser, 2023; No Child Left Behind, [NCLB], 2021).

As of 2022, eleven states[2] had banned teaching about racial issues (Ray & Gibbons, 2021), and 25 additional states[3] had either already installed new school policies or were moving bills through their legislatures forbidding the teaching of CRT (Schwartz, 2021). Equating CRT with indoctrination, Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders stated, "We cannot perpetuate a lie to our students and push this propaganda leftist agenda, teaching our kids to hate America and hate one another. It's one of the reasons that we put into law banning things like indoctrination and CRT" (Snyder, 2023, para. 5). Similarly, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, claiming to fight "indoctrination of children" (Reed, 2023, para. 1), adopted learning materials for Florida schools developed by PragerU. Dennis Prager, founder of the institution, admits his organization's goal is indoctrination, which is evident in an animated video in which "explorer Christopher Columbus defends enslaving people on the grounds that 'being taken as a slave is better than being killed'" (Reed, 2023, para. 6). Oklahoma has joined Florida in adopting the PragerU curriculum, touting it as "pro-American" (Wallis, 2023, para. 1).

Many conservative state legislators also oppose teaching about what they pejoratively refer to as "wokeness." In Florida, Governor DeSantis rejected "54 of the 132 math textbooks on its adoption list" because they contained "woke content" (Bever, 2022, paras. 1 & 5), including "common educational terms like social–emotional learning and equity" (Prothero & Blad, 2021, para. 3). Similarly, the Edmond Public School District in Oklahoma removed the books *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *A Raisin in the Sun* from their classrooms and school libraries. Such actions are especially significant in Oklahoma, "whose history includes the 1889 Land Run, 'Indian' boarding schools, the 1921 Tulsa [Race] Massacre, and racially segregated schools" (Fallik, 2021, para. 10).

State educational boards, textbook publishers, and curriculum companies have fallen in line, complying with state mandates by distorting,

sanitizing, and omitting historical facts and troubling relationships. As Greenlee (2019) observes, this has led to "omissions, downright errors, and specious interpretations, particularly regarding racial issues" (para. 7). Texas textbooks euphemistically note that "the Atlantic slave trade brought millions of workers from Africa to the southern United States to work on agricultural plantations" (Isensee, 2015, para. 2), while failing to mention that "Africans [were] forced to the U.S. as slaves" (para. 5).

Getahun (2023) notes that *Publisher Studies Weekly* "removed mention of Rosa Parks' race" in its Florida first-grade social studies textbooks, and that its fourth-grade textbooks "removed language saying Black people were discriminated against" during the Reconstruction Era, "instead opting for language like 'certain groups'" (paras. 3 & 5). Other textbooks refer to "[w]hite settler colonialism" with "Imperialistic expressions such as 'Empire of Liberty,' 'Manifest Destiny,' 'The American Frontier' [and] 'wards of the state'" (Gahman, 2016, p. 320) without acknowledging the forced assimilation, reservations, removals, boarding schools, and murder that also occurred.

Similar distortion, sanitization, and omission of historical facts has been practiced by state school boards. For example, the Florida Board of Education's new middle-school standards for African-American history assert "slavery gave Black people a 'personal benefit' because they 'developed skills'" (Quinn, 2023, para. 1). Florida's high-school students receive equally misleading information about a 1920 deadly white mob attack against Black residents of Ocoee in a lesson that states the attack involved "acts of violence perpetrated against *and by* African Americans" (para. 3). In 2023, the same board refused to pilot an "Advanced Placement high school course on African American studies, saying it violated state law and 'lacks educational value'" (Fortinsky, 2023, para. 2). New York Senate Bill 1452 goes even farther, banning teaching about four core ethnic groups: "Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latina and Latino Americans" (Gutkin, 2023, para. 2).

Rather than explicitly forbidding the teaching of specific historical events, vaguer language is often used. Examples of such legislation include bills designed to limit "teaching about 'divisive subjects' such as racism and sexuality" (Prothero & Blad, 2021, p. 10) and teaching that "one race, color, religion, sex, ethnicity, or national origin 'is inherently superior to another'" (Coote, 2022, para. 3). Oklahoma House Bill 1775 (2021) mandates that classroom instruction should not cause "any individual discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race or sex" (OK HB 1775, General Prohibition 7). Brint (2023) argues such injunctions are evidence "the institutions of the United States were created to maintain racial and gender inequalities and to preserve the supremacy of [w]hite people and men" (para 1).

Another major contention involves teaching about sexual orientation and gender-identity development. Scholars working in these areas underscore the importance of affirming people's rights to make their *own* choices and define their *own* identities rather than continuing to be controlled and defined by others (Butler, 1990, 1997). Theories of gender identity place emphasis on deconstructing the gender-binary assumption, the "pervasive idea that there are two, rigidly founded and dichotomously existing genders…biologically determined and stable over time" (Shelton & Dodd, 2021, p. 625). Many biologists no longer view gender as rigidly bound by binary constructs, yet there is still widespread adherence to binary gender classifications, and these classifications remain "deeply connected to other binaries…subsequently reinforcing the hierarchy of [w]hite, European, male dominance" (Shelton & Dodd, 2021, p. 627).

Here again, state legislators seek to eliminate critical thinking about issues that upset their constituents. In 2022, Florida's Governor DeSantis led a boycott on discussions of sexual orientation and gender identity and signed into law Florida House Bill 1557 (which has, ironically, come to be called the "Don't Say Gay" law, despite this phrase never appearing in the legislation) (HB 1557, 2022). Since then, thirteen states[4] have followed suit, proposing bills designed to prohibit instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity in kindergarten through eighth grade (Jones & Franklin, 2022). As with issues related to race and ethnicity, books featuring LGBTQ-identifying people or themes related to gender identity are being removed from K–12 schools across the U.S.

In February 2022 alone, "69 anti-LGBTQ school policy bills [were] proposed in numerous states…some of [which] advocated banning LGBTQ books from school districts, while others ban discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity" (O'Loughlin, Schmidt, & Glazier, 2022, p. 1). PEN America reports that "41% of [2021's] banned books were targeted due to LGBTQ+ content" (Monteil, 2022, para. 2). In public hearings on Idaho House Bill 666 (2022), which forbids "disseminating material harmful to minors" (Section 1, 18-1517), speakers listed "queer texts as examples of…pornography/explicit material" (O'Loughlin et al., 2022, p. 5).

Despite containing no sex scenes, Maia Kobabe's graphic memoir *Gender Queer*, "about growing up nonbinary and asexual, was [2022's] most banned book" (O'Loughlin et al., 2022, p. 5). At a 2021 Virginia school-board meeting, two board members "called for 'sexual' books to be burned" (Riedel, 2022, para. 3), and Oklahoma's Superintendent of Public Instruction, Ryan Walters, banned what he calls "pornographic material and sexualized content from public school libraries, including 190 LGBTQ titles" (Villarreal, 2023, para. 5). Some districts across the U.S. are even banning books about human development and changing relationships during puberty, human rights and activism, and biographies,

autobiographies, and memoirs that feature characters of color or religious minorities (Martin, 2022), such as Judy Blume's pre-teen classic *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret* (1970/1988); Ibram X. Kendi's *How to Be an Antiracist* (2023); and Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* (2023).

Along similar lines, Florida pulled Advanced Placement psychology courses rather than allowing students to learn "how sex and gender influence socialization and other aspects of development" (Marcotte, 2023, para. 2). Florida's ban, based on a 2022 law signed by Governor DeSantis, forbids "classroom discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity." This course was targeted in part because the AP Psychology course, as Amanda Marcotte argues, will not "stigmatize LGBTQ people as… perverts" (2023, para. 4). Further, twenty-three states[5] have passed laws that either restrict transgender girls specifically or both transgender girls and boys from participating in sports "in accordance with their gender identity" (Barnes, 2023).

The new legislation has also affected higher education. For example, South Dakota House Bill 1012 prohibits colleges and universities from teaching "divisive concepts" (Flaherty, 2022), anti-CRT legislation for higher education has been passed in Iowa and Oklahoma (Greene, 2022), and Tennessee's CRT ban forbids teaching about racism, sexism, and social class in higher education (Wise, 2022). Florida is currently adopting the *Classic Learning Test*, an "anti-woke alternative" to "left-leaning" SAT and College Board examinations, designed to "reclaim education rooted in truth, goodness, and beauty" (Bartlett, 2023, paras. 1, 14, & 16). In some cases, entire academic programs are being eliminated. For example, Florida's House Bill 999 bans courses in "Critical Race Theory, Gender Studies, or Intersectionality, or any derivative major or minor of these belief systems" (Roberts-Grmela, 2023, para. 1).

More than 30 bills across the country also propose to eliminate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) offices in public colleges and universities (Bryant & Appleby, 2024).[6] Historically, one purpose of DEI offices on campuses has been to support belonging and acceptance regardless of ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or physical ability. According to Lu (2023), not only do anti-DEI bills communicate to "students and faculty of color [and members of] marginalized communities that there is a lack of interest on the part of the government in supporting them when they're on campus" (para. 6), but state-level bills that ban DEI mean states that pass such legislation can lose much needed private, state, and federal funding for diversity work (Marijolovic, 2023).

States' assaults on civil rights, constitutional freedoms, and academic integrity have not gone unchallenged. Concerned teachers, students, and community members have resisted what they perceive as attacks on their civil rights and academic integrity. Many, including members of

communities personally affected historically and presently, caution about the need to "stay woke," to remain constantly vigilant in what is perceived as a continuing war being waged against their minds, bodies, families, communities, civil rights, and constitutional freedoms.

Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), "promised to fight 'cultural warriors' who attempt to limit lessons on racism and discrimination by labeling it as critical race theory" (Binkley, 2021). The first federal lawsuit challenging a state statute preventing teaching about race and gender, filed by the American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU of Oklahoma, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and pro bono counsel, indicted Oklahoma's classroom censorship bill, House Bill 1775 (Fallik, 2021, para. 2). Soon thereafter, a group of students and educators "filed a lawsuit against the state of Oklahoma, accusing it of violating their [First Amendment] rights with a law that restricts the teaching of race and gender" (Coote, 2021).

Another lawsuit, filed by a group of university students and educators, claims that Florida House Bill 7 "unconstitutionally violates the First Amendment by imposing restrictions on speech and information in college classrooms, and is void for vagueness under the Fourteenth Amendment." This suit also claims the "Stop Wrongs Against Our Kids and Employees Act violates the Equal Protection Clause because it was enacted with the intent to discriminate against Black educators and students" (Legal Defense Fund, 2022, para. 1).

In response to growing resistance from teachers and communities, legislators have moved quickly to enforce their mandates, issuing gag orders to stifle dissent. As of October 2022, "educational gag orders…increased 250 percent compared to 2021" (Young & Friedman, 2022, para. 3). "Noncompliant" teachers have subsequently been fired, and entire districts have been targeted by state legislators and superintendents, as recently observed in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Negative Impact on Education and Society

Following decades of efforts to control public education (Apple, 2006; Houser, 2023; Houser, Krutka, Roberts, Pennington, & Coerver, 2017; Kuelzer & Houser, 2019; NCLB, 2001), the recent legislation is taking a toll. Not only are these activities profoundly mis-educative (Dewey, 1938; Woodson, 1933), they are eroding public education and, indeed, the public itself (Houser, 2023). A few years ago, a title like Parramore's (2018) *The Corporate Plan to Groom U.S. Kids for Servitude by Wiping Out Public Schools* might have seemed laughable. This is no longer the case. Of course, these are not the first attempts to achieve social, political, and economic aims by controlling public education. Public schools have been contested spaces since their inception, and in recent decades they have become ideological battlegrounds (Apple, 2006; Fortinsky, 2023; Giroux, 1985; Gutkin, 2023; Villarreal, 2023; Wise, 2022).

It must be acknowledged that mistakes, excesses, and even abuses can occur on all sides. For example, although DEI initiatives were instituted to support diversity, equity, and inclusion, questions have arisen about some of the policies and practices. Criticisms range from allegations of reverse discrimination to charges that DEI ratings have been cultivated by profitable corporations and elite universities simply to boost their status and revenues. Khalid and Snyder (2023) argue that DEI offices have, albeit perhaps unintentionally, undermined meaningful discourse about important issues by replacing "careful, philosophical deliberations about the meaning and value of inclusion" (para. 3) with sets of "administrative policies and practices" (para. 4). Still others note cases in which prosecutions of alleged DEI violations have denied the defendants' constitutional rights. Similarly, questions have arisen about possible excesses in efforts to "remain woke" to the continuing impact of systemic racism. For example, concerns have been raised about indictments based on limited evidence, such as the use of single words or phrases, without due consideration of the broader context or intent surrounding their usage.

We acknowledge mistakes have been made on every side. However, recognition of shortcomings, failures, and even abuses in efforts to address systemic oppression is not an indictment of their need or purpose, and it is far from an admission of moral equivalency. It must be remembered that these are *responses* to continuing (and, we believe, intensifying) oppressive and exploitive societal conditions. As Freire (1970/1990) famously observes: "Never in history has violence been *initiated* by the oppressed. How could they be the initiators, if they themselves are the *result* of violence? … There would be no oppressed had there been no prior situation of violence to establish their subjugation" (p. 41).

The fact remains that the majority of people in the world, not to mention nonhuman life and the planet itself, have been and continue to be exploited for the comfort and privilege of the few. The U.S. and other "developed" nations continue to profit from the exploitation of other countries and marginalized populations throughout the world. These are the facts, and no amount of denial, deflection, or distraction makes them any less true. The fact is that CRT, commitment to "staying woke," and organizations and movements like BLM, DEI, MeToo, and the continuing fight to determine one's own sexual orientation and gender identity originated, and still function, as legitimate means of coping with systems of oppression and exploitation that have not only persisted but intensified despite concerted efforts to end them.

We think there is legitimate cause for concern that the current legislative actions are designed to dismantle public education and the (re)public as we know them (Houser, 2023; iHeartRadio, 2024; Klam, 2024; Mader, Samuels, Butrymowicz, Gilreath, Morton, Preston, Willen, Sanchez, Kolodner,

& Marcus, 2024; Stanford, 2024; The Heritage Foundation, 2005/2023, 2023/2024; Zimmer, 2024). Consider the *explicit* and *acknowledged* aims and initiatives of the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025, a 922-page political initiative also referred to as the 2025 Presidential Transition Project (The Heritage Foundation, 2005/2023, 2023/2024).

The stated purpose of Project 2025 is to promote conservative policies by reshaping the federal government and consolidating executive power (iHeartRadio, 2024; The Heritage Foundation, 2005/2023, 2023/2024; Zimmer, 2024). It was crafted to coincide with an expected Donald Trump victory in 2024 (Zimmer, 2024). Based on *unitary executive theory*, Project 2025 insists that the entire executive branch is under direct control of the president (The Heritage Foundation, 2023/2024). Based on this premise, it advocates reclassifying tens of thousands of federal civil-service workers as political appointees who would (presumably) be loyal to the President (The Heritage Foundation, 2005/2023, 2023/2024; Zimmer, 2024).

As might be expected, strong concerns have been expressed about the meanings and implications of this plan. Georgetown historian Thomas Zimmer argues that Project 2025 can best be understood as:

> The American Right's declaration of war on the idea of a multiracial, pluralistic, diverse society. Project 2025 is a plan to execute what amounts to a comprehensive authoritarian takeover of American government to transform [it] into a machine that serves two purposes. First, exacting revenge on what they call 'the woke, leftist, globalist enemy' and, secondly, imposing a minoritarian, reactionary vision of white Christian patriarchal order on society. (iHeartRadio, 2024)

Under Project 2025, the Department of Justice would come under the partisan control of the President, as would the Department of Commerce, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Federal Communications Commission, and the Federal Trade Commission (The Heritage Foundation, 2005/2023, 2023/2024). The Department of Homeland Security would be dismantled, and the Department of Education would be eliminated (The Heritage Foundation, 2005/2023, 2023/2024). Project 2025 also proposes terminating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and tasking the Department of Justice with prosecuting anti-white racism (The Heritage Foundation, 2023/2024; iHeartRadio, 2024). The Project also recommends a complete ban on abortion and most contraceptives, a ban on Muslims entering the country, and a ban on courses in African-American History and African-American Studies. Report authors also recommend cutting Social Security and Medicare, increasing tax breaks for "the one percent," eliminating unions and worker protections, arresting and deporting illegal immigrants, and using the U.S. military for domestic law

enforcement (iHeartRadio, 2024; The Heritage Foundation, 2005/2023, 2023/2024; Zimmer, 2024).

Is it mere coincidence that conservative state governors, superintendents of public instruction, and boards of education are currently defunding DEI, banning resources and teaching about racism, sexual orientation, and gender identity construction, disallowing conversations about the need to "stay woke" to continuing acts of domination and dehumanization, and gagging those who dissent against these unconstitutional actions? Is it a coincidence that Oklahoma's Superintendent of Public Instruction has enlisted Kevin Roberts, head of the Heritage Foundation and architect of Project 2025, and Dennis Prager, founder of PragerU, to radically overhaul the Oklahoma Social Studies Standards, including determining how the Bible will be taught? We do not think these are coincidences.

One effect of the recent legislation is that it continues the division and conquest of the nation's people that has existed for decades (Freire, 1970/1990). Undermining, invalidating, and alienating countless members of society who have historically endured systemic violence, hatred, and intolerance in the forms of racism, sexism, and homophobia, and striving to silence those who object, these activities lend credence to the claims of Critical Race Theorists "that racism isn't just a flaw in American democracy, but part of the design" (Critchley, 2021, para. 5).

Another effect of the bans, mandates, and gag orders, following in the aftermath of NCLB, is that they have created extreme fatigue as teachers have coped with continual second-guessing, micromanagement, and external control at the hands of state legislators and district administrators far removed from schools and classrooms (Gallegos, 2023; Houser et al., 2017). Public school teachers feel exhausted, intimidated, and discouraged, and they are exiting the profession in record numbers (Houser et al., 2017; Kuelzer & Houser, 2019; Perna, 2024; Staake, 2024; Will, 2024). These are not just the relatively few who explicitly advocate for social justice; there is an exodus of qualified educators in general, the vast majority of whom do *not* focus on CRT, the need to "stay woke," or issues of sexual orientation and gender identity and equity.

Yet another effect of the current legislation is that it severely restricts learning and development. Indeed, it is profoundly mis-educative (Dewey, 1938; Woodson, 1933), arresting continuity of growth by limiting opportunities for students to consider diverse and challenging thoughts, perspectives, and experiences. Quality learning thrives in diverse, inclusive, equitable, honest, and affirming yet intellectually challenging educational environments (Nieto & Bode, 2017; Palmer, 2007; Saad, 2022; Vantieghem, Roose, Goosen, Schelfhout, & Van Avermaet, 2023). Many children and adolescents learn, before and outside formal education, that serious social conflicts have existed in the past and persist today. Failures to acknowledge

these facts in school are not only dishonest, but they represent missed opportunities to help students make sense of their world. Moreover, failure to address past and continuing societal challenges denies valuable opportunities for students to struggle and grow.

Piaget (1969) demonstrated decades ago that intellectual growth requires opportunities to experience and reconcile cognitive disequilibrium. This occurs as humans grapple with new and diverse experiences and perspectives. Banning and censoring discussions of challenging ideas, perspectives, and societal experiences denies access to valuable information that can help students grow intellectually and socially, becoming more informed, empathetic, thoughtful, and critically reflective members of society. For what other purpose do we teach than to promote growth by helping students think beyond their "immediate world[s]" (Robertson, 2022, para. 17)? The current bans, censorship, and gag-orders trivialize education and deny opportunities for growth in an attempt to retain inequitable conditions established throughout history.

Retired Tulsa Public Schools English teacher Amanda Trower notes that Oklahoma House Bill 1775 restricts teachers' ability to enhance critical thinking (Robertson, 2022). From an English literature standpoint, *Hamlet*, Act 2 Scene 2, includes a quotation that, in today's political climate, is paradoxical: "'There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so" (para. 10). Classroom discussion of *Hamlet*'s implication that "nothing is inherently bad," or over what moral codes, if any, all people share, would likely violate House Bill 1775 (para. 12). More broadly, however, from a social–historical perspective, without exposure to materials that document how people of color were colonized, enslaved, abused, and murdered, and without being taught to recognize that many of the thoughts and sentiments underlying how those atrocities persist today, students will be less-capable of understanding the continuing struggles, the significance of constitutional amendments, or the implications of the marches, protests, and legislative efforts intended to ensure the Constitution is upheld. Similarly, censoring LGBTQ-related materials and discussions not only invalidates LGBTQ students and citizens but denies opportunities for straight students and citizens to enlarge and expand their own feelings, understandings, and views of the world.

In addition to eroding the effectiveness of public education by narrowing diversity of thought and arresting continuity of growth, the current bans, censorship, and gag orders, coupled with prior national legislation such as NCLB, also threaten the public itself (Houser, 2023). Undermining democracy, effacing the Constitution, privatizing public resources, and failing to recognize the importance of the commons, we believe rightwing efforts to control what is presented, discussed, and thought about in schools pose a serious threat to the (Re)public (Houser, 2023;

Klam, 2024; Mader et al., 2024; Stanford, 2024; The Heritage Foundation, 2023/2024; Zimmer, 2024). Public relationships and experiences, shared social and environmental spaces, understanding and appreciating the value of the "commons," and a willingness to work together for the "common good" are essential to the health and sustainability of people, society, and the planet (Houser, 2023, 2024). Limiting opportunities to think, question, and grow minimizes students' ability to value, preserve, and protect the (Re)public.

Underlying Causes

Having identified the manifestations of the problem, we now consider the underlying causes. To some, the situation may seem straightforward: angry, fearful, distrusting, defensive, entitled, individualistic, and increasingly desperate members of the political right select opportunistic rightwing leaders who take hardline stands on issues their constituents view as a fight for the heart of America, which they believe is being lost to a weak, corrupt, unpatriotic, and godless political left. Or, from a different perspective, angry, fearful, distrusting, cowardly, unpatriotic, and increasingly desperate members of the political left elect opportunistic leftwing politicians who take hardline stands on issues their constituents view as a fight for the heart of America, which they believe is being lost to an angry, fearful, distrusting, greedy, hypercompetitive, and highly individualistic political right.

Realizing that one way to change a society is to shape the narrative and control access to information, elected leaders and activists have used various means to accomplish their aims. On the left, much of this work is still enacted through traditional protests, organizations and movements such as BLM and MeToo, social media activity, and academe. On the right, in addition to traditional protests (such as Back the Blue), organizations and movements (such as the NRA, anti-environmentalism, opposition to immigration, English-only, and anti-federalism), and social media (such as Truth Social), this is also currently being accomplished by imposing unconstitutional mandates (e.g., to teach the Bible), banning books, censorship, and issuing gag orders to dictate what can be read, discussed, and thought about in schools.

Fear, anger, and distrust are experienced on both the left and the right, and everywhere in-between, but what are the sources of these feelings? For members of historically marginalized, minoritized, and otherwise-oppressed and alienated groups, many of the answers lie in historical and continuing violations of minds, bodies, families, communities, civil rights, and constitutional freedoms, in addition to brutal histories of servitude, enslavement, removals, erasures, and genocide, coupled with the breaking of trust, time and again (Deloria, 1999; Stannard; 1993; Zinn, 1995). But this is not all. As Baldwin (1963, 1963/1988) explained decades ago, living

with ever-present knowledge and understanding of these cumulative experiences cannot help but affect one's identity.

At the height of the Civil Rights Movement, in his powerful essay, "A Talk to Teachers," Baldwin (1963/1988) implores educators to refuse to participate in, condone, or permit Black children to believe what they have been told about who they are or about their role, place, position, abilities, or value in this country and world. Baldwin brilliantly turns the tables in this and other essays and presentations. He begins by stating that white Americans, then the majority in the U.S., have always perceived Black Americans as "problem" people, treating and defining them in the most cruel, inhuman, and loathsome ways. However, he continues, he knows he is not who white Americans think he is. And if they are wrong about who they think *he* is, they must also be wrong about who they think *they* are—about how they have defined themselves. In a 1963 Hollywood Roundtable discussion of the Civil Rights March on Washington and how best to deal with the "Negro problem" (Reelblack One, 2017), Baldwin challenges white viewers to shift their focus to themselves, asking them to think about who *they* are, and what is it about *them* that *needs* Black Americans to be who white Americans misperceive them to be.

Shifting the focus to questions of self-identity, Baldwin gets to the heart of the matter. He argues that the U.S. suffers an identity crisis, not knowing who we are because we have never fully acknowledged what we have done or why we have done it. One reason we have not acknowledged our past actions and motives is that these are shrouded in a mythology that has been repeated so often and believed so ardently that many are no longer capable of distinguishing fact from fiction. Another reason we fail to acknowledge our past is that many continue to benefit from it. Intergenerational wealth accumulated for centuries on the backs of servants, slaves, underpaid workers, and unpaid domestic partners, along with lands that were originally tribal hunting and trading grounds, continue to enrich not only the descendants of the original European colonizers, but all who still experience the unearned privileges of whiteness.

Critical Race Theorists draw heavily on Baldwin's logic in their portrayal of what is still occurring, and the recent bans, censorship, and gag orders could not provide clearer evidence of the continuing national mythologies or our continuing refusal (or inability) to distinguish fact from fiction. To understand the source of the fear and anger on the right, it is instructive to consider what the current legislation does and does not actually target. The legislation does not, by and large, explicitly state that historical events cannot be taught.[7] Rather, what it attempts to control is the *analysis* of the events—and critical analysis in general. Much of the legislation we have identified targets: (1) Critical Race Theory, which reveals factors and processes—including white-supremacist beliefs and practices—

that reproduce racism; (2) "staying woke," which emphasizes vigilance against continuing efforts to exploit, alienate, dominate, and control; and (3) education on sexual orientation and gender identity construction, which challenges binary logic and emphasizes the importance of defining one's own identity rather than being defined by others.

It is also instructive to note that each of these efforts is having an effect. For example, Habermas' (1991) theory provides "knowledge and understanding and action plans intended to free [people] from oppression" (Fleming, 2012, p. 2). Building on Habermas, Critical Race Theorists argue "that racism isn't just a flaw in American democracy, but part of the design" (Critchley, 2021, para. 5). CRT has become a means of *understanding and addressing* the structural phenomenon of racism in the U.S. (Karimi, 2021). CRT's power is that it provides a lens by which to examine how systemic racism endures "through systems, laws, and policies—and how those same systems, laws, and policies can be transformed" (George, 2021, p. 4).

Thus, we maintain, while much of the fear, anger, and distrust on the left is based on past and continuing violations that must constantly be reconciled with personal identities as members of a society that remains unwilling or unable to examine itself for the common good of all, much of the fear, anger, and distrust on the right is grounded in the growing effectiveness of CRT in identifying the root causes of racism, combined with the persistence of "staying woke" to what is occurring, along with the insistence by increasing numbers of people that they define their *own* identities rather than allowing themselves to be defined by others. What critical race theorists and scholars of sexual orientation and gender identity construction realize, as Baldwin (1963, 1963/1988), Said (1978), Butler (1990, 1997), and Spivak (1987) clearly understood, is that it is at the level of self-identification that the work of social transformation ultimately must be done.

Critical Race Theorists argue that whiteness is a socially constructed identity that underlies past and continuing racism (Applebaum, 2016; Delgado, 2012; Haney López, 2006). The concept of socially constructed identity is founded on the post-Structuralist idea that *reality is a social construction* (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The basic claim is that much of what we perceive as objectively "real" is actually socially constructed individually or collectively based on our thoughts, feelings, experiences, wants, needs, fears, perceptions, and so forth. Post-Structuralists theorize that among the "realities" humans construct are our personal and social identities (e.g., Who am I? Who are we?), as well as our assumptions of who others are. When socially constructed assumptions are applied to our understandings of who we are, they form the basis of our socially constructed identities.

In Western societies, just as language meaning is juxtaposed in word-pair binaries, the identity of one social group is constructed simultaneously

with, and in contrast to, the identity of other groups (Butler, 1990, 1997; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1987), and in the co-construction of self and other, the self is typically constructed as superior. Our own identities are constructed in contrast with and as superior to "others" because Western epistemologies and languages are based on binary, absolute, and hierarchical logic. Therefore, as Said (1978) demonstrates, the European concept of the "Occident" ("The West") was simultaneously constructed in contrast with and as superior to the "Orient" ("The East").

Within an absolutist, binary, and hierarchical Western epistemological context, for one person or group to be defined as normal or ideal, others must *necessarily* be defined as *ab*normal and *less*-than-ideal. In this system, one identity literally cannot come into existence without the simultaneous co-construction of the "other." The one identity cannot be recognized and understood without juxtaposing it against the existence of the other. This is what James Baldwin (1963, 1963/1988) understood, and this structural understanding is why Critical Race Theorists insist "that racism isn't just a flaw in American democracy, but part of the design" (Critchley, 2021, para. 5). Similar constructs are evident in Spivak's (1987) assessment of the plight of the "subaltern" in the processes of "worlding" and in Butler's (1990, 1997) concepts of the "paradox of subjection" and the role of "performativity" in transforming dominant social constructions of gender.

These epistemic and language structures also apply to gender identity construction. Like whiteness, prevalent binary gender conceptions of masculinity and femininity are produced and reproduced through everyday social and linguistic practices and relationships, and they similarly accrue the attendant benefits (or liabilities). Here again, part of the problem is that the constructions are generalized. They are absolute, hierarchical, and defined in binary opposites. When perceived as total and essential, there is little room for variation. Many who do not fit the social ideal are perceived, and perceive themselves, as inferior. As the roots of these beliefs are epistemological, these are legitimate causes for anger, fear, and distrust, and they exist across social and political spectra.

Returning to questions of race and power, Chubbuck (2004) theorizes that the "social construction of [w]hiteness…was the mechanism that forged a [w]hite 'national' identity in American history, as various ethnic groups defined themselves as different from people of color in order to benefit from the privileges accorded to the [w]hite population" (p. 304). According to Harris (1993), racial hierarchies have historically depended on the "central principle [of] [w]hiteness as an identity…not by an inherent unifying characteristic, but by the exclusion of others deemed to be 'not [w]hite'" (p. 1736). Whiteness as a power relation has been based on a mythology that white is supreme, coupled with "assigning…inferior status" to racial groups who are considered subordinate (p. 1761). As Bonds and

Inwood (2016) explain, white supremacy is "the presumed superiority of [w]hite racial identities…in support of the cultural, political, and economic domination of non-[w]hite groups" (pp. 719–720).

Socially constructed "truths" are reified, propagated, and in time achieve "commonsense" status, implicitly agreed-upon knowledge perceived as "what everyone knows." When a belief becomes "commonsense," it is no longer seen as needing or worthy of consideration. Why waste time contemplating what everyone already knows? As socially co-constructed assumptions about our own and others' identities proliferate, achieve commonsense status, and are reproduced generation after generation, the entire process (including the implicit, commonsense knowledge) is obscured and becomes virtually impossible to see.

This process explains why it is difficult for so many to recognize and acknowledge inequitable systemic conditions such as racism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity even when their harmful effects have been shown to exist.[8] Problematic systemic conditions are reproduced through intersections of perception, practice, power, and time, and these intersections limit our ability to see, acknowledge, and address the fundamental nature and underlying causes of the problems themselves (Houser, 2023, 2024). As everyday practices and perceptions are passed from generation to generation, they are internalized as aspects not simply of what we *do* but of how we *think* and who we *are*—as aspects of our self-identities. As these ideas achieve implicit commonsense status, they are no longer deemed necessary of further contemplation. For many today, Western practices and perceptions are viewed as all that exists, all that is worthwhile, and all that is possible (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Lukacs, 1923/1968/1994; Quinn, 1992).

Thus, perception, practice, power, and time intersect to reproduce existing conditions while obscuring the entire process, rendering it difficult to see and address (Houser, 2023, 2024). The primary function of perception in this process is that it constrains what we are capable of seeing, and therefore of consciously addressing. The function of everyday practice is that it continually reinforces and normalizes existing perceptions. The function of power is that it is used to enforce everyday practices long enough for them to "take hold," no matter how oppressive or alienating they may be. The function of time is that it provides the necessary space for the normalization of daily practices and perspectives to occur, and for their eventual achievement of commonsense status. The commonsense status of modern Western practices, perceptions, and epistemologies, coupled with loss of memory that things ever have been or ever could be otherwise, reinforces the belief that what we currently see is all there is.

This is the heart of the problem. Absolute, binary, and hierarchical epistemological assumptions, reinforced by everyday social relationships

and linguistic practices, shape our social constructions of our own identities simultaneously with, in opposition to, and as superior (or inferior) to our constructions of "others'" identities. Historically opposed communities, co-constructed and hierarchically arranged in binary opposition, struggle to live together and to make sense of the world they share. Since perception, self-identification, and hierarchical social arrangements are reified over time, the underlying nature, causes, and processes of the social inequities embedded in Western society remain, for many, largely unseen. And even when these processes are revealed, their existence can be difficult to accept, because acceptance requires acknowledging that their benefits and liabilities are still being accrued (Baldwin, 1963, 1963/1988; Houser, 2023, 2024; Said, 1978).

Implications for Education

We are deeply troubled by the book banning, censorship, and gag-order legislation currently enacted across the nation. We consider these actions mis-educative, unconstitutional, and dangerous to public education. Moreover, we fear this legislation threatens the very public upon which all of us depend. Where does this situation leave higher education? First, we think it is imperative that academics understand the impact of such legislation on education and society, and that we communicate this information to our students. This is essential for those who prepare teachers, counselors, administrators, community educators, and other educational personnel.

Second, it is important for us and our students to research and understand the underlying causes. From our reading of the situation, the current legislation appears to be an unconstitutional attempt to seize unprecedented power and control. We are witnessing extreme tensions throughout the country, manifested in fear, anger, and distrust across social and political strata. Many people's deeply held beliefs are grounded in past and continuing experiences of violence, brutality, exploitation, domination, dehumanization, and alienation. Other feelings are based on fear and uncertainty associated with real and perceived losses of power, privilege, status, and wealth amidst significant social and economic changes. Much of the fear, anger, and distrust on all sides is existential, involving deeply felt concerns about lives, families, and communities, about physical, social, and emotional safety, and about fundamental understandings of who we are as individuals and as a society. These sources of fear, anger, and distrust must also be known and taught to humanize each other as we work together to resolve our monumental challenges.

We believe it is also necessary to understand why it is so difficult for many to see, recognize, acknowledge, and address our problematic systemic conditions (e.g., racism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity) even when their harmful effects have been shown to exist. Here the task is to learn and teach about how intersections of perception, practice, power, and time

simultaneously reproduce and obscure the very conditions many seek to transform.

We strongly encourage those who are engaging in the incredibly difficult but vitally important work of identifying and addressing the roots of systemic oppression to *stay the course*. Legislative bans, censorship, and gag orders are being enacted because Critical Race Theory, "staying woke," and insisting on determining one's *own* sexual orientation and one's *own* gender identity rather than allowing them to be determined by others, are having an effect. If they were not effective, they would not be censored, banned, and silenced. The effectiveness of these challenges is *why* CRT, "remaining woke," and sexual orientation and gender identity education are being targeted by conservative state legislators.

Of course, those who engage in this work must proceed in ways that are both effective and allow them to remain in the profession. One way that we (from our admittedly privileged positions as white, middle-class scholars) have sought to do this is to begin by presenting historical events (which has not yet been banned), and then opening space for authentic dialogue. Not lecturing or admonishing (no matter how warranted these may seem), but genuine, reciprocal, mutually respectful conversation. At this point we ask, "What are your thoughts? Do you have questions? Does anyone have further information? Are there other views, based on different experiences? How is it possible for people living side-by-side to experience the world in such vastly different ways? Where does this leave us? What does it suggest for where we should go from here?"

If our primary purpose is to help our students learn how to think rather than what to think, it will be more difficult for others to argue that we are being divisive. There will also be greater possibility for lasting change if we engage our students in honest, informed discussion of the problems of the past and present. For this to occur, we will have to forego the gratification of being agreed with, refrain from defaulting to Western epistemologies to dismantle Western constructions (Lorde, 1984), and resist expecting radical transformation when what is ultimately required is the (painstakingly slow) process of human growth and development.

Finally, we can and must continue working on ourselves, challenging our own ideas, perpetually complicating and expanding our own identities and understandings. As fully and accurately as possible, we must continue to name the nature, causes, and processes of the systemic problems we encounter, including the distinct possibility of our own complicity, so we can imagine and enact better alternatives. This is essential if we are to avoid reproducing the very conditions we seek to transform.

Endnotes

1 At times, we utilize binary language—such as "rightwing" and "leftwing"—for the sake of clarity. We recognize these oversimplifications do not reflect existing variations, nuances, and complexities.

2 Arkansas, Florida, Iowa, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wyoming.

3 Alaska, Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

4 Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas.

5 Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

6 In Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and West Virginia.

7 This is an important point, because it suggests that teachers can still identify the events.

8 James Baldwin famously stated that the crime is in the innocence (1963).

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Does the U.S. Have a Uniquely American-Thinking Philosophy and Education? Conservative Liberal Arts vs. Liberal-Pragmatist Education

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Introduction

In principle, the institution of education in a democratic society functions to serve its citizens. As a result, societies charge colleges and universities with identifying how best to serve citizens and democratic society through education. The question is, what kind of education at once best serves citizens and democratic society? From the early 19th Century through WWI, higher-education students earned a "classical liberal-arts education," an education premised on its students' leisure-class status. Grounded in such "ancient" or "classical" studies in the liberal arts as philosophy, literature, history, and languages (beginning with ancient Greek and Latin), classical liberal-arts education's proponents positioned such studies as higher education's curricular focus, viewing the classical liberal arts as providing the knowledge necessary to live as free, informed citizens of leisure. Even today, many spend their lives, as John Dewey (1859–1952) observed, studying a metaphorical five-foot bookshelf of "Great Books."[1] Because huge social changes and expectations occurred with WWI's horrors, calling, among other things, the value of classical liberal-arts education into question, progressive liberalism emerged. Wanting to make education more democratic and egalitarian than did classical liberal-arts proponents, whose curriculum focused upon leisure-class students, progressive liberals did not begin their thinking about the kind of education required to produce free, informed citizens from all walks of life with the disciplines but with students, their interests, and experiences, and in general relation to contemporary social life. Often identified as proponents of vocational, professional, technical, and science education, progressive liberals focused their work in common schools while questioning the 19th-century dichotomy between common and postsecondary educations.

Because educators continue to ask how best to educate students to become free, informed citizens in democratic society and because those answering still tend to align with either the classical liberal arts or the

progressive-liberal camps, I investigate the issues of classical liberal-arts education vs. modern or progressive-liberal education, especially as they pertain to postsecondary education. To do this investigating, I focus on Alexander Meiklejohn's (1872–1964) vision for a classical liberal-arts education specific to the U.S., John Dewey's responses to Meiklejohn's experiments in university education, Meiklejohn's criticism of Dewey's progressive-liberal education, and key distinctions between the two men's educational starting points and philosophies. I begin by positioning Meiklejohn's philosophy and education experiments atop early Americans' striving for a uniquely American thinking and uniquely American philosophy from which a uniquely American education would emerge. I turn next to the history of Alexander Meiklejohn's life in education beginning with his student days because they greatly influenced him as an educator and education thinker. I emphasize both his vision and his influence not only on conservative liberal-arts education but U.S. education, note Dewey's review of Meiklejohn's Experimental College, and finish my history of Meiklejohn's life in education and of his educational thought noting his writing and innovations after the Experimental College. Finally, I ask readers to look to the ongoing debate, indeed dilemma, between these two quite-different kinds of liberal education in order to ask themselves "What kind of person do we as a society want to create?"

A Uniquely American Thinking and a Uniquely American Philosophy

Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) advocated a system of public education where, regardless of social class, students of ability could continue their educations. He suggested creating ward schools, district secondary schools, and a state university consisting of classical studies, moral and natural philosophy, foreign languages, mathematics, sciences, medicine, and law.[2] Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) thought the American scholar should begin by studying nature, continue by studying the past through books, progress to studying common life, trades, and manufacturing, and finally launch their knowledge into action.[3] Emerson essentially depicted the conflict over education that would define its future.[4]

Emerson casts upon the scholar the responsibility to become more than his social roles. The scholar is to become "Man Thinking": accumulating, organizing, classifying, learning his environment, and applying his intelligence. Although, in the scholar's pursuit of knowledge, what past scholars have learned and book-knowledge become important, Emerson warns that dependence upon past thinking and book-knowledge can limit one's thinking, for the past may dangerously become the end rather than the means: "…instead of Man Thinking we have the bookworm. Hence, the book-learned class, who value books, as such; not as related to nature and the human constitution…."[5] Some declared Emerson's "The American

Scholar" to be the Declaration of Independence from European thought and the beginning of a truly American way of thinking. Similarly, Walter Lippmann (1889–1974), later, in his 1915 review of John Dewey's *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*,[6] deemed Dewey's philosophy wholly American. Based on empirical and scientific methods, experience as knowledge source, and waning interest in ideal and metaphysical assumptions about truth, Dewey's wholly American philosophy is experimental; Dewey "is urging us consciously to manufacture our philosophy…[not] draw sanction from God, or nature, or evolution…to make our philosophies for our own needs and purposes."[7]

Meiklejohn's Impact on Conservative, Liberal-Arts Education

Meiklejohn's position on college education originated partly from personal experience. As an undergraduate, he found he had too much freedom to choose his courses. Although his first year included a set of prescribed courses, subsequent years allowed increased freedom to select courses interesting him, until the fourth year was totally elective. His college experience and course selection led Meiklejohn to distrust the college elective system in favor of more controlled course offerings, especially for younger students: "the elective transition was on and there seemed to be no guiding ideas. …[rather] an absence of structure" in undergraduate courses.[8] His encounter with philosophy reinforced his drive for "the cultural stability and moral certainty of the classical curriculum."[9] During his teaching tenure at Brown, he considered developing a block of courses that would provide a canon of knowledge all students would acquire before beginning their personalized studies for realizing their personal and professional goals. In his teaching, Meiklejohn emphasized the Socratic process of consideration and discovery of the broader meaning of all aspects of life. As professor and dean, he sought ways to empower students by acknowledging their ideas and experiences and through democratic participation in college governance.

Always an avid athlete, Meiklejohn, as a graduate student, devoted himself as much to sports as to philosophy. He played cricket, tennis, soccer, squash, lacrosse, and ice polo and participated in the first intercollegiate hockey game against Harvard. Ultimately, his professor, James Seth (1860–1925), warned him to concentrate more on his studies than his sports. After graduation Meiklejohn followed Seth to the Sage School of Philosophy at Cornell where "between tennis matches and hockey games, Meiklejohn managed to pass his qualifying exams at Cornell and finish a 153-page, handwritten dissertation entitled *Kant's Theory of Substance*.[10]

In 1897, having earned a philosophy Ph.D. from Cornell University, Meiklejohn returned to Brown University as an assistant professor. He avoided lecturing in favor of Socratic debate and open discussion. His students often questioned his restraint in disciplining them and the

scattergun focus of his teaching. One of his undergraduates named Meiklejohn's course in logic at Brown, "Rag Chewing 19."[11] Although none of these remarks deterred Meiklejohn, he lamented,

> …my most active students say, with ever greater insistence, "Are you sure you are asking a real question? Perhaps there are no bearings to find; perhaps your questions are themselves false; perhaps human living does not mean this or that, but only happens in this way or that."[12]

In his course offerings—Introduction to Philosophy, Scientific Methods, Discussions in Casuistry, and Kantian and post-Kantian Philosophy—Meiklejohn focused on analyzing philosophy and the implications of Kantian idealism. During Meiklejohn's fifteen years at Brown, he rose to the position of Dean of Students with responsibilities in discipline, athletics, and student government. As Dean, he focused on democratizing university governance even when students' decisions went against his own judgment.

During his tenure at Brown, Meiklejohn developed his ideas concerning the role of a college education. Part of defining what college education should be and should do is to identify those things an education should neither be nor do. In his 1908 article in *Education*, "College Education and the Moral Ideal," he expressed his disdain for education as preparation for life if such preparation is limited to vocational or practical studies. Lamenting college students' blindness to the importance of investigating the art of living without perceiving the importance of training to make a living, Meiklejohn asked whether "our college graduates go out to make a life or is their ideal simply to make a living?" He observed with chagrin that "most of us are sadly discouraged by the results at present"[13] of students merely training to make a living.

> …the aim of the American college…is not primarily to teach the forms of living, not primarily to give practice in the art of living, but rather to broaden and deepen the insight into life itself, to open up the riches of human experience, of literature, of nature, of art, of religion, of philosophy, of human relations, social, economic, political, to arouse an understanding and appreciation of these, so that life may be fuller and richer in content; in a word, the primary function of the American college is the arousing of interests.[14]

Moreover, Meiklejohn determined training

> …for success in pursuits which violate our ideals, is not only not the aim of the college; it is one of the tendencies in our civilization against which the college must stand and fight, and in such a fight must succeed as best it may.[15]

Beyond attacking the notion that college education's purpose is "preparing" students for success in life, Meiklejohn maintained meeting

society's demands and performing social service also to be unfit purposes of a college education, for students are automatically to serve society because the "natural" education–society relation induces students automatically to serve. Indeed,

> …the college must send its students out to serve, but it must first open their eyes and give them a vision which they may carry with them as the guide and inspiration of their work…and to send men out instructed and inspired by the possession of the best things of which our human nature is capable.[16]

What then should a college education be and do?

> It is the aim of the college life to give to a student the capacity for and the possession of healthy recreation, generous friendship, earnest work and ideal interests.[17]

> In a word, the primary aim of the college is the development and enrichment of the better tastes or interests. [That] interest should be aroused in the great impersonal universal things of human experience. In the order of nature as revealed by the sciences, in the fundamental puzzles and problems of human thought as defined by philosophy, in the experiences of religion, in the beauties of nature and of art, in the significance of literature, in the history of mankind, in the economic and social problems of the time.[18]

If the education colleges offered in 1908 discouraged Meiklejohn because that education often catered to frivolity in a time of life when students performed as little serious work as possible so to enjoy a young adulthood free from most social constraints, when Amherst College selected him as its president in 1912, he found himself in a position to do something about it. In his Inaugural Address, Meiklejohn laid the foundation for his liberal college-education vision, asserting the "college curriculum should be so arranged and our instruction so devised that its vital connection with the living of men should be obvious even to an undergraduate."[19] Identifying five essential elements to a liberal education—philosophy, humanistic science, natural science, history, and literature[20]—Meiklejohn viewed college "not [as] a place of the body, nor of the feelings, nor even of the will; [but]…a place of the mind"[21] and college education to mean one primarily pursues intellectual ends, leaving technical and professional training to other institutions. Meiklejohn based his exaltation of intellectual training and activity on two assumptions: "First, knowledge and thinking are good in themselves. Secondly, they help us in the attainment of other values in life which without them would be impossible."[22] For,

> …the principle underlying all our educational procedure is that, on the whole, actions become more successful as they pass from the sphere of feeling to that of understanding…to take human

> activity as a whole, to understand human endeavors not in their isolation but in their relation to one another and to the total experience which we call the life of our people.[23]

Meiklejohn continued teaching and developing curricula combining his five disciplinary pillars so that by 1915 the new curriculum, an endowed professorship, and a set of eight courses across the four years of undergraduate studies, began as a freshman elective. The Course of Study in Social and Economic Institutions "was [designed] to help students develop a general perspective on twentieth-century American civilization as a synthetic whole. Its emphasis was on intellectual rather than professional or vocational training."[24]

By the time Meiklejohn's freshman program elective was in place, Europe was entrenched in WWI and calling for the U.S. to join. Just as Meiklejohn had shot down the idea that college education's purpose is to prepare students for the workplace, he was skeptical of using colleges to prepare students for military mobilization and therefore resisted compulsory military training in the college.

> I do not believe that by any great miracle this people is to be integrated, is to be fused into a single Will. A war might do it but we hope that we shall not have a war. But lacking that we must win our unity not by some miracle of will, but by growing understanding of each other, by growing considerateness for our fellow citizens.[25]

According to Nelson, Meiklejohn supported "compulsory moral education, not compulsory military education, [as] the nation's best hope for peace."[26] Although he condemned hyper-nationalism as toxic to a shared national purpose, he told his students "to obey the laws of the United States, to go to war when called, to fight with conviction and confidence, but also to think—and think hard—about the war and its meaning."[27]

For Meiklejohn moral education found its source in his conception of the liberal-arts education he was trying to develop at Amherst: "intellectual training of the liberal type."[28] He wrote, "our hope lies not so much in the growth of a Will as in the development of a Mind, so that by our understanding of each other we shall learn to will together."[29] The changing times and conflicts among faculty, especially conflicts between the faculty he inherited and the faculty he brought in, caused slow erosion in the Board of Trustees' confidence. Just before the 1923 commencement, they asked for his resignation as President with retention as philosophy professor. Meiklejohn moved his family to Manhattan, gave public lectures and wrote essays, mainly for *The Century Magazine*. He turned down offers to teach at Harvard and The University of Chicago and refused requests for consideration for presidencies at Reed College, Knox College, and The University of Oklahoma.[30]

Meiklejohn sought the means to start a new college and with the assistance of *The Century*'s editor, Glenn Frank (1887–1940), assembled a group of supporters to fund the project.[31] Meiklejohn published his general proposal for such a college, "A New College: Notes on a Next Step in Higher Education," in *The Century* in January 1925.[32] One year later, he published a more-detailed proposal, "A New College" in *The New Republic*.[33] Based on lessons learned as Dean of Students at Brown and experiences from establishing the "Social and Economic Institutions" freshman program while President of Amherst, Meiklejohn presented a comprehensive proposal for creating a new liberal college, asserting the "interrelation of separate fields of knowledge is a primary task of those who seek to understand the world and our experience of it."[34] This new college consisted of a lower college for freshmen and sophomores and an upper college for juniors and seniors. For Meiklejohn it was necessary for the lower college to be limited in size: 250 students and 25 teachers with a "range of knowledge" and the ability to engage students not as lecturers but in a conference or seminar setting.[35] He wanted to integrate lower-college instruction in modern studies of the social, natural, and physical sciences in "terms of the more stable and permanent insights of…philosophy, history and literature and the other arts."[36] To provide the student with a grounding in the knowledge of the past with a view to how that knowledge influences modern studies, the lower-college curriculum focused on general enquiry and the development of "intelligence for living." The student must "begin to know both how knowledge is made and what it means."[37] The lower colleges provided the opportunity for social and intellectual development in preparation for the specialized study and scholarly development in the junior–senior upper college.[38] Although "Meiklejohn College" never materialized, he applied his ideas and program at the University of Wisconsin as the "Experimental College."

After Glenn Frank stepped down as *The Century*'s editor to become President of the University of Wisconsin in 1925, Meiklejohn joined him the next January as professor of philosophy and designer of the proposed Experimental College. The model for Experimental College was similar to the proposal for the lower college outlined in *The Century* and *The New Republic*, but instead of a new independent college, Experimental College was a college within a university. The plan was for a small faculty to collaborate on a course of study based on Athenian civilization for Experimental College freshman, on American civilization for its sophomores, and on studies of their own region during the summer: "we have the complete picture of a college run without classrooms, lectures, or text books; founded on a theory of education the purpose of which is to find and to teach a new way of life,"[39] leading "the student toward acquaintance with Human Intelligence as seen in two typical illustrations of its activity."[40]

Meiklejohn "interpreted [intelligence] as meaning all the creative activities, whether or not consciously directed, by which men strive to raise the quality of human experience."[41] For Meiklejohn, the

> …process of learning was a process of drawing connections between the specific and the general, between the particular and the transcendental, between the individual example and the universal essence. Liberal education, in other words, tried to interpret the meanings of human civilization through the major problems and intellectual controversies presented in books.[42]

Socratic exploration in a conference or seminar setting would encourage thoughtful enquiry. Student assignments ranged from directed reading and notetaking to reflection, essays, and research papers.[43] At its inception Experimental College had about 120 students and a dozen advisors, several of whom Meiklejohn selected from Amherst and Brown. After two years enrolled in Experimental College, many students transferred to other colleges and universities with great success. By 1931 economic conditions of the Depression, lack of administrative support, antagonism between Experimental College faculty and the College of Letters and Science faculty and its Dean, and personal animosities led Meiklejohn to ask his advisors to end Experimental College. A victim of the economy, university and state politics, and the animosity of those who desired the *status quo*, Experimental College ceased to exist until its rebirth as The Integrated Liberal Studies in the late 1940s.

Meiklejohn's 1932 book, *The Experimental College*, was a serious appraisal of his philosophy, plans, and experiences. He expanded on his ideas in the "New College" essays, citing his experiences, adding an appraisal of what went wrong, and offering suggestions for a liberal arts program in universities. Especially important was the development of faculty's teaching.

> …future professors are rigorously prepared for the activities of scholarship. We demand and require that they "know their subjects." But we do not demand that they understand or master the teaching process, that they know what students need and how their needs can be supplied.[44]

Dewey Reviews Meiklejohn's Experimental College

In "The Meiklejohn Experiment,"[45] John Dewey reviewed *The Experimental College*, expressing his appreciation for the efforts required to put a philosophy of education into action in opposition to higher education's *status quo*. Dewey viewed *The Experimental College* as a proposal for comprehensive rearrangement of universities not just a piecemeal incorporation of a few ideas. Reorganizing the university into a number of "lower colleges" with integrated general curricula and "upper colleges" with specialized practical or scholarly pursuits would take into account the

mission both to develop students' intelligence and provide professional training.

> [Meiklejohn provided] the philosophy of an actual undertaking, not as a full bolt from the blue of abstraction. Moreover, the educational ideas presented are tied up with a clearly thought-out conception of the nature, the defects and promise, of American culture and life.[46]

Dewey further complemented Meiklejohn by noting he did not claim unqualified success but proposed "a scheme of teaching whose merits have been demonstrated…[that] have a plan which seems worthy of consideration by an American college of liberal arts…and a contribution to the art of teaching—its discussion of what goes on, or may be induced to go on, in the contact of mind with mind."[47] Dewey assessed Meiklejohn's book detailing the experimental college at Wisconsin as

> …an account of a particular experiment undertaken in a particular American college…[which] attracted great attention, not to say controversy. … It excited enthusiasm and animosities…and involved a clash of persons as well as of educational principles and practical policies. It engaged the emotions quite as much as the intellect.[48]
>
> The Meiklejohn experiment was such a challenge to the accidental empiricism which so controls our college studies and teaching methods, that it's not surprising that it evoked bitter opposition or that it failed of achieving its supreme purpose.[49]

Dewey nevertheless wondered if the "methods actually pursued did not involve an overestimate of the function of books in developing intelligence."[50] Recognizing American society does not value literary heritage as much as it should, Dewey supported the movement toward curricular integration and the integration of social interactions between teacher and student, observing "a genuinely integrated learning and discipline cannot be attained without an integrated relationship of teacher and student."[51] He was nevertheless concerned that

> …the development of intelligence, not the assumption of intellectual responsibility; nor that the function of intelligence was conceived to be "service of men in the creation of and maintenance of a social order, a scheme of individual and group living, which will meet the human demands for beauty, strength, justice, generosity."[52]

Dewey viewed the experimental college as a proposed comprehensive rearrangement of the university not just a piecemeal incorporation of a few ideas. Dewey considered Meiklejohn's experiment such a challenge to most college studies and teaching methods that it evoked bitter opposition and failed to achieve intended purpose.

Meiklejohn's Innovations after Experimental College

After ending Experimental College, Meiklejohn moved to Berkeley, California where he began translating his ideas into the adult education movement. From 1934 until 1942, the San Francisco School for Social Studies (SFSSS) enrolled over 1,700 adult students in over 120 study groups from the San Francisco Bay area. Meiklejohn proposed the School's program as a "new branch of public education in America…[with a] comprehensive scheme of adult education."[53] The adult school would differ from the college by focusing on the condition of American society without grounding that study in the general background he thought one obtained from the study of ancient Greece. "The end to be served by this new teaching [would] not be vocational…[but the] creation of an active and enlightened public mind."[54] Pragmatic in his outlook, Meiklejohn defines

> …the practice of democracy in teaching…[as] one of 'free inquiry.' It seeks to create and develop the will and the capacity for independent judgment. It regards its own beliefs as open to study, to criticism, to revision. … [We] cannot teach democracy unless we trust it in action, practice it in our teaching.[55]

Meiklejohn modeled the SFSSS on his previous work at Brown, Amherst, and the Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin. He suggested the study of great books found in programs at Columbia and The University of Chicago.

> Basic to all these enterprises was a principle which, though constantly ignored, is as old as teaching itself. … [T]he best external help in learning to think about human problems is to get into living contact with the ablest men who have thought about these problems.[56]

For Meiklejohn, "democracy must arouse and sustain the creative intelligence."[57] The new adult education assists in "the beginnings of the making of an American mind."[58] Although loss of funding accompanying the United States' entry into WWII ended the school, Meiklejohn's experience with adult education programs and curricula caused him more poignantly to shift the educational focus to the meaning of American society, as he attests in several magazine and journal articles and two books, *What Does America Mean* (1935) and *Education Between Two Worlds* (1942). In these works, Meiklejohn outlines his perception of American society's condition, expressing his discomfort with what he called the "American problem."[59]

One way Meiklejohn seems to have worked through his discomfort was by contrasting past knowledge from two scholars and by looking to the past itself, in this case, when schooling was grounded in Christian beliefs and morality and when England broke from such schooling. In *Education Between Two Worlds*, Book I, Meiklejohn contrasted Comenius' (1592–1670)

thought with John Locke's (1632–1704), positing that "Comenius…better than anyone else I know, expresses, in its early Protestant form, the Christian view of what schools are and do."[60] He suggested had Comenius been successful in establishing a Pansophic College in 1641, and, had the Civil Wars (1642–1651) in England not ended its Pansophic College project, his influence would have forestalled the transfer of education from church to state. Religious elements aside, Comenius' focus was universal education, the idea of pansophia, universal wisdom, and sense realism.[61] Although his belief in universals would require the teaching of Latin since Latin was considered the universal language of scholars, children's educations would have begun in the vernacular with students' everyday experiences.

In the writing of John Locke, Meiklejohn found self-contradictory social tendencies which have dominated the Protestant–capitalist era. Locke's vision for education was more limited than that of Comenius. Locke mirrored the aristocratic structure of his society but sought to reform the teaching of young aristocrats whose experiences at even the best boarding schools could be quite unpleasant while those at the hands of personal tutors could be limited by the tutor's personality and preparation.[62] Meiklejohn disagreed with Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and the "uncompromising attitude towards dogmatism and the construction of abstract systems generally; its method demands a close adherence to reality, and full allowance for the results of concrete thinking. The claims of authority are confronted by the assertion of the absolute necessity for independence of mind."[63] Meiklejohn also disagreed with Locke's view of individual rights, and the role of the state. For Locke, "the rights of the individual acquired a moral superiority over civil law and order."[64] Meiklejohn preferred his view of Comenius who seemed to him to overcome the authority vs. independence of mind dispute.

In *Education Between Two Worlds*, Book II, Meiklejohn continued his look to past knowledge from past scholars. Focusing on Rousseau's flawed view of government and his unworkable plan for education, Meiklejohn pits Rousseau against Dewey and Pragmatism. Meiklejohn recounted the roots of "modern teaching" in the views of Rousseau (1712–1778) as "the most stimulating, the most suggestive, the most provocative of all recent students of a society and its teachers."[65] For Rousseau, "the rights of the individual and the authority of the state spring from the same stock. They have the same moral status."[66] That the state determines rights and may deny them is clear. The issue remains that there are more rights than the state confers. Will and Ariel Durant observed of Rousseau's philosophy, "There is a social contract…not as a pledge of the ruled to obey the ruler, but as an agreement of individuals to subordinate their judgment, rights, and powers to the needs and judgment of their community as a whole."[67] In his review of *Education Between Two Worlds*, Sydney Hook asserts:

> From Rousseau and his theory of the General Will[,] Mr. Meiklejohn openly derives his clue. The General Will takes the place of God as the only and absolute source of all moral authority. The author seems unaware that weak as are the arguments for the existence of God, they are stronger than the arguments for the existence of a General Will.[68]

Ultimately Rousseau substituted a secular supernatural belief in place of religion and rejected representative democracy, reasoning that legislators will make laws that benefit themselves first. Meiklejohn says, "Rousseau combines, as no one else since Plato has done, the study of society and the study of education. Better than anyone else he seems to me to lead the way into the consideration of 'modem' problems."[69] Meiklejohn concluded, "It may be that we moderns can create a nontheological civilization which can carry on the work of morality and intelligence."[70] Hook noted that for a world state, Meiklejohn recommended

> …a common education with fixed goals and prescribed content, scholarship harnessed to true politics, training for world citizenship, and an extended program of adult education. Excellent suggestions—some of them. But those that a democracy can use are compatible with a theory of democracy entirely different from that of Mr. Meiklejohn.[71]

In skipping from Rousseau to Pragmatism, Meiklejohn ignored Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche's powerful contributions as well as Dewey's tracing of his own educational thought through Rousseau's in *Schools of Tomorrow* (1915).

In his 1941 article, "Higher Education in a Democracy," Meiklejohn structured his criticism of Pragmatism and Dewey that he later followed up with in *Education Between Two Worlds*, Book III, where he continued his focus on pragmatist thought in general and John Dewey's pragmatism, in particular.

> The pragmatic attempt has failed at its most essential point. It is significant chiefly because it is so faithfully representative of the inner failure and collapse of the civilization for which it speaks. If that is true, then we must try to go beyond pragmatism.[72]

Meiklejohn's article began his serious attention to the role of pragmatism in education and society. "If you will look back at democracy and education," Meiklejohn wrote, "and ask where John Dewey stood and what he had to say to America and for America twenty-five years ago, you will find it summed up in that statement in which he characterizes his own argument, 'I took democracy for granted.'"[73] Meiklejohn seriously misquotes and misrepresents Dewey's writing and thought, for Dewey did not take democracy for granted but "took for granted the democratic criterion and

its application in present social life."[74] In suggesting technology facilitated the development of democracy, Dewey did not preclude other outcomes for the effects of technological advances. Aristocratic domination was superseded by domination of the economic class. Meiklejohn found the problem in the limited effect of religion. He attributed the changes in societies to the influence of technology and the sciences. He disregarded the impact of economic conditions and the rise of nationalistic ideologies.

Meiklejohn identified "two things the dictatorships are saying: first, down with religion, the opiate of the people. Then they have a second one. Not only down with religion, but up with the state."[75] The rise of the totalitarian state, however, was neither scientific nor technological, neither political nor economic, though each sector made its impact. The fascist ideology was the victory of feeling over thinking, the emotional over the rational. Bolshevism succeeded in response to intolerable conditions and the promise of a new social structure. Meiklejohn opposed modernity and its increasing domination by the apparatus of the state to the detriment of religion, especially in education: "The place to discover a society most clearly and most directly is in its schools. There you will find what the society thinks and what it values, as you will find them nowhere else."[76] The waning influence of the church from whence schools and colleges originated heightened the differences between the secular and the sacred. Meiklejohn forgot, however, that religion, no less than government, is a human enterprise, equally subject to abuse and self-interest. Ultimately, for Meiklejohn,

> Higher learning in a democracy is criticism, and democracy is self-criticism. I appeal to you in the name of American democracy to make sure that every institution of higher learning in America is studying dictatorship and democracy so that we may not only beat the dictators but understand them; not only conquer them, but ourselves.[77]

Hook observed that Meiklejohn

> …expresses with feeling and unrestraint a growing mood in the country. It is cut to order for groups who would like to save democracy from itself, not by appealing to common interests and negotiating those that are not common, but by invoking a Public Good or General Will, interpreted by themselves, that has no relation to anybody's interest except, accidentally, to their own…. In the pre-Hitlerian era it would be sufficient to say that this is a false and foolish book. In the era of Hitler it must be characterized as false and dangerous.[78]

Along that same line, Dewey suggested that education takes more than "a study of democracy and dictatorships. All intelligent political criticism is comparative."[79] He wrote, "It deals not with all-or-none situations, but with

practical alternatives; an absolutistic indiscriminate attitude, whether in praise or blame, testifies to the heat of feeling rather than the light of thought."[80] In his criticism of Dewey and Pragmatism, Meiklejohn sought to follow the example of Socrates, "to limit the argument to the evidence presented by his opponent."[81] The Socratic method, however, has its uses and misuses. Dialectically, it provides all sides of a question to be examined. Critically, the inquisitor structures the questions to obtain the desired answers. Though he accepted the waning of the theological and the supernatural, Meiklejohn states, "Pragmatism is Darwinism applied to human intelligence. It is scientific naturalism, as opposed to a theological supernaturalism."[82] For Meiklejohn intelligence was the outcome of educational experiences with thinkers of the past. Conversely, Dewey maintained education was the application of intelligence through experience in the present, identifying the philosopher's task to be determining "what criteria and what aims and ideals should control our educational policies and undertakings."[83] The revival of the movement toward "Liberal colleges" bothered Dewey. Insisting the progress of the pragmatic and progressive in education was the breaking down of the chasm between utilitarian and liberal views of education, Dewey suggested the liberal is not necessarily liberating, that Liberal is not liberalism: "The traditional idea is that a certain group of studies is Liberal because of something inhering in them—belonging to them by virtue of an indwelling essence or nature."[84] Purveyors of classical Greek education, separating education of the aristocratic, leisure class from the training of the peasant, working classes, and later education of gentlemen from the training of tradesmen, premise their model on aristocrats' noble, refined nature and everyone else's baseness.

> A five-foot bookshelf for adults, to be read, reread, and digested at leisure throughout a lifetime, is one thing. Crowded into four years and dealt out in fixed doses, it is quite another thing. … It marks reversion to the medieval view of dependence upon the final authority of what others have found out—or supposed they had found out—and without the historical grounds that gave reason to the scholars of the Middle Ages…[and] it marks a departure from what is sound in the Greek view of knowledge as a product of intelligence exercised at first hand.[85]

Meiklejohn responded to Dewey's concerns noting their goals as very much the same and that he also

> …accepts as his own the goal at which his opponents are driving. He, too, hates incoherence and painlessness…would like to know what he is doing, where he is going. [He identifies] the common problem. How can the curriculum be simplified?[86]

To illuminate the matter, Meiklejohn focused on his ideas behind Experimental College at Wisconsin and the liberal arts curriculum at St.

John's College. He found two issues: the choice between the study of the past as opposed to the study of the present, and imitation of the past in liberal-arts studies. Although Meiklejohn wrote "that all education should be a study of the present…[that] the goal of teaching is an understanding of the present,"[87] he based the study of the present on a study of past writers and scholars. Meiklejohn wanted an educational structure that would meet the needs of a modern, democratic society, but his view of a liberal education missed the broader point that such education originated from and perpetuated a dualistic education. He favored liberal education as the focus, leaving students to work out professional, vocational, and self-fulfillment goals over time: "liberal teaching must be deeply concerned with the vocations of men…[not] centered upon the specific vocation of that pupil."[88] He concluded that although he could not

> …accept the pragmatic interpretation of the modern and the new…that does not mean that my heart is fixed upon the past rather than upon the future…. American students of education… have tragically serious and sober work to do. We have common problems to tackle.[89]

Meiklejohn's heart, however, remained chained to a narrow perspective of the educational enterprise.

Conclusion

In Isaiah Berlin's words, Alexander Meiklejohn was a hedgehog.[90] First, at Brown as Professor and Dean, Meiklejohn tried to provide an open-democratic environment based on Socratic teaching. His classes were discussion; his leadership *laissez faire*; neither resulted in him realizing his goals. Amherst's entrenched faculty, whom he did not bring into planning and implementing the program, doomed his vision for a freshman liberal-arts curriculum. At Wisconsin his Experimental College enjoyed brief success but proved unsustainable as a model for expansion across the university, and the San Francisco School for Social Studies (SFSSS), dependent on external support, expired with Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. Fixing upon "cultivation of intelligence" on an international scale, Meiklejohn's vision extended to "internationally minded" universities and worldwide adult education[91] in his UNESCO consulting work for the United Nations. Cultivating intelligence significantly contrasts with Dewey's stress on the responsibilities of intelligence. Similarly, Dewey distinguishes his focus on students, their contexts, and their experiences with Meiklejohn's focus on the disciplines, maintaining conservative, liberal-arts education and its educators as authoritarian: "There is implicit in every assertion of fixed and eternal first truths the necessity for some *human* authority to decide, in this world of conflicts, just what these truths are and how they shall be taught."[92]

The end of WWII and the passing of the GI Bill of Rights provided a watershed for higher education. Meant to support GIs' reintegration into a peacetime society in which they would live as productive citizens, most veterans wanted a practical, useful course of study they associated with professional studies and vocational training. Initially the education only the leisure class would enjoy, conservative, liberal-arts education, democratized into the norm for public schooling during the 19th Century, now reverted to its place as leisure-class education. Meanwhile, educators structured liberal-arts education in public secondary schools, colleges, and universities for a quasi-leisure class. The subsequent growth of postsecondary education has, almost a century later, resulted in the general expectation that common-school curricula should support teachers preparing all public-school students for college and university studies. Many students begin that path but drop out or continue until earning a degree yet live most of their adult lives repaying loans. Although secondary and postsecondary vocational and technical campus curricula offer students an opportunity to train for work, they create a separate track that often separates vocational students from mainstream school activities.

The conservative liberal-arts education with its perceived authoritarianism versus liberal pragmatism with its perceived emancipatory premise and structure remain a dilemma each time one considers the kind of education to which U.S. citizens should have access. Few higher-education institutions emphasize the conservative, liberal-arts education one often associates with a scholarly rather than useful education. Required courses for beginning college students provide whatever grounding students need in mathematics, physical sciences, fine arts, humanities, and the social sciences to specialize in a work-focused field. Courses students need for their majors take precedence over courses through which they might explore and deepen their knowledge and understanding. Insofar as schooling-for-function, has U.S. education become uniquely American because its uniquely anti-intellectual and anti-thought? Are the U.S.-educated condemned to repeat the past because they know nothing of it? Today's U.S. secondary and postsecondary school curricula reveal that those deciding which kind of education has value have abandoned conservative, liberal-arts education's strictly regimented curriculum in favor of the required, "useful" curriculum and continuing self-education, an expansion of the idea of a five-foot bookshelf that reflects neither Meiklejohn's nor Dewey's goals for an educated U.S. citizenry. What kind of person do we in the U.S. want to create, and which kinds of things do we want this person to be able to do and contribute?

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Artificial Intelligence, Gamification, and Constructivist Pedagogy

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…technology is not neutral, and it must be steered by our agency.
—UNESCO, 2024

Introduction

Technological advancements in recent decades have transformed access to information, changed how one studies, and created new tools through which one learns and constructs knowledge. Because the world runs on digital technologies, integrating technology use into education has become essential to ensuring students function well in the working world they enter as adults. We posit that beyond knowing how to use digital tools, one might enhance learning processes and outcomes via digital technologies, particularly when teachers combine these technologies with constructivist pedagogies. Specifically, we suggest weaving together artificial intelligence (AI), digital gamification, and constructivist pedagogies not only offers students unique opportunities to engage, explore, and experiment as they construct their own knowledge but to receive immediate feedback on their learning processes, growth, and "products" they have created. First, we address AI's educational possibilities and challenges. Second, we consider digital learning gamification, and, third, we define constructivism before turning to AI, digital gamification, and constructivism in liaison.

Artificial Intelligence and Education

Given AI's potential to free teachers from administrative work and students' applying it to school assignments, educators are incorporating AI into schooling internationally. UNESCO (2021) recognizes AI's educative value, identifying it as innovative, providing rapid feedback and information to students, especially information helping to guide problem solving and resolving doubts (Fonseca, Benitez, & Oliva, 2019), and as delivering intelligent tutoring systems (UNESCO, 2021). Despite excitement over AI's power and although AI projects itself as a "smarter-than-most" expert, AI remains a *tool* one should not use to replace a human teacher and subject expert (Rodríguez, Castro, Pilay, & Quimiz, 2021). Indeed, developing AI's digital capacities for education should include linking those capacities with

students' educational levels, the content and specific subject, the course curriculum, and specific exercises and activities aligning with these levels, contents, subjects, and curricula (Rodríguez et al., 2021). While maintaining AI's integration into schooling should prepare students for adulthood in a world where digital technologies will continue to play a strong role and may well improve the efficiency in which students learn, we recognize one should not embrace AI before considering numerous challenges its use calls to the forefront. We consider three such challenges.

First, one must question AI-generated responses' quality and then, as a result of that quality, the value of AI-generated responses to the teacher or learner. Part of response quality and value concerns misinformation, including false bibliographic references. Although to teachers and students such misinformation is of negative value, one must ask, "To whom is such misinformation of value?" and "Who values disseminating such information of value?" Second, UNESCO (2021) is only one international organization asking how AI might pose obstacles to human rights. For example, AI programs may collect and store personal information without users' consent or permission, which violates one's Right to Protection of Personal Data. In turn, algorithms, when trained on user information, can perpetuate prejudices and discrimination. Recognizing AI's possible detriments to human rights, UNESCO (2021) has composed its recommendations for using AI ethically in its "Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence" (UNESCO, 2021). With bullying rampant at school sites and among students on cyberspace, school administrators and educators need to address AI ethics upfront as well as the legal, reflective, and critical elements involved when choosing to use AI (Mengi-Dinçer, Ediger, & Yesevi, 2021). Some critical elements that need to be strengthened include reliable and consistent fairness, transparency, and user privacy. Finally, should one wish ethically, legally, critically, and effectively to incorporate AI into teaching and learning, one must provide training on AI's operation, usage techniques, algorithms, and data handling before delivering training specific to teachers' administrative and pedagogical use. The training time required to use AI depends on the intensity, depth, and specialization desired, as well as the level of familiarity that the user has up front. All of these aspects are taken into consideration with the aim of AI supporting, enhancing and amplifying the effects and knowledge of pedagogy.

Gamification and Education

Humans and other animals have used play to teach children and to supply relief after concentrated learning since ancient times. Indeed, the brain seems to work and thrive on play (Bruner, 1960)! Today, many humans' audiovisual and interactive preferences seem to beg educators to combine digital technologies with play to enhance cognitive processes and speed

knowledge construction. Although leaders in the economic, marketing, and production sectors have experimented with digital gamification's usefulness for many years, demonstrating its effectively improving these sectors' work outcomes, increasing students' motivation to participate in classes (Landers, Bauer, Callan, & Armstrong, 2015), students' positive learning experiences, and students' actual learning (Kim & Lee, 2015) premise digital gamification in schools. In contrast to the use of elaborate games requiring previous content knowledge and knowledge of game design and how it develops, digital gamification tools use game-thinking and game-design structures to encourage students' motivation, engagement, positive experiences, and learning (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke, 2011).

Over 40 years ago, Malone (1980) began instead with the notion of "fun," identifying three criteria for making learning fun. For learning to be fun and thereby motivate students to learn, Malone (1980) contends the task must be *challenging*, arouse *curiosity*, and be under the learner's *control*. Malone (1980) further stipulates the challenge must incorporate relevant objectives for students' learning; building previously unconceived mental images through visual and auditory effects are to arouse students' curiosity; and giving students ownership for their own learning via choices within the game is to promote self-determination constituting Malone's criterium for "control." Malone's (1980) criteria—challenge, curiosity, and control—indeed connect to Gee's (2003) later stipulation that making quality game-based simulations requires game-makers to create flexible spaces where students may experiment, make decisions, and see their actions' consequences in an interactive, healthful environment. These three criteria further link to digital gamification supporters' connecting to intrinsic motivation theory to ground digital gamification within schooling (Kim & Lee, 2015).

Before constructing a digital learning game, fun and thereby motivational, those creating the digital game, in principle, analyze the discipline(s) included in the game, the students' knowledge base and levels, and students and their local context; define learning objectives; design the experience; apply relevant contextual elements to curricular content; ascertain how to ground the game process in learning and pedagogical theories; and know how to use the game's operational elements to systematize what all students in the class will come to know via the game (Valenzuela Alfaro, 2021).

Moreover, similar to AI, one must analyze and evaluate the ethical and social aspects involved when students access and engage in the game, for their engagement influences how students behave in the school environment while calling responsible use, data privacy, and equal access to the gaming tools and play into question (Deterding et al., 2011). Also, like AI, one must ensure the game adapts to students' different learning styles, intelligences, and educational and developmental levels (Plass, Homer, & Kinzer, 2015).

Last, although one's tendency may be to evaluate students according to their game play vs. their learning, growth, and knowledge construction, for digital gaming to be worth the class time invested and confidence in its educative value, teachers should identify progress, growth, and knowledge acquisition indicators and effective mechanisms for monitoring and measuring these indicators (Kapp, 2012).

Constructivism, Gamification, and Artificial Intelligence

Although one might ground AI and gamification in multiple different learning theories, we select constructivist learning theories and pedagogical applications because they are student-centered, and focus on learners' constructing their own knowledge using their prior knowledge, interactions with the environment, and building upon each new experience gained during the teacher's scaffolding for learning (Bada & Olusegun, 2015).[1] Constructivism thus builds upon the imperative that all students' experiences are of value. With this value as a preliminary, teachers and students recognize students each construct knowledge uniquely; teachers personalize teaching and learning, accordingly; and teachers scaffold learning to support students' unique means of knowledge construction.

Although Zegarra (2014) posits constructivist teaching liaised with AI influences "learning processes…in order to generate autonomous development," we maintain adding digital gamification increases the sense of play and the students' sense of control over their own learning and knowledge acquisition. Some of this control arises because constructivism suggests the possibility of attempts, errors, exploration, evaluation, and reflection, processes through which one constructs knowledge. By providing opportunities for students actively to explore and experiment within a game context, students must make decisions, analyze, evaluate, and solve problems, and reflect on their experiences, which, in a suitable environment with teachers' guidance, could improve their understanding and assimilation of the subject. Thus, although the teacher initially sets up the digital gamification tool to direct students' learning to some degree, students' participation in digital gamification in turn directs teaching to improve learning performance with AI's help. In this sense, AI can analyze how students respond to the challenges of gamified teaching and support them in overcoming obstacles and taking advantage of strengths in real time with teaching adapted to their particular needs, which must be monitored by an attentive teacher.

In contrast to teacher-centered, direct instruction in which the teacher holds all knowledge, teachers combining AI and gamification with constructivist pedagogies prioritize students, their learning, and their experiences' value, encouraging, supporting, and promoting students' learning through play. Ideally, play grounded in constructivism helps students not only come to know but internalize the knowledge they

construct, so they may build upon it (Türkmen & Soybaş, 2019). Using AI and digital educational games as classroom learning tools and activities is promising because AI and games center fun as their motivational component and because games promote, support, and reinforce such skills as problem solving, collaboration, and communication while students enjoy themselves (Dicheva, Dichev, Agre, & Angelova, 2015). Using AI to generate game content and dynamics, digital gamification as the learning activity, and constructivist pedagogy as the overall design can transform what might be a dry, lifeless encounter into a meaningful and memorable educational experience. The bonus beyond students' learning to value their own and others' learning experiences, interactions, and means of knowledge construction is their receiving immediate feedback concerning their progress and growth.

Endnote

[1] Cognitive constructivist theorists include Jean Piaget (1970) and Jerome Bruner (1960) as well as cognitivist and sociocultural constructivist, Lev Vygotsky/Vigotsky (1978). Piaget and Bruner focus on the child's learning style and developmental stages while Vygotsky focuses on meaning and understanding's growth from social encounters and dependence upon sociocultural context.

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Wobbling on the Razor's Edge: A Review of Literature Examining How Teacher Preparation Programs Can Teach Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in States with a Hostile Climate

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At Issue

In the late 1990s when one of the authors taught in special education at an inner-city public school, a co-worker wrote her master's thesis on the benefits of sterilization of the intellectually disabled. Although history has all but buried evidence of U.S. sterilization laws—at least 31 states passed such legislation—some sterilization laws remain on the books to this day (National Women's Law Center, 2022). But involuntary sterilization was not limited to those with intellectual disabilities. The sterilization of Native-American women during the 1970s at the Indian Health Services hospital in Claremore, Oklahoma was so pervasive that it is now estimated that for every four babies born, at least one woman was involuntarily sterilized (Ordover, 2003). Clearly this shocking practice is not confined to ancient history, so our failure to understand the ramifications of these abhorrent, involuntary practices raises the opportunity for discriminatory practices to continue. Although teachers are not in a position to cause the terrible physical harm these doctors caused, they nevertheless carry the burden and responsibility of causing emotional harm and mental duress.

Teaching about the history of discriminatory practices is critical in teacher preparation programs as classroom teachers influence how students think about and treat students of color and students with intellectual or physical differences. Decades of educational research demonstrates how children of color, for example, are disproportionately disciplined at a higher rate than their white peers (Samimi, Jefferson, Flanagan, & Anyon, 2023). Therefore, teaching how to recognize and navigate racial, gender, and socioeconomic constructs at work in schools which can silence the voices of some students is of vital importance for teacher preparation programs. To accomplish this, we argue, teacher educators need critically to teach curricula focused on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

(DEIA). The ramifications of not doing so, we posit, affect not only students, but affect teachers' ability to contribute to a socially, culturally, and economically just society. Since both authors reside and teach in states that Kelleher (2022) documents have established legislation to prohibit the teaching of certain DEIA content, we thought it important to document how some teacher educators wobble on the razor's edge between university-mandated DEIA standards and their states' silencing of teacher speech and curriculum through the use of educational gag orders (EGOs), specifically focusing our work on how our teacher education colleagues navigate these treacherous waters. We construct this paper to provide the research context for our empirical work with teachers, currently ongoing.

Overview

In this paper, we provide a review of the literature constructed to illustrate what materials are available to teacher educators navigating the ambiguities between their institutions' DEIA policies and states' EGOs. We seek to understand how, in spite of legal prohibitions, teacher educators might still teach to dismantle racial injustice in those states currently under legislation to censor teacher-educator voices without imperiling their livelihoods. It seems inconceivable to us that faculty in teacher preparation programs are mandated by their universities to note diversity and difference among their students and promote a culturally based curriculum that will be effective for all students while simultaneously adhering to their state's educational gag orders. In having what Hess and Noguera (2021) call "courageous conversations" (p. xi), we learn that avoiding these conversations is sometimes neither possible nor desirable. In what they describe as the functions of schools, they state the three functions of education are "social, economic, and political" (p. 8); they maintain it is not possible for teacher educators to avoid these functions. Sometimes it feels there is an overabundance of hate, misunderstanding, anger, or snippy platitudes instead of real, in-depth, and meaningful discussions about difficult issues, however, courageous conversations are indispensable. As teacher educators, we try to provide space to have those conversations necessary to live, work, and compete in a diverse society, but how is this possible when we are forbidden, sometimes by threat of prosecution or job loss, to say certain words or ask about a person's feelings? In his influential work about poverty and equity, Gorski (2018) lays out the difference between an empty conversation about difference and one that is robust and productive. He elaborates the first step in a critical conversation is to be able to name the problem, which requires educators' specific knowledge and skills to identify and challenge bias and deficit thinking. However, how are *courageous conversations* and open discussions of difficult political topics possible in a culture that punishes teacher educators for enacting DEIA curriculum?

Considering this political context, our paper therefore is designed to function as an initial step in our research on how teacher educators respond to educational gag orders. We first present current definitions and understandings of DEI and educational-gag-order laws, we then discuss the reasons for and challenges of teaching DEI. Next, we review the literature on gag-order laws that could be used to understand how teacher educators navigate such laws, and, finally, we discuss what we recommend in terms of theory to help teacher educators with decision-making and a discussion of our subsequent empirical research.

Research Questions

Education seems to us to be an epicenter for the current culture war because, according to Rogers and Kahne (2022), politicians have exploited the current political conflict further to split the electorate by injecting partisanship into political topics in which many individuals and communities have a stake. We seek to answer the following questions:

- How can teacher educators educate pre-service regular and special educators critically to teach about the politics of race, gender, ability, and socioeconomic status in states with EGOs?
- How do teacher educators adhere to university DEIA initiatives when state EGOs are at play?
- How do teacher educators reconcile the difference between the requirements to teach DEI content and the fear of their state's educational gag orders?

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) in Teacher Education

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), which represents over 800 postsecondary teacher-preparation institutions, proclaims DEIA as one of its core values (AACTE, 2023). AACTE recognizes the struggle of teacher educators to engage in honest, robust conversations about diversity at all levels. The association has developed the Educating for American Democracy Initiative, which promotes a framework in which teacher educators teach pre-service teachers to instruct in history and civics. The AACTE proposes to incorporate their framework in all subject areas and grade levels to interrupt "historical tensions and the polarization of current topics deemed essential to a well-rounded, inclusive civic education [which] has created hesitance for teachers, especially those just entering the classroom, to engage students in civic inquiry" (para. 3).

Likewise, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE. 2021) represents over 14,000 college and higher-education career professionals. In their annual DEIA report for 2021, they express their

commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion as a cornerstone of the organization. Their strategic goals are solidly ensconced in development of and engagement in creating opportunities for diverse learners and their commitment to anti-racist research. DEIA initiatives in higher education have designed myriad educational opportunities, not just for people of color, but for people with different abilities, veterans, the LGBTQ+ population, and adult learners.

Educational Gag Orders (EGOs)

At the time of our writing, certain speech is increasingly challenged, in particular in higher education. For example, in a recent Oklahoma governor's State of the State address he decried, "…when we send our kids to college, we expect our tuition to pay for their education, not their indoctrination! I want our universities to have less DEI officers and more career placement counselors" (oklahoma.gov, 2023). What the governor does not mention is that for a teacher preparation program to be certified by the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) this body requires its pre-service teachers exhibit a knowledge of diversity (CAEP, 2022). In addition, to ameliorate the nationwide teaching shortage universities are expected to recruit and retain a culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse student population (USDOE, 2023). These mandated requirements become difficult to achieve if admissions officers and faculty do not understand the unique needs of under-represented populations who have traditionally not pursued higher education such as people of color, people with disabilities, adult learners, and veterans.

In Texas, Governor Greg Abbot has taken Governor Stitt's words even farther. Senate Bill 17 legislates state universities must close their offices of diversity and cease all diversity training within six months. This marks Texas as the second state behind Florida to enact such legislation (Fortinsky, 2023). Even universities' hiring practices must be made color- and gender-blind. "We call it division, inequity, and indoctrination. The DEI office name is a misnomer…. We feel like it's purposely being misused, to push a very woke very liberal agenda" (Chandler, 2023).

Florida, Oklahoma, and Texas are not the only states legally imposing educational gag orders on public education. Several other states are considering similar measures to eliminate DEI offices in public universities (Kellerman, 2023). The script for such legislation was drafted and disseminated by The Manhattan Institute, authored by senior fellow Christopher Rufo (Rufo, Shapiro, & Beienburg, 2023), meant to eliminate DEI offices and prohibit the training of faculty and staff to identify systemic racism. Elimination of DEI offices in public universities is likely to decrease the recruitment of underserved minorities. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has issued several statements in opposition to state gag orders. The AAUP evidences over 500 anti-CRT

bills (allegedly pertaining to the teaching of "critical race theory") have been filed with over 200 local, state, and federal entities (AAUP, 2023). PEN America (Friedman & Tager, 2023), a 100-year-old organization dedicated to freedom of expression and free speech, reports 15 states currently have enacted legislation to restrict teaching about racism, race, and gender issues. We argue that without learning such knowledge in the classroom, it becomes more difficult for students to understand the power dynamics of race- and ability-based inequities.

We see educational gag orders as popular with some segments of the public because of the fear students will be indoctrinated with certain political and social ideologies that stand in opposition to their families' values. Acknowledging that parents and students should have a voice in the curriculum, we point to what some literature reveals about people's fear respective to DEI that its critics raise. How can educators, parents, and students find common ground and allay fears? How can we listen to one another respectfully in a highly partisan political moment? Are there genuine concerns that can be discussed, or are we dealing with simply another example of a moral panic? Starting with a review of the literature seems to be the prudent approach to establish a foundation for further discussions of these concerns.

Teaching DEI

The process of teaching about diversity can be uncomfortable for individuals in advantaged groups. Gay (2015) reports it challenging for educators from advantaged backgrounds to teach in a culturally responsive manner if they do not first understand their own culture and the cultural differences of others. She elaborates that, often, "Students don't know as much as they need to about their own cultures, histories, and heritage" (p. 124). Additionally, much of what students think they know and understand about other cultures is often overshadowed by deficit thinking. However, acquiring a cultural knowledge base about under-represented groups is not alone enough to make change. Teachers will need to translate their acquired knowledge into culturally relevant, equitable curriculum. Culturally responsive teaching is intended to prepare learners for thoughtful participation in society.

Faculty in teacher preparation programs must be equipped to guide their students through the difficult process of understanding oneself in relation to their race, gender, and socio-economic position, particularly the influences of deficit thinking in many American classrooms. This can be an onerous and painful journey for members of advantaged groups who have never been challenged about the perspective of others from marginalized populations and how current educational practices can work to keep their voices silenced. For example, Castagno (2013) posits that a mere awareness of race, culture, and racism is insufficient for challenging

societal norms of whiteness. Sociologist Ruth Frankenberg (1993) points to the difficulty of even recognizing race given that, "Whiteness is even difficult for white people to name. Those who are securely housed within its borders usually do not examine it" (pp. 228–229). Educators in PK–12 classrooms must be taught to recognize and address racial differences in order to create equitable learning environments that respect and support the diverse backgrounds of all students. Ellerbrock and Cruz (2014) delineate five stages of diversity awareness and identity development: naïveté/pre-awareness, bombardment, dissonance/resistance, adjustment/redefinition, and, finally, acceptance/internalization. Often, the greatest difficulty in relation to multicultural awareness is that such teaching does not lead students through the entire five stages, nor does it always progress through each stage completely. Contributing to this challenge is that not all people go through these stages at the same time, and conflict may arise when people are not in the same stage of awareness. Therefore, when teaching concepts related to cultural awareness, it is critical to create open, safe places and to use examples and activities found in real-world situations. Continuous self-reflection such as "providing opportunities to reflect on their own thoughts, perceptions, and feelings regarding self and others" (p. 23) is critical to challenging deficit thinking. Additionally, Howard (2010) reminds us that an examination of our own racial identities and biases can be challenging because it is only through critical reflection that a person can travel this difficult journey. Teacher educators will need to help students along this path in a respectful and sensitive manner. They must not shy from teaching students about the U.S.'s history of exclusion in schools or about institutional constructs that reinforce deficit thinking.

Method

We utilized a literature review method (Grant & Booth, 2009) aimed at identifying the current state of a theme or method in the research literature, in this case how university faculty navigate contradictions between state EGOs and university DEIA initiatives, to answer chosen research questions and in order to assist in building a foundation for faculty in teacher education to navigate the obstacles in teaching DEIA under threat of EGOs. Such a methodology allows us to build on its foundation our empirical work (Zawacki-Richter, Kerres, Bedenlier, Bond, & Buntins, 2020).

We restricted our parameters to a 5-year period from 2018–2023. We chose this range because this is not a new problem within education, and we wanted to include historical data. We focused solely on research conducted in the U.S. We specifically looked for literature that discussed ways to navigate teaching about DEIA considering EGOs. Therefore, we focused on higher education pedagogy for teacher educators in areas including the health field and PK–12 education. Exclusion criteria included: books, book chapters, dissertations, theses, meta-analyses, and systematic

reviews of literature. Included and excluded articles were agreed upon, and discrepancies were settled through discussion.

Discussion

The majority of identified articles discuss the phenomenon of educational gag orders or decry attacks on academic freedom. Few authors presented strategies on how to continue teaching about DEIA in light of EGOs, limiting our initial search results considerably. In the second stage of our review, we excluded articles not directly related to higher education. During our final review we also eliminated studies that discuss the problem of educational gag orders but did not give concrete advice on how to continue teaching DEIA principles under the shadow of limiting legislation. Once these new parameters were in place, only six articles remained. While there is much literature about EGOs and opinions about the harm they inflict on our education system, there is scant research that assists instructors in how to navigate the dangers of a gag order while teaching about DEIA. Likewise, there is quite a bit of material about the culture wars and the concept of "wokeness" as a pejorative. Those excluded articles discuss the problem and articulate a history of dangers but do not offer concrete assistance to teacher education faculty who find themselves caught between EGOs and university mandates to teach DEIA.

Date	Citation	Key Words
2022	Morgan, H. (2022). Resisting the movement to ban critical race theory from schools. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, *95*(1), 35–41.	Critical Race Theory; culturally responsive teaching; inequalities in education; ethnic studies; classroom environment; curriculum; culture
2022	Moore, J. (2022). Assaults on freedom of speech: Why social studies must defend the First Amendment. *The Social Studies*, *113*(1), 30–49.	Free speech; First Amendment; censorship; democracy
2022	Morton, T. S. M. (2022). Separate and unequal again: The disparate impact Texas gag orders may have on Texas's second-oldest institution of higher learning. *AAUP Journal of Academic Freedom*, *13*, 1–15.	The potential effects of Texas gag orders on Prairie View A&M University faculty, students, and the successful BGLOBAL program
2022	Ward, L. W. (2022). The real "Boogeyman": How white legal logic is used to create educational gag order laws in US higher education. *Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education*, *4*(3), 13–27.	Critical Race Theory; educational gag-order laws; white legal logic; anti-CRT bans
2023	Caradonna, C. Y. (2023). Tugging at the veil: Critical race methods for analyzing educational gag orders. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, *23*(4), 403-412	Critical Race Theory; ethnicity and race; qualitative evaluation and social policy; qualitative research; methodologies; counternarrative; methods of inquiry; politics and culture
2023	Ehrlich, O., Izumi, S. S., Bigger, S. E., & Johnson, L. A. (2023). Gag order laws threaten nursing education and health equity. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, *46*, 27–30.	Nursing education; legislative gag orders; academic freedom; professional autonomy; health disparities' health equity

Table 1: Final articles for review (marked with * in our bibliography)

Free Speech, First Amendment Rights, and Censorship

The six remaining articles reviewed are position papers discussing the need for teaching about diversity considering educational gag orders, and all give examples and strategies used by instructors who continue to teach critically. Caradonna (2023) posits that educators, students, and politicians from both extremes of the partisan political spectrum as well as the groups

they belong to may believe they are entitled to prevent others from voicing ideas they consider offensive or perceive as a threat to their interests or power. Despite this thinking, hate speech codes—defined by Moore (2022) as having no legal definition but that act to regulate or restrict offensive or intolerant words—are often the result of genuine attempts to prevent harm to minority groups who in the past have been hurt by racist, sexist, transphobic, and anti-immigrant speech and actions. Calling out what some call hate speech can limit discrimination and prejudice and function as a defense against white-supremacist ideas. However, even with the best of intentions, labeling someone else's words as "hate speech" can lead to censorship; that is, using intimidation and control of independent thought may amount to censorship, silencing and thoughts and ideas opposed to one's own.

Speech codes are closely related to freedom of expression and speech protected by the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment. Students and educators have the right to express ideas freely and to acquire new knowledge, although, of course, free speech does not mean speech is free of consequence. The First Amendment protects people's rights to voice opposing political and social opinions, values, and ideas (Ehrlich, Izumi, Bigger, & Johnson, 2023; Moore, 2022). As Moore chronicles, teachers must never allow their personal political beliefs to silence the First Amendment rights of their students. This is especially true in social studies and the social sciences where freedom of expression is crucial because many times, political opinions expressed in the course of classroom discussions will be unpopular and controversial, but without the freedom to state such opinions without fear of retribution, learning ideas other than one's own becomes difficult, as does education on civic actions meant to improve the lives of others.

Our society must remain free and open to different and controversial ideas. The true story of U.S. history can be ugly and disturbing, but as Caradonna (2023) states, honest teaching provides "epistemic tools for understanding and dismantling systems of oppression" (p. 405). Many stories of historical events can be offensive in one way or another, but censorship can make the exploration of knowledge difficult or undoubtedly impossible (Moore, 2022).

Erlich et al. (2023) argue freedom of expression plays a pivotal role in public PK–12 education because without it students cannot learn critical thinking skills. Students must be exposed to opposing, sometimes offensive viewpoints and learn to think for themselves while investigating different claims. Remaining calm in the face of aggressively promoted despicable ideas from the point of view of the students and countering such ideas with research and evidence is an important skill to maintain an open, democratic society. Students need to experience for themselves that the

best way to refute speech they consider hateful is with better ideas that promote equity (Moore, 2022). Another benefit of such a pedagogical approach is that students learn about the relationship between rights and responsibilities and about the fact their actions have consequences. Students need to understand that not immediately voicing an opinion even if legally entitled to but instead collecting needed evidence is not necessarily a sign of weakness or disinterest but can instead be a sign of maturity. Students need this skill to find solutions that truly promise to improve social issues (Moore, 2022; Morton, 2022).

In these articles, the discipline of social studies education seems to be a focal point of censorship and reimagining, and rightly so as it can be the first battlefield in the struggle for the true, unvarnished history of our country. In Oklahoma, for example, the Superintendent of Education has a team of ultra-conservative influencers rewriting PK–12 standards for social studies (Lonas, 2024). The goal of rewriting these standards is to "inspire in students a love of country and a proper understanding of the American founding. It will also eliminate DEI, indoctrination…" (para. 2). It is imperative that classroom teachers, not shy away from discussion of controversial topics that may make students uncomfortable or offend them because if such topics are banned, students cannot engage in activities and experiences that help them learn and they will not learn how to contribute to global efforts in solving problems (Morgan, 2022; Morton, 2022). At the same time, teachers must employ caution that their partisan, individual opinions and views on contentious social or political issues do not stifle student speech and lead to claims of indoctrination (Moore, 2022).

Educational Gag Orders, Academic Freedom, and Higher Education

A common manifestation of externally imposed speech codes is legislated *educational gag orders* (EGOs). Gag-order laws, which often cite vague and ambiguous language, are designed to censor teacher speech and curricula, and attempt to prevent discussion of certain topics from being discussed in the classroom, especially those related to racism, inequities, and civil rights. Legislators claim to want to protect students from feeling discomfort when discussing topics such as race or gender (Caradonna, 2023; Morgan, 2022). Academics or institutions reported to have violated gag-order laws are threatened with individual penalties such as individuals' loss of job, loss of teaching license, tenure denial, or tenure revocation, as well as the imposition of institutional penalties such as reductions in state funding (Ward, 2022). In fact, one of the tenets of *Project 2025*, the conservative playbook and platform agenda should Trump be re-elected President, is to eliminate tenure for academic professionals (The Heritage Foundation, 2024). Such a change likely would act as a chilling factor and warning for faculty in teacher-preparation programs to conform to the conservative agenda for fear of losing their positions.

Caradonna (2023), Morgan (2022), and Ward (2022) explain the justification for gag-order laws is in response to anti-racist sentiment that arose following the police murder of George Floyd and the subsequent protests following that horrific incident. These gag orders result from an organized effort of conservative policymakers, right-wing mainstream media outlets, and certain grassroots political groups. EGOs are designed to restrict academic discussions on race and gender, even in the teaching of U.S. history. While Caradonna points out that controversy in the teaching of certain higher education subjects is not new, enacting legislation which mutes the epistemological tools faculty need to understand the social constructs of these issues is a nascent and dangerous trend.

Gag-order laws are designed to suppress research and teaching about the history and the continued impact of racism, which some claim makes the laws a violation of freedom of speech and academic freedom. The goal is to assume ideological control over the content of the post-secondary curriculum and to censor and punish those scholars who expose systemic racism and the effects of white supremacy. Ward (2022) claims that anything outside of "ablest, cisgender, heteronormative, Christian, patriarchal white supremacist thought" is unwanted and a threat to the status quo that must be suppressed. Ward's perception is echoed by both Caradonna (2023) and Morton (2022).

The consequences of gag-order laws are manifold. They threaten faculty control of the curriculum and are an attempt to place such control in the hands of politicians for their own gain (Morton, 2022). Both Ward (2022) and Morton fear that minority scholars in the field of racial and social justice will particularly be affected because they will be limited in what research they conduct, how they develop and teach classes, and how they revise classes to support and benefit their minority and non-traditional students. Teacher educators need to discuss racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other topics in their classes, but these laws make it difficult for them to introduce such discussions in their classrooms. Teachers fearing job loss or loss of funding will self-censor, avoid teaching these topics, and stop preparing their students for entry into professions focused on social and racial justice. Teachers thus leave out important topics, students lose the opportunity to learn about these topics, and researchers can no longer stay current in their field or continue to claim subject-matter expertise (Ehrlich et al., 2023; Morgan, 2022). Morgan (2022) rightly concludes that the loss of academic freedom to learn about struggles, progress made on racial equality, and social injustices take away students' ability to understand these issues and produce viable solutions.

The oft-invoked threat to democracy as a result of anti-racist teaching is actually amplified by silencing the conversation about discrimination and imposing limits on classroom discussions (Morgan, 2022). Even more

alarming, Ehrlich et al. (2023) observe that educational gag orders serve to protect racism and institutional discrimination by denying scholars the voice to name it. Although EGOs are often directed at the public-school setting, "by encroaching on the ability of K–12 educators to discuss and confront structural racism, white supremacy, sexual orientation, and gender identity, these laws also influence the delivery of related content in higher education" (p. 4).

CRT, Ethnicity, and Race

A common target of gag-order laws is critical race theory (CRT), an area of legal theory that examines power and racial bias in social, political, and legal contexts. Morgan (2022) discusses how critical race theory can be pivotal to understanding issues surrounding racial and gender inequality and examining how discrimination becomes enshrined in political and legal systems as well as how institutions (e.g., universities) create and maintain such inequities.

Morgan (2022) chronicles how recent attacks on critical race theory by political conservatives appears to be based on some false understanding of what CRT is, stating "Conservatives' mission to spread misinformation… for political gains pose unique threats to faculty and students. …any professor…that encourages students to look beyond the sugar-coated facts…is a threat to conservatives. The use of CRT is portrayed as indoctrination" (p. 10).

Whether such falsifications and misrepresentations are deliberate, are based on misunderstanding the theory, are the result of biased information, or simply buzz words for partisans to seize onto, critics have assailed CRT as unpatriotic, un-American, and disrespectful to historical figures, as wanting to espouse Black and female supremacy, and as trying to portray whites as oppressors and make white children feel guilty (Caradonna, 2023; Morgan, 2022; Ward, 2022). In other words, what conservatives are doing is trying to eliminate all unwanted academic content by tarring it with a falsified CRT brush and claiming that CRT is presented as the ultimate truth that all must support. Caradonna (2023) evidences how public schools are falsely accused of teaching CRT, and parents and educators are thus encouraged to fear CRT because it is purportedly dangerous in that it encourages children to hate one another.

Caradonna (2023), Morgan (2022), and Moore (2022) articulate how CRT can potentially offer a lens through which to understand racism. Such theory can help individuals consider and craft solutions focused on racial equity by revealing how oppressive structures can still be hidden in institutional contexts and how such institutions can perpetuate limiting rights for minorities. Critical race theory thus can be used to question whether freedom is truly guaranteed to all Americans. Moore (2022) likens the banning of CRT to a violation of the First Amendment. Those who

care about academic freedom will find it necessary to clarify misconceptions about CRT which can ultimately work to end the conservative campaign against it.

In addition to such activities, teacher educators must engage with groups who fear critical race theory and attempt to censor opposing viewpoints so that their goals become apparent (Moore, 2022). Scholars must debunk the reasoning behind gag orders, and institutions should call their legislators' bluff and not implement or enforce gag orders (Moore, 2022; Ward, 2022). Additional actions might include open discussion forums about racism; media campaigns; statements released by state boards, professional organizations, and faculty senates; and public support for faculty on the part of administrators (Ehrlich et al., 2023).

Future Directions

Given that a commonality among reviewed articles is how instructors *should* approach the inclusion of DEIA, what is conspicuously absent from the current literature is discussion about what faculty actually *are* doing. Passionate appeals for free speech and DEIA's curricular necessity do little to help faculty design a course of action. Faculty deal with a great degree of uncertainty in these situations because they do not know if and how their employer or the state will react to their actions. They may find themselves in a position either to defy their institutions (and jeopardize their job security) by removing DEIA content and CRT from their courses as mandated by a state's EGO, or to defy state law (and also jeopardize their job security) by teaching DEIA and CRT. Nonetheless, faculty must decide and follow through on their decision without knowing what the consequences will be (or whether there will be consequences), so faculty need guideposts that help them determine which course of action is indicated or prudent considering their particular context and the severity of possible punishment. Not everyone is either cut out to be an activist or willing to risk their job security on principle alone. As a result, we advocate for the use of decision theory as a framework for future research, since it allows us to investigate how teacher educators make these decisions and which evidence they use in the process.

Decision Theory

Decision theory offers structures that take uncertainty into account and helps decision-makers investigate which information or variables might be used to come to a decision in a particular situation. Decision-making frameworks help decision-makers use logical and rational strategies that include all available information to analyze the probability and the value or utility of alternative courses of action used to guide the decision-maker toward the most logically advantageous course of action based on the decision-maker's criteria (Jepsen & Dilley, 1974; North, 1968).

The value of a decision depends not only on the chosen alternative but also on factors that one cannot influence, such as environmental conditions. In many decision situations, the outside influences and the available information are so varied that alternative courses of action or outcomes cannot be determined. If a decision is connected to more than one possible outcome, scholars call it *situation uncertainty* (Alquist & Baumeister, 2023). The focus of decision theory, therefore, is dealing with uncertainty, meaning that probabilities for the occurrence of certain outcomes cannot be determined. As a result, a decision situation can be considered rational only if all possible environmental conditions have been considered. It seems unlikely, however, that teacher educators without advanced training in statistics and probability theory will have the skills, the time, or the inclination to rely on elaborate mathematical models. They are much more likely to use *heuristics*, that is, rules of thumb or mental shortcuts, to arrive at their decisions. The reason for that is that heuristics save time and effort in making the most advantageous decision (Plous,1993; Rieskamp & Hoffrage, 1999) even though they include the risk of introducing bias into the process. In what can only be described as paradoxical, Gigerenzer (2007) avers that even decision theorists themselves tend to rely on heuristics rather than their own models.

According to Plous (1993), the two most common heuristics are the *availability heuristic* and the *representativeness heuristic*. The representativeness heuristic refers to those who consider specific scenarios more likely to occur than general ones because a specific scenario is more representative of how people imagine a hypothetical scenario will unfold. Decision makers often believe that the more specific a scenario, the more likely it is to occur; misjudge how often something truly occurs in real life; believe that past events must necessarily trigger certain future events; and assume that where chance factors are concerned, extreme outcomes can be maintained or improved.

The *availability heuristic* is based on a process by which events are judged to occur more frequently than they really do simply because these events can be remembered, imagined, or visualized easily or because it is easier to think of examples of one event than of another. Uncommon events are often more easily remembered and so are judged to be more common than is warranted. However, just because something is easy to imagine does not increase the likelihood of its occurrence. Furthermore, people tend to shy away from imagining or remembering disconcerting events and may be in denial about the frequency of their occurrence. In addition, something considered exciting or close in time often affects decision makers more strongly, such as anecdotal testimonies from friends and family members rather than the result of a research study (Plous, 1993). Gigerenzer (2007) adds one more common heuristic, the r*ecognition heuristic*. This heuristic is

based on the fact that when we recognize the name of a brand, person, company, university, sports team, etc., we automatically assume it has more value than the alternative, lesser-known choice.

The recognition heuristic is also tied to the perception that one choice is the better choice when more information about it is available. The bias here is, for example, that recognition can be manipulated by clever marketing and name placement even if one's product is inferior, and having more information also means that there is a risk of introducing irrelevant or confounding information that may eventually lead to a worse decision. A subtype of this heuristic is the *fluency heuristic*, which assigns higher value to choices whose names are retrieved more easily, effortlessly, and fluently from memory than the alternative (Hertwig, Herzog, Schooler, & Reimer, 2008; Jacoby & Brooks, 1984).

Empirical research into the tensions between teaching DEIA and states' educational gag orders, therefore, will need to rely upon the testimony of teacher educators in states that have higher education EGOs in place. How do teacher educators determine whether their states and the state-level higher education boards are truly dedicated to enforcing these laws or whether the laws are mostly an attempt at political grandstanding to placate current politics and attract future voters? How do teacher educators determine whether their institutions will allow them the academic freedom to remove DEIA content, and how do they ascertain that they will have their institutions' support in case of conflict with the state? Finally, which models or processes do they use to decide which action is called for? How do they search for information and decide? How much and what kind of information do they use? Is their approach process-oriented or outcomes-oriented (Rieskamp & Hoffrage, 1999)? All these questions can be answered only if researchers actually sit down with teacher educators to mull over the repercussions of various decisions and ask them about their decision processes and anything else they might have to say about the situation.

Conclusion

Our review of the literature is intended to illustrate how, although speech codes may be proposed or demanded by actors from all partisan political stripes, gag-order laws seem at present to be the chosen approach to unwelcome curricula and classroom topics favored by conservative and right-wing political actors. Arguing that freedom of expression is a constitutional right, as is learning everything there is to learn about how to achieve social justice, the arguably scant literature rejects gag-order laws and presents arguments about what the consequences of such laws will be, how students benefit from a free exchange of ideas, and what educators and others can do to push back against these laws.

Considering the uncertainty teacher educators experience in states with higher-education gag orders in place when deciding on whether to

include DEIA content in their classes or to remove it, teacher educators need guidance on how such decisions are arrived at, and the best way to develop such guidelines is to listen to those who have actually gone through the process. Since state laws and institutional policies are often intentionally vague or inconsistently enforced and since the relative recentness of the issue has not yet produced a body of research, investigating "best practices" and the experiences of colleagues in how to navigate these treacherous waters represents a first step in providing teacher educators with the input needed to work through their own decision-making processes.

At the same time, we must not forget that gag-order laws enjoy far more than a negligible level of public support and cannot simply be written off as a cynical attempt by partisan politicians to be re-elected. Our next step should then be to investigate reasons for such support, especially examining public opinion and fears. Educators' perceptions are important because they are at the forefront of the issue and educators must decide to comply or not with gag-order laws—and they must do so quickly. However, in the long run, the perceptions of students, parents, and others involved in education are necessarily key in understanding the institution and support of gag-order laws and resistance to DEIA content as well as important to the future of public education as a whole. Only seeking such an understanding on the part of all stakeholders can be used to affect adequate responses that can re-establish common ground and help educators find viable solutions to ongoing educational inequities.

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