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schooling, community of philosophical inquiry and a new sensibility

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abstract
This paper seeks to reconstruct the role of schooling in a moment of accelerated social, political, economic, geo-political, climatic, indeed planetary crisis. It identifies the school as a potentially prefigurative institution, an evolutionary social frontier, capable of nurturing the democratic social character, a form of sensibility apart from which authentic political democracy is not possible. As theorized by Herbert Marcuse and Richard Hart and Antonio Negri, the "new sensibility" or "multitude" is characterized by greater psychological freedom, individuality, social creativity and self-rule, comprising a "whole of singularities" that "acts in common". It suggests a human subject with a vital, biological drive for liberation, with a consciousness capable of breaking through the material as well as ideological veil of a society based on hierarchy and domination, and is associated politically with democracy and social-anarchism, or what Murray Bookchin called "communalism". This paper identifies three main characteristics of an institution informed by this form of modal subjectivity, all of them based on student-teacher dialogue: an emergent, project-based curriculum, whole-school direct democratic governance on all levels of the community, and the regular practice of communal philosophical inquiry, through which we problematize the concepts we live by, in the interest of their ongoing reconstruction.

key words: democracy studies; evolutionary psychology; philosophy of childhood; dialogical schooling; community of philosophical inquiry

escolaridad, comunidad de investigación filosófica y una nueva sensibilidad

resumen
Este artículo busca reconstruir el papel de la escuela en un momento de acelerada crisis social, política, económica, geopolítica, climática e incluso planetaria. Identifica la escuela como una institución potencialmente prefigurativa, una frontera social evolutiva, capaz de nutrir el carácter social democrático, una forma de sensibilidad sin la cual no es posible una auténtica democracia política. Como los plantearon Herbert Marcuse y Richard Hart y Antonio Negri, la "nueva sensibilidad" o "multitud" se caracteriza por una mayor libertad psicológica, individualidad, creatividad social y autogobierno, comprendiendo un " conjunto de singularidades" que "actúa en común". Sugiere un sujeto humano con un impulso vital y biológico de liberación, con una conciencia capaz de romper el velo tanto material como ideológico de una sociedad basada en la jerarquía y la dominación, y se asocia políticamente con la democracia y el social-anarquismo, o lo que Murray Bookchin denominó "comunalismo". Este documento identifica tres características principales de una institución

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basada en esta forma de subjetividad modal, todas ellas basadas en el diálogo entre alumnos y profesores: un plan de estudios emergente basado en proyectos, un gobierno democrático directo de toda la escuela en todos los niveles de la comunidad, y la práctica regular de la investigación filosófica comunitaria, a través de la cual problematizamos los conceptos que orientan nuestras vidas, en aras de su continua reconstrucción.

palabras clave: estudios sobre la democracia; psicología evolutiva; filosofía de la infancia; escolaridad dialógica; comunidad de investigación filosófica

escolaridade, comunidade de investigação filosófica e uma nova sensibilidade

resumo
Este artigo busca reconstruir o papel da escolaridade em um momento de acelerada crise social, política, econômica, geopolítica, climática e até mesmo planetária. Identifica a escola como uma instituição potencialmente prefigurativa, uma fronteira social evolutiva capaz de alimentar o caráter social democrático, uma forma de sensibilidade sem a qual nenhuma democracia política autêntica é possível. Como teorizado por Herbert Marcuse, Richard Hart e Antonio Negri, a "nova sensibilidade" ou "multidão" é caracterizada por uma grande liberdade psicológica, individualidade, criatividade social e auto-governo, compreendendo um "todo de singularidades" que "age em comum". Sugere um sujeito humano com um impulso vital e biológico para a libertação, com uma consciência capaz de romper o véu material e ideológico de uma sociedade baseada na hierarquia e na dominação, e está politicamente associada à democracia e ao social-anarquismo, ou ao que Murray Bookchin chamou de "comunalismo". Este artigo identifica três características principais de uma instituição embasada nessa forma de subjetividade modal, todas elas baseadas no diálogo aluno-professor: um currículo emergente baseado em projetos, uma governação democrática direta a todos os níveis da comunidade escolar, e a prática regular da investigação filosófica comunitária, através da qual problematizamos os conceitos que orientam nossas vidas, com vista à sua reconstrução contínua.

palavras-chave: estudos sobre a democracia; psicologia evolutiva; filosofia da infância; educação dialógica; comunidade de investigação filosófica

schooling, community of philosophical inquiry and a new sensibility

What is the role of the school in a moment of accelerated social, political, economic, geo-political, climatic, indeed planetary crisis? If we suspect that the inability of the majority of those who hold the reins of power and influence in this global moment to act effectively to combat climate change, alleviate dramatic income inequities and promote genuine democracy can be attributed at least in part to bad education, then what is good education? And if we consider the glass half full rather than half empty and invest our hopes in the self-correcting movement of the historical dialectic, what opportunities does this moment suggest for a shift in our understanding of the role of education—especially the "common school"—in the potential psychosocial transformation this crisis implicitly invokes? Can the school act as a prefigurative institution, an evolutionary social frontier? Can it function as a cultural site that fosters significantly changed ways of being in the world that presage fundamentally different personal, social and political forms of life? This begs the eternal question that confronts educationalist: is the phenomenon of school, as historically constructed anyway, always and only a site for the reproduction of the social, political and economic status quo, or can it act to reconstruct it? And if the latter, what is the role of community of philosophical inquiry (CPI) in that reconstruction?

I. a new sensibility

In response to that question, I want to start with an evolutionary argument—"evolution" here understood as gene-culture coevolution—the process by which culture evolves and may interact with biological evolution—based on the assumption that by altering their environments, organisms influence the selective pressures of those environments. The ruling speculation of this paper is that, given the fact of co-evolution, we live in the hope and the implicit promise of the emergence of an enhanced or evolved type of human subjectivity, which the social philosopher of the 1960's Herbert Marcuse and the anarchist eco-philosopher Murray Bookchin of

the 1970's have called a "new sensibility", and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2004), philosophers of the turn of this century, call, after Spinoza, "multitude". The latter indicates a form of subjectivity characterized by greater psychological freedom, individuality, social creativity and self-rule, comprising "a whole of singularities" that "acts in common". Multitude suggests a human subject with a vital, biological drive for liberation, and with a consciousness capable of breaking through the material as well as ideological veil of a society based on hierarchy and domination. It represents a form of sensibility that is associated politically with democracy, social-anarchism, or what Bookchin (2005) calls "communalism".

The new sensibility as evoked by Marcuse suggests a type of human subject who finds intolerable the aggressiveness and brutality that are inherent in the organization of established society, and who is biologically incapable of fighting wars and purposely creating suffering. We are talking about a transformation on the level of "instinct" to the extent that we can separate human instinct from acquired habit. The new sensibility—which in fact is not new, but always a permanent human possibility, and embodied in many human lives over the ages—experiences the actual felt "liberation of the mind and of the body from aggressive and repressive needs". Marcuse (1969) characterizes it as a new form of "sensual reason" or "libidinal rationality" emergent through the experience of unconditional love, art and play and social experiment, all of them forms of evolutionary inquiry, and characterized by dialogue, reflection, equity, cooperation, negotiation, and non-violence: for the new sensibility, these have become somatic necessities, bodily needs. It embodies a form of social character governed by a sense of intrinsic ethical requirement that instinctively refuses hierarchy, domination, and the arrogation of privilege by the powerful few at the expense of the dispossessed many. It is tolerant of difference, intolerant of injustice, refuses tribalism, and is committed to non-violence. Its historical emergence is mediated through the ongoing personal and collective reconstruction of operative concepts—concepts that we live by—such as authority, freedom, equality, reciprocity, fairness, responsibility, compromise, right, and duty. As such, it is the basis for the

democratic social character, which is a necessary form of subjectivity for political democracy to be anything but, as Plato (1961, 785, Section 557) suggested, a prelude to mob rule and tyranny.

From the point of view of evolutionary psychology, the new sensibility is associated with emergent neuronal relations between upper and lower, the old and the new, neocortex and limbic system—the thinking brain and the feeling brain. Joseph Chilton Pearce (2002) has argued that the evolutionary potential represented by their ongoing coordination is given biologically in nature, and that it is "culture" which, through historically transmitted collective habits of fear and repression, maintains the gulf between them, and the interruption of higher functions in the dominance of fight or flight patterns of response to challenge. The promise represented by experience-dependent neuronal development over the course of the long human childhood is on his account, continually blocked and betrayed by what John Dewey (1922) called "the fixed and rigid" habits of adult habit. It has its more obvious prefigurations in what Charles Sanders Peirce (1893) called evolutionary "sports"—extraordinary individuals or social and cultural forms like the anarchist commune, or progressive educational movements. It is announced in new forms of experience that activate the functional connections between forebrain, midbrain and hindbrain, right and left brain hemisphere, heart and mind.

These individuals, exemplars of gene-culture coevolution are, I would suggest, always among us, in all classes and stations of life, formally educated or not—an ever-emerging psychoclass. In fact, it might be more accurate to characterize them as representing the majority of the human population, which yields a picture of a species whose evolutionary potential is regularly thwarted and betrayed by a minority mired in Hobbesian patterns of domination, tribalism, exploitation, aggressiveness and brutality, hierarchy and low-grade collective psychoses of various sorts—the war of all against all. The potential of the emergent psychoclass is captured in Paulo Freire's (1965) identification of what he calls the "ontological vocation" of the species, which is to "become more". The pursuit of this vocation becomes more widespread and

visible whenever social and cultural, material and historical conditions allow it, or lives in hope and expectation—a virtual always becoming actual; a "seed beneath the snow"; a felt conviction that "another world is possible".

II. child

I want to make two historical arguments, both related to gene-culture evolution. First, that the actual possibility of the universal advent of the new sensibility has always been associated with the extraordinarily long human childhood, a period in which brain development is to a great degree dependent on experience; and second, that it is the slow historical evolution of adult beliefs and assumptions about childhood, children and child-rearing modes (including formal education) that, as the psychohistorian of childhood Lloyd deMause (1974) claimed, make possible the emergence of new psychoclassses, new forms of subjectivity and new sensibilities. Implicit here is the notion that the possibilities that the child and childhood embody and represent comprise a potential evolutionary frontier, and even that the child, as "unconscious master", embodies *in potentia* the characteristics of the new sensibility. These possibilities are squandered through what John Dewey (1922) called "training" rather than education—through, as he put it, "An impatient, premature mechanization of impulsive activity after the fixed pattern of adult habits of thought and affection" (p. 96).

DeMause charts the historical evolution of child-rearing modes in the West from the "projective" to the "empathic", or "helping". In what he calls the "projective reaction" adults tend to project their own shadow materials—their neediness and fear of inferiority, their greediness and emotional liminality, their resentments, their jealousies, their need for power over others, onto the child and see him as a danger, a potential monster of the will, in need of discipline, constraint, shaping; as a not-adult, as a sub-species. The direction of historical evolution, he argues, leads dialectically toward the "empathic reaction". In the empathic or "helping" child-rearing mode, the adult withdraws the projection, or at least resists it and becomes the child's helper,

therapist, facilitator, interlocutor, co-constructor as opposed to punisher, shaper, molder, instiller, master, operant-conditioner. The empathic mode parent understands the child's "acting out" as result of what developmental psychologists call a weaker internal locus of control or ego-stability. She interprets child's negative behavior as an expression of need rather than a naked assertion of will (power), and therefore can act to satisfy that need without moral prejudice. This withdrawal of the projection is accomplished through the capacity of the adult to "regress to the level of the child's need" without being triggered by it; to feel again, (hence "regression") the immediacy and quality of the child's need and yet to maintain an internal distance from that feeling, and to act to meet that need in the same way one learns to do with one's own emotional liminality, distress, and one's own shadow material.

As such—and this is important for thinking about teaching children—the evolved adult-child relation entails a form of adult self-work, of a certain mindfulness in learning to resist the projective reaction in general, which implies an increase in the recognition of singularity of the other and implicitly, toleration of difference. This is the empathic reaction, and the fundamental psychodynamic impulse of the new sensibility: to feel the other person's need (lower brain) and not be triggered by it, but rather strategize to alleviate it (higher brain). As such, it implies a relational form of subjectivity. Rather than speak of the subject, we might speak of the *inter-subject*, of being as intrinsically relational. Having withdrawn (or, if that's not completely possible, having become conscious of and resistant to) the projection, she understands the child as a singularity—as agentic, as co-constructor, as one who navigates her own developmental pathways *with* the adult.

The empathic adult-child relation, then, is the cradle of the emergence of the new sensibility, of a form of social character grounded in principles of dialogue, difference, and mutual aid. As such, we might characterize the evolutionary possibility invoked by Freire, Marcuse, and Pearce as the realization of our biological evolutionary status as "paedomorphs"—the species that retains juvenile traits into adulthood, which is perfectly expressed in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's (1987)

notion of "becoming-child", in the sense, as they put it, of childhood as "the principle of affective thriving, connection and creativity in the emergence of new assemblages, new connections"—which, "as an affective capacity or capacity to be affected, both positively and to grow and connect in new ways, can be activated at any stage of life". As such, on their account, all becomings are

> [. . .] traversed by becoming-child, an iteration of the affective register and a wonder at worldly surrounds: a new awareness, a configuration of a frontier that registers experientially as the capacity to be affected. The affective capacities of the child are part of the deep mixtures that unfold to constitute our mobile limits of becoming (and being) in the world. Virtual possibilities for change will always have 'childhood' parts, or affects, which may be mobilized in processes of becoming. (p. 272)

Here becoming-child is understood as an essential dimension of the human ontological vocation to, in Freire's words "become more", which may be understood as an evolutionary ideal that promises the emergence of a form of social character grounded in the principle of dialogue, which in turn is grounded in the principles and practices of empathic child-rearing and pedagogy, which in turn contains a promise of personal and cultural reconstruction that grounds authentic democracy. This puts the question to educationalists: what is the relation between this emergent (or "virtual" in the sense of always "becoming-actual") form of subjectivity, this "new" sensibility, and the one institution dedicated exclusively to the encounter between the generations—the school?

III. school

Is there a way of constructing school that encourages the new sensibility? That is organized as a site that allows and encourages the process of becoming-child? That teaches, in its deep structure—its "hidden curriculum"—the relational and emotional habits associated with deep/strong social and political democracy? That cultivates the democratic social character? These are critical questions, given that "school" as practiced for millennia has been dedicated to social reproduction rather than reconstruction, functioning as an ideological state apparatus whose hidden

curriculum is specifically dedicated to the reproduction of the status quo maintained by the privileged elites, and which typically functions as a psychocultural site inherently hostile to personal and/or social transformation. Can the school act, on the other hand, as a prefigurative institution, an evolutionary social frontier, a transformative institution, ahead of the evolutionary curve rather than behind it? Is there a form of schooling that acts to reconstruct society rather than reproduce it? This is the eternal question confronting educationalists, especially given the historical association of the common school with the advent of mass compulsory schooling that accompanied the Industrial Revolution and the rise of the nation state. Indeed, we can trace the reproductive mode of schooling in the West back to the ancient scribal school of Egypt and Mesopotamia, an authoritarian, monological speech community organized for the training of the clerks for the governmental system (see Bowen, 1970).

Ironically enough—or dialectically enough—the possibility of school as a site of adult-child dialogue and agent of social reconstruction emerged in reaction to the onset of universal state-provided, compulsory schooling in early 19th century Europe. The "radical" ideas of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, and further along of Francisco Ferrer, Montessori, Dewey, Freinet, Faure and numerous innovative others—what came to be known as "progressive" education—represent a dialectical counter-movement, what Deleuze and Guattari call a "line of flight". In their terminology, this movement is "molecular" as opposed to "molar"(1987), a disruption of the "majoritarian" by the "minoritarian", leading to the emergence of new assemblages on the "plane of immanence", which acts to reconstruct the "plane of organization". Rather than an ideological state apparatus, the reconstructive model emerges in the idea of school as an "embryonic community" or "miniature society", which puts the transformative interaction of adult and child in the service of new sensibilities, new meanings, and is devoted to participatory democratic political ideals. As such, the school is reinvented as an evolutionary zone, constructed with the possibilities inherent in the long human childhood in mind.

This vision of school as a potential evolutionary frontier is, I would suggest, not just the invention of progressive educators in the 19th and 20th centuries, but the manifestation of an *archetype*, understood as an inherent configuration of the human adult-child relation that will always emerge given favorable social conditions. It first enters recorded history in connection with the invention of direct democracy in fifth century Athens, in the simultaneous emergence of two educational forms: in *skholé,* the word that the English word "school" comes from, which in Greek means "free time"; and in the emergence of Socratic philosophical dialogue in the public space of the *agora*. Skholé was practiced within a contained space and, following Jan Masschelein's and Maarten Simon's (2013) phenomenological account, understood as a "place apart", a site dedicated to intergenerational "gathering". We may understand this educational space as a zone of encounter, a manifestation of a different kind of time, a time of "study"—*studium*, which is Latin for zeal, ardor, enthusiasm, eagerness. The temporality of *studium* is that of elevated experience, of passionate inquiry in the pursuit of which, in Dewey's (1922) formulation, impulse and habit are in a creative relation. The time of *skholé* is not the clock-dominated time of office, factory, government or shop, but "free time",—*aion* and *kairos* as opposed to *kronos*. It implicitly rejects the function of schooling as a tool of state and economy, and identifies it as a site dedicated to conversation, dialogue, inquiry, "extraordinary investigations"—to re-imagining the world. The second, non-formal educational space—the *agora* as site for communal dialogue, was a public space in which, most famously, Socrates practiced the *elenchus*, which was dedicated to the problematization of fundamental philosophical concepts in the interest of ongoing personal and social reconstruction; concepts we live by like happiness, justice, person, beauty, love, true knowledge and learning.

I understand *skholé* and *elenchus* to represent two modalities of what Robert Corrington (1992) has called a "community of interpretation" as opposed to a "natural" community: a space of interrogation, and in particular of philosophical interrogation, a transitional space in the culture. As a space dedicated to the

emergence of new meanings, new forms of life, *skholé* and *elenchus* are connected historically and thematically with the inauguration, however imperfect, of Athenian democracy, through the cultivation of social democracy in an intentional community dedicated to intergenerational dialogue. Here, new values (or concepts) are invented and discovered, and existing regimes of knowledge interrogated and reconstructed. It is a utopian community in the weak sense—as David Graeber (2004) argued, a form of gathering dedicated implicitly to ". . . the creation of alternative forms of organization, new forms of communication, new, less alienated ways of organizing life" (p. 40). To claim that Athenian democracy fully—or even partially—fulfilled the promise represented by these two institutions would be absurd; rather they are to be understood as precursors, molecular, minoritarian practices, what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) described as "lines of flight", glimpses of human possibility.

To summarize, can we imagine the school as an evolutionary outpost, an experimental zone, a place where new cultural meanings and values, and new forms of subjectivity have space to emerge? We are challenged to understand school as a social space that privileges the cultivation of a new sensibility, an emergent psychoclass that is made possible by the increasing prevalence of the empathic child-rearing mode. The latter sees children as agentic, co-constructors with adults of their own development (Malaguzzi, 1994; Sorin, 2005), and school as the social and cultural institution in which that way of seeing children is operationalized in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, governance and school-community relations. And finally, we may identify this institution, both historically and phenomenologically, with the promotion of social democracy—those habits and beliefs that make authentic political democracy possible; where the skills and dispositions of participatory democracy are acquired through their actual exercise in the epistemological art of *studium* and the political art of collective self-governance.

I would suggest that the impulse which launched the ancient Greek model is the same impulse that has driven emancipatory educational ideals over the centuries, and that its emergence in the 19th and 20th centuries, coincident with the emergence, in

deMause's formulation, of the "socializing" (19th century) and "empathic" child-rearing modes, is consonant with Michael Fielding and Peter Moss's (2011) formulation of what they call "radical education". The latter is an emergent model that rests on the 200 year old countertradition of "progressive" or "libertarian", or "anarchist" education—or, more descriptively, "child-centered", or variously "emancipatory" or "democratic" education, all of which are based on dialogue and the empathic mode. In what follows, I shall refer to it as the "new school" in recognition of its historically and socially emergent character, and identify some practical patterns and characteristics that this form of education tends to exemplify.

IV. the new school

The curriculum of the new school tends to be emergent and interest-driven, typically actualized in projects that are arrived at through student-teacher dialogue, and which have relevance to the surrounding culture and environment. For example, in a community that lives near the sea some projects may be organized around topics related to oceanography, or boats, or sea travel, or marine ecosystems and economies. Both teachers and students offer possible project topics, and they are chosen through a democratic process. The goal of the teacher is to organize foci and activities for each project in such a way that they call the traditional school disciplines into play. The teacher works to organize the curriculum for communicating disciplinary knowledge through multidisciplinary approaches to the project at hand, which are pursued by sub-groups of the project team. A study of boats, for example, may involve history, geography, science, literature, sociology, and mathematics.

The new school's curriculum starts with the question rather than the answer. As in the Waldorf schools, student write their own textbooks as accounts of what they have learned. Not only is knowledge organized in multidisciplinary patterns, but it is approached in polysymbolic and multi-sensorial modes: through writing, drawing, photography, listening, dancing, acting. In a project focused on boats, one project sub-group might write and perform a theatrical drama based on an ocean voyage,

another might collect and perform sea chanties, another analyze maritime water or soil samples, another might investigate the history of sea voyages, another map the oceans of the world, another study local fishing economies, another write fictional stories, another read and dramatize *Moby Dick* or *The Odyssey* and so on. Here the "basics" are understood as primarily aesthetic—modes of felt understanding—and as multiple: drawing, painting, sculpting, craft, writing, nature study, dance and movement, drama, poetry, narrative, music and language. These "basics" act as expressive modes for disciplinary learning—history, geography, literature, mathematics, the sciences—and the task of the teacher is to orchestrate projects that involve their use.

Assessment in the new school is a formative rather than a summative affair, and takes multiple forms (portfolios, exhibits, performances, reports, interviews, etc.) non-graded and outcome based. A balance of pedagogical modalities is constructed for and with each student—an individualized educational plan for each student that can run the gamut from self-paced programmed computer-delivered instruction in mathematics and language arts (grammar, other languages) to regular classroom instruction, to small group study focused on project themes, to seminars. Inquiry is followed by activism—bringing issues that have been revealed by the project's investigations into the larger community of the school. It may, for example, be discovered through water sampling that levels of pollution were abnormally high, which would lead to students organizing a public hearing to deliver the news or bringing the facts to the media in some other form. Or the project might result in one large public event—a play written and acted by the students, an exhibition of art or artifacts, a concert or a documentary film.

Finally, the new school operates by a system of shared governance in the form of whole-school participatory democracy. One fundamental component of community life is the "weekly meeting", run by parliamentary procedure and chaired by a student, in which each participant, staff or student, has one vote on decisions ranging from small to large. And in addition to participating in the weekly meeting,

students serve on a rotating basis on committees, the most important of which is a judicial committee, which hears and rules on complaints made by students or staff regarding infractions of school order.

The characteristics just listed are all present in various emergent forms in what are known specifically as "democratic schools" (Krätzä, 2006), the most visible example of which is Summerhill, which was founded in 1923 in the UK, and has influenced such schools as Sudbury Valley School in the U.S. or Sands School, also in the UK. There is a wide variety among these schools in the balance set between teacher and student choice of curriculum and activities, ranging from no organized curriculum at all, where teachers are simply present as enablers of whatever students choose to do (or not do), to schools in which students attend regular classes, and everywhere in between. The issue of the relation between students' academic freedom and responsibility is a barometer, not only of what adults think is necessary to learn by way of disciplinary knowledge and how it is arrived at, but of the extent to which students are understood as autotelic learners, and the extent to which adults understand the dialogical relation to entail a necessary and even fruitful tension between choice and necessity. What, for example, can teachers require of students in the way of curriculum? Must they take certain courses, if any at all? How much power can students assert in the weekly meeting; are decisions made through an up or down vote, or by consensus?

As an epistemological space, the new school is transitional, like the theater, art studio, or other organized settings for deep play—a psychological space in which the symbolic boundaries between inner and outer, subject and object, real and imaginary, possible and impossible, self and other, dream and reality are provisionally tested. As such, the primary curriculum of the new school is grounded in aesthetic experience, which is the human experience in which those boundaries are most visible and often called into question. The transitional is the psychological and social space of creativity, interruption, and innovation, and of intrinsically motivated inquiry of all kinds—scientific and philosophical as well as artistic and interpersonal. It is the

epistemological space from which new paradigms arise, and new ontologies are considered. In a paedomorphic culture, it is the space of inquiry that leads to transformation and reconstruction, and to the form of joint communicative inquiry and action that Dewey (1916) identified as social democracy. It exemplifies the long-recognized psychodynamic characteristics of play—self-regulating arousal modulation and drive reduction, moderate complexity, discovery, intrinsic competence and mastery motivation, the primacy of the nonliteral and representational. As such it constitutes the basis for a theory of autotelic, self-organizing learning, and of a dialogical pedagogical approach. Deep play—play that dissolves the conventional work/play dichotomy—is an aionic activity, in which time is experienced as presence (*parousia*) and immediacy, as opposed to an external metric driving or dragging me forward, waiting for me, demanding a predetermined product of my time.

IV. community of philosophical inquiry

None of the schools in the tradition identified above as "democratic" have, to my limited knowledge at least, incorporated into their curricular structure, at least in any systematic way, the second dimension of the emergent educational system of democratic 5th century Athens—the philosophical dialogue that was practiced in the agora by Socrates. In complement with *skholé*, the dimension of communal philosophical deliberation is exemplified in the new school in what is known as community of philosophical inquiry (CPI), a discursive form modeled on Socrates' *elenchus*. It may be thought of as the master-discourse of an inquiry-based community of interpretation—an ongoing group conversation that permeates the curriculum, pedagogy and governance of the school. It has several key characteristics:

Most fundamentally, it is based on the question rather than the predetermined answer, and thereby inverts conventional educational epistemology, exemplified in what Freire called the "banking method", which sees the student as empty—i.e., without questions, or without questions that matter. On the other hand, if the student

is understood as having questions, it is the responsibility of the teacher to create conditions in which those questions can be identified, articulated and pursued, in the faith that such a pursuit will result in answers—or, which is more likely, further questions—that invoke and address on a more personal and sophisticated level the answers that the teacher presumes to hold.

CPI is intrinsically relational. Truth is understood as arrived at collaboratively, dialogically, but only, as C.S. Peirce put it, "in the long run", as a result of ongoing group dialogical inquiry, which in fact is never finished. The answers to questions like "what is justice?" or "what is number?" or "what make something a fact?"–philosophical questions which, in fact, underlie any episteme or regime of knowledge—are inherently contestable, and inevitably generate further questions, and different answers are brought by different individuals in the CPI, where, in a community of interpretation, we seek to coordinate our perspectives through ongoing dialogical inquiry.

As a community of interpretation that functions dialogically, CPI is implicitly dedicated to outing, interrogating, and exploring the assumptions, beliefs and concepts that we live by and that inform our thinking and our behavior and our responses to the world we live in, which influence our beliefs, which shape our interaction with the world and are shaped by that interaction. In CPI, we are dedicated to exploring and deconstructing those concepts—especially relational concepts that have been formed and shaped through our experience, like fairness, justice, or friendship—in the interest of their reconstruction. We bring, for example, the concept of friendship—how it works, what are its limits, to whom or what does it apply, whether it requires reciprocity, etc.—into dialogue, and submit it to critical interrogation by the group, each member of which has a different experience, however slight, of the phenomenon called "friendship". In the process, we emerge with a more nuanced, more objective, more intelligent concept, which we then carry into further experience. As such, philosophical inquiry has a powerful pragmatic component.

CPI encourages and even insists on the commitment to giving reasons as its first and perhaps only epistemological requirement. As a thinking group, we are implicitly dedicated to identifying and considering multiple perspectives, to questioning the logic of claims and statements, to identifying the structure of arguments, and to searching for criteria by which to make reasonable judgments. As such we cultivate the metacognitive; we watch ourselves think. The group maintains a reflective stance on its own performance, and is dedicated to continual self-evaluation. And finally, CPI tends to be teleologically oriented toward the ethical imperative: how should we then live? As group inquiry on a given topic, whether justice, beauty, the concept of organism, or some other, advances, we regularly find ourselves deliberating on moral and ethical issues. This tendency provides a pragmatic role for CPI in the school community, and as such, it acts as an engine of reconstruction in two dimensions of the school community.

In the area of curriculum, the practice of CPI acts as a vehicle for the exploration of the philosophical understructure of the disciplines. When we study biology, for example, what do we understand by the concept "alive", or "organism"? In psychology, what do we mean by "person" or "self"? The disciplines are grounded in the contestable concepts that underlie them, in those fields of meaning we call philosophy of history, art, of language, science and mathematics. As we interrogate those concepts, we are in a sense reconstructing the discipline they underlie on a deeper level of meaning. CPI in school interrogates, not just classical philosophical concepts like friendship or truth or justice or beauty but concepts such as measurement, nature, matter, cause, chance, change real, number, freedom, responsibility, identity, possibility, truth, certainty, time, order, objectivity, power, conflict, progress, theory. These and related concepts form the understructure of our commonly held philosophical anthropology and our ontological convictions, and their problematization represents the first step in their ongoing reconstruction dedicated to the emergence of new sensibility and the democratic social character.

Second, as a dialogical and deliberative discourse-model oriented to making reasonable judgments, and as intrinsically oriented to ethical judgment, CPI provides us with a model for social discipline in the new school—for dealing with conflict and the dysfunctional dimensions—the collective shadow—of any community, given that the school, like any institution, may be thought of as a natural community *becoming* a community of interpretation. The group process that the *elenchus* involves in the realm of epistemology is, on one level anyway, akin to the processes that underlie the rule of law. As such, the new school, on the model of the well-known democratic school Sudbury Valley[2] handles disciplinary issues with a judicial committee made up of students and one staff member, all of whom serve on a rotating basis, in hearing and making judgments on complaints from anyone in the community, and possibly issuing penalties. Cases that cannot be resolved on the level of the judicial committee are referred to the School Meeting—a whole-school weekly meeting dedicated to shared governance and run by parliamentary procedure, in which students and staff each have a vote, and the opportunity to add an issue to the agenda. As an ideal speech community then, CPI provides the school meeting with a discursive, deliberative model, not just for philosophical inquiry in the area of curriculum and study, but for shared governance as well: both involve communal deliberation and judgment. Both are forms of inquiry—one philosophical and one pragmatic. As such, the New School embodies, as "miniature" or "embryonic" democracy, the same spirit of dialogical reconstruction on the epistemic and the political level.

Not only does CPI as a master-discourse act to challenge and reconfigure curriculum and governance in the New School, but the role of the teacher as well. In keeping with the Socratic paradigm, the teacher adds a pedagogical discourse to her *dossier* as convener and facilitator of group dialogue. She acts as a co-inquirer, model, coach and clarifier, rather than master manipulator, instructor or ultimate authority. As such, she or he acts to decenter and to reconfigure relations of authority within the democratic community, modeling a form of "rational authority"—that is, an authority

[2] https://sudburyvalley.org/

given and not arbitrarily imposed, and negotiated through ongoing dialogue. The gifted facilitator understands CPI as a master play-form. Its process is emergent and self-organizing, and based on Socrates' injunction to "follow the argument where it leads" (Plato, 1961). The spontaneous, interactive to-and-fro movement of the argument plays the subject as much as being played by her, and the facilitator aspires to disappear in that movement, and as such, to deconstruct her hierarchical position as teacher through an ineffable shift in relations of power within the group.

in conclusion

As a pedagogy, CPI represents one form of the reconstruction of power in the classroom in the interest of direct democracy and the new sensibility, and as such, is a key element in conceptualizing the new school as a primary democratic institution. As a master-pedagogy, it introduces the principle of dialogue, not just into the study of the disciplines, but into the structure and processes of school governance, which, to the extent that *skholé* is an embryonic society, cannot ultimately be separated from larger political spheres. The democratic impulse, for which the human hunger for autonomy, self-regulation, cooperation, rational authority, and participatory governance is a fundamental evolutionary drive, and is operationalized in the new school. Decisions about rules of conduct and of disciplinary issues, of scheduling, of individual responsibilities within the group, of curriculum, and of forms of activism are made by the community as a whole. The dynamic balances and tensions that exist both within each individual and within the group, when manifested in the procedural context of group deliberation, are given a space that is both safe and that encourages transformation. As a social organism based on intergenerational dialogue, the new school embodies forms of communicative action that promise the transformation of political as well as epistemological habits and normative beliefs—all those characteristics of an evolved reality principle, or "new sensibility". As the engine of that evolutionary impulse, the discursive space of CPI models an "ideal speech

situation" that is on principle egalitarian, pluralistic, ethically sensitive and oriented to individual and communal reconstruction.

The new school incorporates three major dimensions of *skholé*, understood as a social archetype. The first is what might be called cultural conservancy—where the cultural fruits of the past are offered to the young most vividly, befitting the sensuous reason of childhood, in the form of an emergent, polyphonic curriculum featuring project-based immersion in the arts, crafts, and the experimental sciences. Second, where the skills and dispositions of participatory democracy are learned through their actual exercise, and the art of collective self-governance through its actual practice; and third, in the regular practice of community of philosophical inquiry, which acts to reconstruct the concepts we live by through ongoing communal dialogue. Of course it begs the question: how do we get there?

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